

# REInSER

Refugees' Economic Integration through  
Social Entrepreneurship

**Comparative STA Report on the Assessment of Main  
Challenges in the Partners' State**

---

**Deliverable T1.2.2**

**23.07.2021**

This report activity is conducted within the framework of the REInSER project.

<b>Responsible Institution for this deliverable</b>	ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - Università di Bologna
<b>Main Authors:</b>	Stefano Bianchini, Silvia Cittadini, Marco Zoppi, Federica Bandini, Daniela Bolzani, Francesco Savoia
<b>Project Support Team:</b>	Carolina Graffi, Eleonora Grassi, Michela Ceccorulli, Riccardo Prandini

REInSER brings together eight partners from academia, business support organizations and local authorities gathering different expertise, knowledge and skills in six countries of the ADRIION area, namely: Slovenia, Italy, Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Croatia. This strategic partnership strives to find a sustainable solution for the pressing issue of refugees and asylum seekers. The main objective of REInSER is to improve their economic, and consequently wider integration process in host societies of the ADRIION programme area by using approaches of social economy and in particular social entrepreneurship. Information on the project REInSER can be found here: <https://reinser.adrioninterreg.eu/>.

<b>Lead Partner:</b>	Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper (Slovenia)
<b>Project Partners:</b>	Regionalna razvojna agencija Srem (Serbia), Primorski Tehnološki Park D.O.O. (Slovenia), ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - Università di Bologna (Italy), Hellenic Open University (Greece), Javna ustanova "Razvojna agencija Unsko-sanskog kantona (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Comune di Brindisi (Italy), and Grad Osijek (Croatia).
<b>Associated Partners:</b>	<u>Bosnia and Herzegovina</u> : Grad Bihać; Ministarstvo zdravstva, rada i socijalne politike. <u>Croatia</u> : Osječko-baranjska županija. <u>Slovenia</u> : Ministarstvo za gospodarski razvoj in tehnologijo - Sektor za socialno podjetništvo, združništvo in ekonomsko demokracijo; Urad vlade RS za oskrbo in integracijo migrantov. <u>Greece</u> : Executive NSRF Structure, Employment and Social Economy Division, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; Development Agency of Karditsa S.A Anka Anaptyxiaki Karditsas Anaptyxiaki Anonimi Etairia O.T.A; Anaptyxiaki Etaireia Dimou Trikkaion Anaptyxiaki Anonymi Etaireia Ota E-Trikala AE. <u>Italy</u> : Presidenza della Regione Puglia, sezione "Sicurezza del Cittadino, politiche migratorie e anti-mafia sociale; Regione Emilia-Romagna Direzione Generale Cura della Persona Salute e Welfare. <u>Serbia</u> : Pokrajinski sekretariat za socijalnu politiku, demografiju i ravnopravnost polova.

Printing, reproduction or quotation is authorized provided the source is acknowledged. For further information, you may get in contact with the project communication manager: Ms. Inga Dragušica ([inga.dragusica@osijek.hr](mailto:inga.dragusica@osijek.hr)), and with the communication manager at the University of Bologna: Ms. Carolina Graffi ([carolinagraffi@gmail.com](mailto:carolinagraffi@gmail.com)).

## Table of contents

Introduction to the deliverable.....	2
Methodological notes .....	2
Findings .....	3
1. Main legal challenges .....	3
2. Main social challenges .....	18
3. Main economic challenges .....	38
Policy recommendations.....	48

## Introduction to the deliverable

This Comparative Report is part of the project “REInSER - Refugees’ Economic Integration through Social Entrepreneurship”. The Report is conceived as a state-of-the-art document that collects the experience of the participating ADRION project partners vis-a-vis a number of legal, social and economic challenges pertaining to migration flows, societal dynamics and the entrepreneurship sector. Taken together, this information helps elaborating a comprehensive snapshot of ADRION societies in the last years, underlining both the similar and diverse solutions applied to common challenges, as well as identifying spaces for mutual learning.

Given the overall goals of the REInSER project, it is particularly relevant to emphasize the interconnection between legal, social and economic matters. Such awareness is important in order to increase the possibilities for refugees to become active economic actors and agents of their own integration, while contributing also to the local and regional sustainable economic development.

In this respect, we hope that the Report can be useful as reference for policymakers, entrepreneurs, practitioners, academics, intercultural mediators and migrants that seek information at various levels concerning the type of dynamics currently affecting the labour market across the ADRION area.

## Methodological notes

In order to collect evidence for this report, each project partner was assigned the responsibility to fill the National STA Report Template “on the identification of the main challenges in the partners’ state” (Deliverable T1.2.1). A draft of this template was previously agreed among all partners in the attempt to identify all potential useful information to be included. Partners were given the possibility to collect the needed information in multiple ways, such as literature search, databases and interviews with relevant actors. The results of this activity are summarized in the next sections, each devoted to a specific set of challenges.

The different sources of information used by the partner to fill the report, together with the different kind of data available in each country and the variety of contexts, determine the fact that the content and level of details here presented may differ for each country.

## Findings

### 1. Main legal challenges

#### *National legislations in regards of migration, integration and asylum*

Since 2015, a series of laws have been adopted in the countries of the ADRIAN region with the aim of regulating migration and asylum procedures. As it is possible to see in table 1.1, some countries have reformed several times the reception and integration system, especially those that have been affected by migration for a longer time, such as Greece and Italy. In these countries, the most recent legislation had the aim to simplify the procedures for asylum decisions and to regulate the integration process, but, in some cases, it has also limited the possibilities to receive international protection and the integration services offered to asylum seekers. The numerous changes of approach highlight the political relevance of the migratory issue in the public debate. Another important factor that has affected migration's norms in these countries is the necessity to incorporate EU directives into national legislation. The new wave of arrivals from the Balkan Route has most probably triggered the adoption of new laws in this field also in these other countries, which have recently started to develop a new system of reception and integration for refugees and asylum seekers.

Despite the legislative developments, the general management of the migration flows by governments and international actors continues to present numerous issues that hinder the achievement of a coherent and comprehensive response to the migration challenges. On the side of the Western Balkans, the closure of the "formalised" Balkan Route since the EU-Turkey Statement in 2016 prevents the establishment of a common response to the continuous arrivals of asylum seekers, obliging thousands of individuals to face higher risks and to pay international smugglers to cross the region. In this context, the transit countries have often proved unprepared to deal with the flow and to provide migrants with proper support accommodation. At the same time, the last years have witnessed an increase of the chain pushbacks that from Italy, Slovenia and Croatia bringing migrants back to Bosnia and Herzegovina, often in a violent manner. This practice, along with accusations of being illegal because de-facto prevents the possibility to ask for asylum, has determined a situation in which thousands of asylum seekers remain blocked in Bosnia and Herzegovina for months, or even years, where the capacity of the reception structures is limited. The consequent humanitarian crisis, only made more evident by the blaze that destroyed the reception centre of Lipa, recently gained mediatic attention but still did not find a definitive response<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Further information can be found in: Matteo Astuti et al., 'The Balkan Route. Migrants without Rights in the Heart of Europe' (Rivolti ai Balcani, June 2020); Statewatch, 'Blackmail in the Balkans: How the EU Is Externalising Its Asylum Policies', accessed 19 July 2021, <https://www.statewatch.org/analyses/2021/blackmail-in-the-balkans-how-the-eu-is-externalising-its-asylum-policies/>; Nidžara Ahmetašević, 'Limits to Access to Asylum along the Balkan Route' (Refugee

On the side of the Central Mediterranean Route, the numerous shipwrecks, the difficulties encountered by the NGOs' rescue ships to find "safe ports" where to dock, the tortures reported by migrants that have been detained in Libyan centres and the cases of migrants brought back by Libyan coast guards highlight how most of the major issues concerning this route remain unsolved, or even deteriorated. In this context, NGOs have often denounced the cooperation between the Italian and Libyan authorities accused of violating migrants' human rights systematically. It has been also often called for a complete reform of the current EU asylum system, often announced by EU officials but still under discussion.

Within this general context, all countries here analysed have adopted a procedure for the asylum application and decision and provided a reception system that offers basic accommodation and services to asylum seekers. Nevertheless, differences can be traced in regard to the services offered and integration process. One interesting difference concerns the access to the labour market: while in Italy asylum seekers can be employed after 2 months from their asylum application - independently if a decision has been taken or not - in Greece they need to wait 6 months and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia 9 months, if a decision on their application is not taken before. In Serbia, the working permit is released together with the international protection; therefore, asylum seekers need to wait for a decision, which should be taken in a regular procedure within 3 months after the application, extendable to 12 months only in complex circumstances. In addition, in case of a mass influx of displaced persons unable to return to their country of origin or habitual residence and where individual asylum procedure is under stress, asylum seekers can be accorded with a temporary protection, which, among the other things, allows them to work immediately. Temporary protection can be granted for up to a year and, if the reasons for protection still exist, the duration may be extended for an additional six months, up to a maximum of one year.

---

Rights Europe, 2021), [https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RRE\\_LimitedAccessToAsylumAlongTheBalkanRoute.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0As3SQjV\\_\\_m3hGZsajCjZodp9r4DCOZlyh3950FI-xJ9naloY1lNZFaRU](https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RRE_LimitedAccessToAsylumAlongTheBalkanRoute.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0As3SQjV__m3hGZsajCjZodp9r4DCOZlyh3950FI-xJ9naloY1lNZFaRU).

**Table 1.1 Most recent national legislations in regards of migration and/or integration**

Country	Year	Name of the Law	Content
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2015	Law on Foreigners	It regulates: the conditions and procedure for entry of foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including visa and visa-free regime, travel documents for foreigners, stay of foreigners in BiH, removal of foreigners from BiH, reception of foreigners and placing foreigners under supervision, as well as the competencies of authorities in application of this Law, and other issues related to the stay of foreigners in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
	2016	Law on Asylum	It regulates: the principles, conditions, the bodies responsible for its implementation and the approval procedure for refugee status, subsidiary protection status, termination and abolition of refugee status and subsidiary protection status, temporary protection, identification documents, rights and obligations asylum seekers, refugees and foreigners under subsidiary protection as well as other issues in the field of asylum in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
Croatia	2015	Law on International and Temporary Protection	It prescribes the principles, conditions and procedure for granting international protection and temporary protection, the status of rights and obligations of applicants for international protection, asylum seekers, aliens under subsidiary protection, aliens under temporary protection and the conditions and procedure for annulment and termination of asylum, subsidiary and temporary protection. Some key principles outlined in the Act are: family integrity; the principle of the best interests of the child; the principle of “sur place”.
Greece	2014	Immigration and Social Integration Code	It aims to simplify procedures, to revise terms for access to the labour market, encourage investment by third-country nationals, to modify terms and conditions for granting long-term residence permits, and to ensure the legal stay of the second generation of third-country migrants.
	2015	Law 4332/2015	It offers a 2-year residence permit and access to the labour market to third-country nationals on the basis of exceptional grounds - humanitarian grounds.

	2016	Special Circular 27430/2016	It gives access to the labour market to those immigrants who find themselves in a situation between illegality and legality, known as 'para-legality'. This intermediate category includes irregular immigrants whose order to leave the country was postponed for humanitarian reasons and so they were granted a special certificate to remain in the country for 6 months, without the right to access social integration programs, and which is renewable for 6 months. The status of 'para-legality' offers limited access to the labour market in specific sectors (such as agriculture, animal husbandry and domestic work) and geographical destinations (mainly rural areas).
	2016	Law 4375/2016	A main aspect is the different asylum procedures for those applicants who arrive in Greece after 20 March 2016 (according to EU-Turkey Statement) compared to those who were relocated to the mainland and had reached the country before this date. The access of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers to the labour market is further facilitated with the abolition of the requirement for the possession of a permit to work as a condition for participation in the labour market. Asylum seekers gain access to health services on the same terms as nationals
	2019	Law 4636/2019	The Law has abolished the rule of automatic suspensive effect for certain appeals, in particular those concerning applications rejected in the accelerated procedure or dismissed as inadmissible under certain grounds. Asylum seekers need to wait a period of six months after filing their application for international protection in order to gain the right to work legally, if in the meantime no decision concerning their case is taken.
Italy	2015	d.lgs. 142/2015	Reform of the Bossi-Fini Law (2002) to integrate a series of EU directives. It organises the protection and integration system establishing a system of structures and services apt to the reception and integration of the beneficiaries (SPRAR).
	2017	d.lgs. 46/2017	It removes the possibility for asylum seekers to appeal against the rejection of their application.
	2018	d.lgs. 113/2018	It replaces the SPRAR system with a new one called SIPROIMI, limiting the access to the integration system only to those whose application for protection has been already accepted and unaccompanied minors. Most importantly, this reform abolishes the "humanitarian protection" accorded to asylum seekers that did not qualify for the refugee status or the subsidiary protection but arrived in Italy for serious humanitarian reasons.



	2020	d.lgs. 130/2020	It replaces the SIPROIMI system with a new one called SAI - System of Reception and Integration that includes also those who are still waiting for a decision on their application, but that ensures full integration services only to those already entitled with a form of protection. It introduces a new "special protection", enlarging again the cases in which international protection can be accorded.
<b>Serbia</b>	2016	Decree on the Manner of Involving Persons Recognised as Refugees in Social, Cultural and Economic Life Official Gazette, no. 101/2016, no.	This Decree regulates the inclusion in social, cultural and economic life of a person who has been granted the right to asylum. It prescribes: 1) full and timely provision of information on rights, opportunities and obligations, 2) learning the Serbian language, 3) getting acquainted with Serbian history, culture and the constitutional order, 4) assistance in joining the education system, 5) assistance in exercising the right to health and social protection 6) assistance in entering the labour market.
	2018	Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection, Official Gazette no. 24/2018	This law regulates the status, rights and obligations of asylum seekers and persons granted the right to asylum and temporary protection, principles, conditions and procedure for granting and terminating the right to asylum and temporary protection, as well as other issues of importance for asylum and temporary protection.
	2018	Rulebook on the Procedure of Registration, Design and Content of the Certificate on Registration of a Foreigner Who Expressed Intention to Seek Asylum Official Gazette, no. 42/2018	According to the Rulebook the Registration of a Foreigner who express intention to seek asylum, registration certificate is issued by the Ministry of Interior Affairs subsequent to obtaining and processing personal and biometric data of a foreigner. Personal data about a foreigner are obtained by insight into the documents that the foreigner has and his personal statements. Biometric data are obtained by foreigner's photography and fingerprints.
	2018	The Rulebook on the Form of the Decision on Refusal of Entry into the Republic of Serbia, the Form of the Decision on the Approval of Entry into the Republic of Serbia and the Manner of Entering Data on the Refusal of Entry into the Travel Document of the Foreigner Official Gazette, no. 50/2018	It prescribes the appearance of the form of the decision on refusal of entry of a foreigner into the Republic of Serbia and the manner of entering data on refusal of entry into the travel document of a foreigner, as well as the appearance of the form of decision on approval of entry of a foreigner. A foreigner who has been denied entry into the Republic of Serbia shall be handed a form of a decision on refusal of entry into the Republic of Serbia by a border officer indicating one or more reasons for refusing entrance.

	2019	Law on Foreigners Official Gazette no. 24/2018 and 31/2019	This law shall regulate the criteria for entry, movement, stay and return off foreigners, as well as the competences and tasks of state authorities in the Republic of Serbia with regard to entry, movement and stay of foreigners on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and their return from the Republic of Serbia. Stateless persons shall be subject to provisions of the Convention relating to the status of stateless persons, if this is more favourable to them
<b>Slovenia</b>	2010	Economic Migration Strategy 2010-2020	It focuses primarily on third-country nationals who come to Slovenia for temporary or permanent employment and potential highly skilled workforce. It states that in order to open business, in addition to the required one-year residence, foreigners must also show their own financial resources and the ownership or lease of business premises or premises where they have their registered office.
	2015	Employment, Self-Employment and Work of Foreigners Act	It follows the principle that the entire procedure is regulated in one place ("Everything in one place") and that a residence and work permit in the Republic of Slovenia is issued as a single permit.
	2020	Strategy on the field of Migration 2020-2030	It aims at promoting immigration of foreign labour, providing fast and efficient procedures for determining entitlement to international protection, detecting and preventing illegal migration at both the external and internal Schengen borders of the Republic of Slovenia, effective implementation of return agreements, elimination and restriction risks to national security arising from or related to migration movements, ensuring synergies between different actors in the formulation and implementation of integration policy, addressing the causes of migration and protecting the lives, dignity and basic human rights of migrants
	2021	Amendments to the Foreigners Act (ZTuj-2F) and the Employment, Self-Employment and Work of Foreigners Act (ZZSDT-C)	Stricter conditions for foreigners. A two-years stay of a foreigner in the Republic of Slovenia for family reunification is also being introduced. Knowledge of the Slovene language is also required for foreigners residing in Slovenia for a longer period of time (A2 of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). The way of proving the receipt of the necessary means of subsistence is also changing.

In the case of **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the President of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia, Milorad Dodik, announced in early 2018 that the entity would not be involved in any form of reception of asylum seekers. Consequently, it was only within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that camp sites and other camps for migrants and asylum seekers were set up, managed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and financed by the European Union.<sup>2</sup> Dodik reiterated his position in early 2021.<sup>3</sup>

Having clarified this point, the legislation this country establishes a process for asylum application that consists of several steps. Asylum seekers have a right to interpretation and free legal assistance at all stages of the asylum procedure. According to the current legislations, asylum seekers can ask for asylum immediately at their first contact with the Border Police or with the Service for Foreigners' Affairs. Following their expression of intent to seek asylum, a registration officer of the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security will contact them, either at one of the reception facilities or at their registered private address, for an appointment for the registration interview. The Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security will briefly ask them questions related to their asylum claim and fill in their asylum application form for formal submission. After the registration interview, the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security will issue an Asylum-Seeker's Card (the 'yellow card'), normally within three days of the registration interview date, which is valid for three months. The Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security will invite them for a second interview, this time with a refugee status determination officer, who will examine their case and decide on your application within a six-month period. In exceptional cases, this period can be extended up to 18 months. In particular cases, the Sector for Asylum of the Ministry of Security may reject the application in an accelerated procedure (within 30 days). They are entitled to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina while a decision is made and they have the right to ask for an interpreter and free legal aid from the beginning of the asylum procedure. If they meet the conditions under the Law on Asylum, they can be granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. If their asylum application is rejected, they have the right to appeal.

The asylum seeker has the right to stay in BiH, access to information in accordance with the Law on Asylum of BiH, accommodation in a centre for asylum seekers, primary and secondary education, access to free legal aid, monitoring the progress of the proceedings in a language that they understand or is reasonably presumed to understand and psychosocial assistance. Access to the labour market is ensured after 9 months from the asylum application, if a decision on the application is not taken before. The asylum seeker is obligated to respect the public order of BiH and to comply with the decisions of the competent authorities in BiH, to cooperate with the competent authorities in order to establish identity and throughout the asylum procedure, to submit the documents at his disposal, which are necessary for the consideration of the request, submit a request for

---

<sup>2</sup> Matteo Astuti et al., 'The Balkan Route. Migrants without Rights in the Heart of Europe' (Rivolti ai Balcani, June 2020).

<sup>3</sup> See : <https://ecre.org/balkan-route-life-threatening-conditions-for-people-trapped-in-bosnia-as-temperatures-fall/>.

extension of the validity of the asylum seeker's card and also report the loss of the card in a manner prescribed by Law, reports residence and change of residential address, to adhere to the house rules in the centre for reception and accommodation of asylum seekers.

In **Croatia**, asylum seekers must request protection/asylum immediately, as soon as they enter the country. It can be at the border crossing, at a police station or with the first police officer see them, or at the Reception Centre for Foreigners (Detention Centre). In exceptional cases, they can also express their intention to seek protection in the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers. They can also request protection if they have been caught while irregularly crossing the state border or irregularly staying in Croatia.

When it comes to the rights of other migrants, foreigners are allowed to work in Croatia based on residence and working permits, which are subject to quota regime. The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the determination of annual quotas for the employment of foreigners in Croatia. The Croatian Government annually adopts the decision on annual quota of work permits for the employment of foreigners for the next calendar year. Determined quotas are usually relatively low - for 2015 the annual quota for the employment of foreigners in Croatia was set to 1730 work permits, of which 1 500 permits were related to the prolongation of already issued work permits for foreigners. This rule does not apply to asylum seekers, since they can have access to the labour market once they have been granted with a form of protection, or 9 months after filing their application if a decision has not been taken yet. In addition, when their protection status or temporary residence are granted, foreigners under international protection gain wider rights compared to foreigners with temporary residence and are provided with integration support. This primarily includes free learning of the Croatian language, history and culture, free legal aid, as well as accommodation and an allowance awarded based on their material status.

In **Greece**, asylum applications are filed before the Asylum Service. Thirteen Regional Asylum Offices and twelve Asylum Units were operational at the end of 2019. The Asylum Service is also competent for applying the Dublin procedure, with most requests and transfers concerning family reunification in other Member States. The Asylum Service may be assisted by European Asylum Support Office (EASO) staff in registration and interviews. A fast-track border procedure is applied to applicants subject to the EU-Turkey statement, i.e. applicants arriving on the islands of Eastern Aegean islands after 20 March 2016, and takes place in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) where hotspots are established (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos) and before the RAO of Rhodes. Under the fast-track border procedure, *inter alia*, interviews may also be conducted by EASO staff and, in urgent cases, the Police and Armed Forces. Short deadlines are provided to applicants for most steps of the procedure. First instance decisions of the Asylum Service are appealed before the Independent Appeals Committees under the Appeals Authority. Regarding the integration into labour market, beneficiaries of international protection and their families have the right to employment under the same conditions as nationals, while asylum seekers need to wait a period of six months after filing their application for

international protection in order to gain the right to work legally, if in the meantime no decision concerning their case is taken.

In **Italy**, the first phase of the reception system is represented by the hot spots where all individuals who entered Italy illegally (usually through the Mediterranean Route) are placed for a couple of days in order to be registered. After registration, those who express the intention to ask for asylum are moved to first reception centres, intended to be a transition structure where asylum seekers and refugees wait before being moved to the second phase of the reception and integration system, represented by the SAI or CAS (centres for extraordinary assistance). The SAI is composed of a series of reception and integration projects run by local municipalities that can apply for funds with this purpose. It represents the successor of the SPRAR system, which has often been presented as a model of integration for refugees, opposed by far-right parties.<sup>4</sup> Due to the lack of enough places within the SAI system to host all potential beneficiaries, the system of the CAS, intended exclusively as an extraordinary measure that does not ensure the same services offered by the SAI, has become the most common structure to place beneficiaries of protection.

Regarding the integration in the labour market, according to Italian legislation all asylum seekers are allowed to work after two months from applying for asylum. Their economic integration is considered one of the main objectives of the SAI system that offers a series of opportunities and services with this purpose. Along with legal education and support and language courses, the integration into the labour market is mostly promoted through the activation of a series of internships within private and public enterprises that can then turn into employment contract or represent a first professional experience. Nevertheless, the interviewees of this study agree on the fact that the economic integration of refugees is one of the main challenges. This is due to several reasons: beyond the general lack of working opportunities in some Italian areas, the integration in the labour market is hindered by the lack of competences of the social workers to deal with the world of private businesses<sup>5</sup>; furthermore, asylum seekers and refugees can benefit from the services offered by the SAI system for about 6 months to 1 year, which is often not enough to become economically independent.

The asylum procedure in **Serbia** is governed by the Asylum Act as *lex specialis* to the General Administrative Procedure Act (GAPA). The Asylum Act provides that a decision on asylum applications in the regular procedure must be taken within a maximum period of 3 months from the date of the lodging of the asylum application or the admissible subsequent application. It is possible to extend the time limit by 3 months in case the application includes complex factual or legal issues or in case of a large number of

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Dans le sud de l'Italie, un village déserté reprend vie en accueillant des immigrants', *Le Monde.fr*, 26 April 2011, [https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/04/26/dans-le-sud-de-l-italie-un-village-deserte-reprend-vie-en-accueillant-des-immigres\\_1512969\\_3214.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/04/26/dans-le-sud-de-l-italie-un-village-deserte-reprend-vie-en-accueillant-des-immigres_1512969_3214.html); "'They Are Our Salvation": The Sicilian Town Revived by Refugees', *the Guardian*, 19 March 2018, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/19/sutera-italy-the-sicilian-town-revived-by-refugees>.

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR Italy, online interview, 07/06/2021.

foreigners lodging asylum applications at the same time. Exceptionally, beyond these reasons, the time limit for deciding on an asylum application may be extended by a further 3 months if necessary, to ensure a proper and complete assessment thereof. The applicant shall be informed on the extension.

Asylum seekers are recognized as members of specific category of foreigners entitled to obtain the work permit. Persons entering the asylum procedure in Serbia do not have an *ipso facto* right to access the labour market. However, persons who seek asylum while possessing a work permit on other grounds may continue working based on that permit. The Asylum Act foresees that the persons granted asylum in Serbia shall be equal to permanently-residing foreigners with respect to the right to work and rights arising from employment and entrepreneurship. The Asylum Act guarantees equality in the rights and obligations of persons granted refugee status with those of persons granted subsidiary protection, even though the Employment of Foreigners Act (EFA) explicitly states that persons who have been granted subsidiary protection are to be issued personal work permits for the duration of that status. The Integration Decree further foresees assistance in accessing the labour market as an integral part of integration. The assistance is to be provided by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations and is to form part of every individual beneficiary of refugee status' integration plan. The assistance includes assistance in gathering of all the necessary documents for registration with the National Employment Service (NES), the recognition of foreign degrees, enrolling in additional education programmes and courses in line with labour market requirements and engaging in measures of active labour market policy.

In **Slovenia**, the procedure for international protection is regulated by International Protection Act (*Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti (ZMZ-1)*)<sup>6</sup>, IPA) and it is initiated in two phases<sup>7</sup>. PIC, Legal information centre for NGOs observes the following procedures for asylum applications. First, the individual expresses the intention to apply for international protection. Third-country nationals or a stateless person<sup>8</sup> can express their intention before any state or local authority, which has the duty to inform the Police. From the moment someone has expressed an intention to apply for international protection, he or she cannot be deported from the country. The Police conduct the "preliminary procedure" in which they establish the identity and travel route of the individual and complete the registration form. The individual is then transferred to the Asylum Home where he or she starts the second phase of the procedure by lodging the application for international protection. First instance procedure: at first instance level the international protection procedure is carried out by the Ministry of the Interior, specifically the International Protection Procedures Division of the Migration directorate. Following the lodging of the

---

<sup>6</sup> Zakon o mednarodni zaščiti - International Protection Act, Official gazette of the republic of Slovenia, n. 16/17, <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7103>.

<sup>7</sup> PIC (2020): AIDA Asylum information database - country report: Slovenia, p. 16-18.

See:[https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AIDA-SI\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AIDA-SI_2020update.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> This is the phrasing in the legislation; Slovenian nationals and citizens of a EU member state would seem cannot ask for international protection.

application, a personal interview is conducted, normally within a time period of one month, during which the applicant is expected to provide detailed grounds for asylum (“first interview on the merits”). Following the first interview on the merits, the case is referred to a “decision-maker”, who organises another interview on the merits if needed, before he or she takes an in-merit asylum decision on the case. An accelerated procedure is also possible pursuant to the IPA. There are only a few minor differences compared to the regular procedure, such as the deadline for appeal. According to the law, asylum procedures normally need to be concluded within six months, however this is often not respected, leading to an excessively long duration of procedures - one of the most significant shortcomings of the Slovenian asylum system. Appeal: One cannot appeal against the decisions and resolutions passed in the international protection procedure; rather, the applicant can opt for an administrative dispute. The applicant has to apply for judicial review of the decision within 15 days if it was made in the regular procedure and eight days if it was made in the accelerated procedure. Judicial review of all other decisions needs to be lodged in eight days, except in the case of a detention decision, when it needs to be lodged in three days.

PIC continues: “The Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants ([*Urad za osktno in integracijo migrantov*] - UOIM) is responsible for the reception and accommodation of asylum seekers in Slovenia. After the preliminary procedure, applicants are brought to the Asylum Home or its branch in Logatec where they must wait to lodge the application for international protection. Before lodging the application, individuals are accommodated in the pre-reception area of the Asylum Home or in the separate building or containers in Logatec. In practice, they are not able to leave the pre-reception area of the Asylum Home and are *de facto* detained. The Asylum Home security personnel allow them to walk in front of the Asylum Home a couple of times per day. Food is brought to them by the social workers. The rooms of the pre-reception area have limited space and do not allow for privacy or for the separate accommodation of vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors, single women, families, or victims of torture. The reception capacity of the pre-reception area is approximately 36 persons. However, during a large influx of persons, a higher number of persons is often accommodated. [...] Large-scale centres are used for the accommodation of asylum seekers in Slovenia.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***National legislations in regards of entrepreneurship since 2015 (included)***

In the last years, all the countries considered, apart from **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, have enacted new legislations to favour entrepreneurship by supporting start-up initiatives, especially among young people, and simplifying the procedures to open a new business. The interest towards it demonstrates how entrepreneurship is considered a key sector for innovation and development, especially in countries still suffering from high rates of unemployment.

---

<sup>9</sup> PIC (2020): AIDA Asylum information database - country report: Slovenia, p. 55.  
See: [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AIDA-SI\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/AIDA-SI_2020update.pdf).

**Croatia** in 2016 has amended the law on encouraging the development of small businesses. This Act regulates the basis for the application of economic policy incentive measures aimed at the development, restructuring and market adjustment of small businesses. It established the Agency for Small Business and Investments. Furthermore, it regulates incentive measures, lending under more favourable conditions, providing loan guarantees, providing professional and advisory assistance, simplifying the procedure for establishing, operating and developing small businesses, providing incentives to strengthen competitiveness in the market, and promoting entrepreneurship of particularly vulnerable groups. In 2016, the Amendment to the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Act was adopted, and a chapter was added to assess the effects of regulations on small businesses - the Small and Medium Entrepreneurship Test (SME TEST). This assessment includes the process of analysis and assessment of the negative impact of individual regulations on small businesses in the form of additional or increased costs, or positive effects as economic benefits for small businesses.

**Greece** has committed to implementing several reforms including a more business-friendly environment, as part of its commitment to past European Commission, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Stability Mechanism bailout packages. In this context, the following adaptations have been made in legislation. In 2015, starting a business was made easier by lowering registration costs. Moreover, the government has reduced the property transfer tax and removed the requirement for the municipal tax clearance certificate. It has introduced an electronic filing system for court users, to improve the enforcing of contracts. In 2016, Greece made paying taxes less costly for companies by reducing the rates for social security contributions paid by employers, making insurance premiums fully tax deductible and lowering property tax rates. In 2017, Greece made enforcing contracts further easier by amending its rules of civil procedure to introduce tighter rules on adjournments, impose deadlines for key court events and limit the resources that can be lodged during enforcement proceedings. However, there have been a significant setback in paying taxes which has been made more costly by increasing the corporate income tax rate. In 2018, Greece made starting a business easier by creating a unified social security institution. In 2019, it streamlined its construction permitting process and, in addition, made the process of getting electricity easier. However, registering property has become more burdensome by requiring a property tax certificate for registering a property transfer. In 2020, Greece reduced the time to register a company with the commercial registry and removing the requirements to obtain a tax clearance and by strengthening minority investor protections by requiring greater disclosure and an independent review before the approval of related-party transactions as well as greater corporate transparency of executive compensation.<sup>10</sup>

In 2012, **Italy** instituted the “Italian Start Up Act”, which introduced a package of incentives to support the creation and growth of innovative start-ups: namely, limited companies, including cooperatives, not listed, that meet certain requirements, like the

---

<sup>10</sup> Source: The World Bank, *Doing Business*, Business Reforms, <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/reforms/overview/economy/greece> .



clear development and employment of a technological component and to be newly founded. The act was aimed at fostering the entrepreneurial ecosystem and employment, especially for the youth. Such start-ups could also be qualified as “innovative start-ups with a social goal (Start-up Innovative a Vocazione Sociale - SIAVS), if they operate in the sectors identified by national legislation on social enterprises (Legislative Decree 112/2017). The support measures include: the possibility of establishing the company entirely online; being waived from the annual membership fees normally due to the Chambers of Commerce; being subject to some exceptions to general company law to extensions to deadlines to cover losses; having tax incentives for equity investors and simplified access to the SME guarantee fund. In 2017, incentives for Social Enterprises were introduced to finance programmes aimed at: increasing employment for disadvantaged categories; social inclusion of vulnerable people; safeguarding the environment or the cultural heritage; addressing some specific need of the community. In 2021, Italian Government introduced new support measures and tax incentives for new enterprises constituted by youth from 18 to 35 years old or women (of every age).

In **Serbia**, since 1 January 2018, within the digitization project, the Business Registers Agency allows electronic registration for entrepreneurs. Adopted amendments to the Law on Personal Income Tax (2019) introduce the obligation to apply and implement, as of 1 March 2020, the so-called Independence Test for entrepreneurs. This test basically questions the current tax status of entrepreneurs - whether the entrepreneur can be taxed as usual, or something must change to comply with the tax law. The Strategy for SME Development for the period 2015-2020 is by aligning strategic objectives over several ministries for the first time. Out of six pillars of the strategy, three of them are of particular importance for start-ups: “Improvement of the business environment” focuses on establishing a supportive regulatory framework; “Improvement of access to sources of funding”; and “Development and promotion of entrepreneurial spirit and encouraging of women’s entrepreneurship, youth entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship”. Prospective and existing micro, small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs in 16 accredited development agencies throughout Serbia can obtain support through consulting, training, assistance in preparation of documentation and application for programs implemented by the Ministry of Economy and the Serbian Development Agency, assistance in registration and establishment of SME, preparation of business plans, all necessary information on the commencement of business, available national programs, training, mentoring service and all these services are free.

In **Slovenia**, the Act Amending the Supportive Environment for Entrepreneurship Act was adopted in 2015<sup>11</sup>. This law sets out measures to promote entrepreneurship and organization in this area, as well as procedures for allocating funds intended for the creation of a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. According to Small Business Act by EC (SBA facts 2019)<sup>12</sup> Slovenia has in recent years established a vibrant start-up and

<sup>11</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 17/15.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MGRT/Dokumenti/DIPT/Podjetnistvo/Dokumenti/Slovenia-SBA-Fact-Sheet-2019\\_dostopno-za-ranljive-skupine.pdf](https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MGRT/Dokumenti/DIPT/Podjetnistvo/Dokumenti/Slovenia-SBA-Fact-Sheet-2019_dostopno-za-ranljive-skupine.pdf).

scale-up ecosystem. The key component is the 'Start:up Slovenia' initiative, an open platform that organises start-up weekends, national campaigns and international start-up and entrepreneurship events. Supported by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, the initiative is also active in making proposals for improving the business environment. In Slovenia there are various financial support measures for entrepreneurship, such as grants, incentives, venture capital and seed capital (mainly available under the SEF), and non-financial support measures, such as coaching, mentoring and training (mainly available from SPIRIT Slovenia - the public agency for entrepreneurship, internationalisation, foreign investments and technology).<sup>13</sup> The entrepreneurial infrastructure (university incubators, co-working spaces, one-stop shops, technology parks) is well established. Some progress has been made in the field of women's entrepreneurship, with the introduction of training programmes for unemployed women and subsidies for self-employed women from the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. In April 2018, the Chamber of Crafts and Entrepreneurship opened the first consulting and mentoring centre for family businesses. In 2017, following a public tender, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport selected 120 basic schools and 70 grammar/secondary-level schools in which to provide activities until 2022 to enhance pupils' entrepreneurship skills and support their transition to the business environment.

***National legislations in regards of re-population of remote areas enacted since 2015 (included)***

In general, depopulation process is reason for concern across all ADRION countries, as emerged from the Comparative report on the assessment of societal change (Deliverable T1.1.2). This is reason of major concern especially for backward regions and their inner areas. In regards of re-population of remote areas, the great majority of countries has promoted national or local policies with this specific aim. These initiatives have all the objective of encouraging the development of areas that have been increasingly abandoned (small villages or islands, mountain and border areas). Nevertheless, it seems that in this sector comprehensive legislations are still missing since most of the policies adopted either cover only certain areas or sectors.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Croatia**, no specific legislation in regards of re-population of remote areas has been enacted since 2015.

The **Greek** states policy towards remote and rural areas is a part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and foresees three sets of actions both to try to keep rural population in place and give incentives for incomers: benefits policy that provides certain financial incentives in the form of benefits and tax exemptions for people residing in so-called disadvantageous areas (mountainous, border, small islands)<sup>14</sup>; financial incentives

---

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.sloveniabusines.eu/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://oreina.epidomata.gov.gr/> (in Greek).

for companies that set up in such areas - Developmental Law 4399/2016<sup>15</sup> provides special financial incentives to companies that settle in special areas (i.e. mountainous areas, border areas, small islands (population under 3000), islands that have been in the midst of 2015 refugee crisis); financial incentives for young farmers to set up in rural areas and create new agricultural businesses.

In the framework of the EU programming period 2014-2020, **Italy** has implemented a specific integrated policy, the National Strategy for Inner Areas (NSIA), with the aim of contributing to social and economic recovery. The strategy has been put in place within the framework of EU Cohesion Policy to reverse depopulation trends, to tackle ageing, improve access services, and foster social inclusion. The strategy aimed also at creating jobs and in general to promote local development combining European and national funds. Generally, local strategies rely on two types of actions: actions supporting innovations in services and addressing socio-demographic issues; actions supporting local development. According to UNHCR officers, interviewed within the project activities, the idea of repopulating inner areas integrating migrants may have high potential effects. However, these initiatives are not followed by evaluation activities to monitor the progress and estimate the impact (opinion of the officers).<sup>16</sup>

In October 2020 the Government of **Serbia** adopted the National Programme for Revival of Serbian Villages. Some of the new proposed measures are the establishment of a state fund for the development of rural infrastructure, special financial incentives for young married couples, women and children living in rural areas, and the transfer of up to 50 hectares of state-owned land for free use to young married couples. Moreover, the programme also proposes allocation of houses under the most favourable conditions to those who want to come to live in the countryside and work the land, to reduce the value added tax rate for agricultural cooperatives and completely exempt villagers in border and mountainous areas from most taxes.<sup>17</sup>

**Slovenia** does not have specific legislation in regards of re-population of remote areas, however several adopted Acts cover issues related to balanced regional development: Act on the Promotion of Harmonious Regional Development (ZSRR-1); Development Support Act for the Pomurje Region in the Period 2010-2019 (ZRPPR1015); Municipal Finance Act (ZFO-1); Real Property of the State and Self-governing Local Communities Act (ZSPDLSL-1). Regional development policies promote sustainable development in the broadest sense, realise development potentials and eliminate development barriers in all Slovenian regions while preserving resources and opportunities for the development of future generations. There are great differences in regional development in Slovenia and there are particular activities in the priority regional policy areas. In these areas are implemented special measures and key projects. In areas with high unemployment are implemented programmes for promoting competitiveness. Priority areas refer to

---

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.espa.gr/elibrary/n4399\\_2016\\_FEK117A\\_Anptyxiakos.pdf](https://www.espa.gr/elibrary/n4399_2016_FEK117A_Anptyxiakos.pdf) (in Greek).

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR, online interview, 07/06/2021.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/en/161893/national-programme-for-revival-of-serbian-villages-presented.php>.

disadvantaged border areas, Pomurska region, disadvantaged areas with high unemployment rate, areas where the Hungarian and Italian national communities live, areas where members of the Roma community live. Within the regional policy the development of social entrepreneurship, cooperatives and economic democracy is stimulated as well. One of the incentives is the transfer of unneeded state-owned assets to municipalities and public funds when they can be used in new development projects.

## 2. Main social challenges

In relation to the goals of this project, one of the most crucial challenges we found in the region is the **lack of systematic surveys of migrants' skills**, compiled with the aiming of improving their employability on state and regional markets. In none of the involved countries we found an established state-wide mechanism for the recognition and identification of qualification and skills of migrants and refugees. This represents a significant impediment for entering the labour market, especially for asylum seekers, which adds to other limits such as the time requirement before accessing employment opportunities, as seen above. A positive development is, however, the **increasing educational opportunities** recognized to asylum seekers, refugees and their families in the ADRION area: this is even more relevant when considering that all ADRION societies present **gaps and mismatches between demand and offer in their labour market**, as we shall see now.

### *Migrants' skills: what do we know?*

In **Greece**, the available national data on migrant/refugee skills are scarce and mainly represent the general educational levels (0 to 8) which are included in the Eurostat database<sup>18</sup>. The same goes for the recognized asylum population that is profiled in the National Strategy for Integration<sup>19</sup>. On the other hand, there is fragmentary evidence collected by UNHCR in 2015 and 2016 that give profile information about those arriving at the Aegean islands<sup>20</sup>. On a regional level there have been attempts<sup>21</sup> by NGOs that have been overseeing a majority of services, such as the provision of language courses, skills development training, and employability programs which aim to help integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. The focus is mainly on job searching

<sup>18</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat\\_lfs\\_9911/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfs_9911/default/table?lang=en).

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.opengov.gr/immigration/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2019/07/%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7\\_final\\_.pdf](http://www.opengov.gr/immigration/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2019/07/%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7_final_.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> This data follows a month by month gathering of information, but have no actual use as they give bulk information about the population. See:

[https://data2.unhcr.org/en/search?country=640&country\\_1=0&situation%5B0%5D=11&text=profiling&type%5B0%5D=document&partner=&working\\_group=&sector=&date\\_from=&date\\_to=&uploader=&country\\_json=%7B%220%22:%22640%22%7D&sector\\_json=%7B%220%22:%22%22%7D&apply=&page=1](https://data2.unhcr.org/en/search?country=640&country_1=0&situation%5B0%5D=11&text=profiling&type%5B0%5D=document&partner=&working_group=&sector=&date_from=&date_to=&uploader=&country_json=%7B%220%22:%22640%22%7D&sector_json=%7B%220%22:%22%22%7D&apply=&page=1).

<sup>21</sup> Some examples are <https://www.solidaritynow.org/en/blue-refugee-center/>, <https://www.intersos.gr/en/intergration-initiatives/>.

techniques and curriculum vitae improvements rather than actually finding job positions for the persons concerned.

Empirical findings based on the opinions of refugees and asylum seekers themselves<sup>22</sup> seem to indicate that although NGOs have made an extremely significant contribution to humanitarian aid, legal and administrative assistance, the protection of human rights and the dissemination of information, they did not appear to be as successful in meeting refugees' and asylum seekers' needs in terms of their integration into the labour market. This was for a variety of reasons, such as: there were no expected results from the services provided; the actions did not have a follow-up; fragmented funding meant that services were provided for a limited period of time; or because NGOs in particular were being asked to fill the gap created by the inability of public actors, supported by the public administration, to provide a clear integration policy. It is also probably related to the fact that, in some cases, refugees and asylum seekers perceive NGOs as employment services providers that therefore have expectations that ultimately are not met.

It is, however, worth noting that although NGOs are key actors in the provision of employability services, public authorities have recently attempted to take a much more active role in this area. The trend towards the greater involvement of public authorities in the socio-economic integration of migrants and refugees is reflected in the skills recognition activities. In that respect, perhaps the most typical example is the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees,<sup>23</sup> which assesses refugees' education level, work experience and language proficiency in the absence of full documentation, by using a tested methodology and a structured interview. This was started in 2017 as a pilot project under the responsibility of the Council of Europe and involves several national and international actors, in particular the Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. At the same time, the initiative of the Athens Coordination Centre for Migrants and Refugee Issues, where someone can attend job counselling sessions as well as other services, such as Greek and English language courses, must be seen as a sign of the further involvement of the public authorities in the social integration of migrants and refugees.<sup>24</sup>

One of the latest developments in this section is the program HELIOS funded by the Ministry of Asylum and implemented by IOM.<sup>25</sup> The target group of the HELIOS project consists of beneficiaries of international protection recognized after 01/01/2018. Among the services offered is job counselling with the target to match the skills of the beneficiaries with the needs of the job market. However, as it was pointed out by one of interviewees that has an active role in the program there seems to be a distance between the declared aims of the program and the actual result of job finding.

The same goes for **Italy**, where despite the importance given to integration of asylum seekers and refugees, no integrated national or regional system aimed at surveying migrants' skills is in place. According to the interviewee from the Municipality of Brindisi,

---

<sup>22</sup> Bagavos, C., Xatzigiannakou, K., & Kourachanis, N. (2019). Civil society barriers and enablers - Report on Greece. Report prepared for the SIRIUS research. <https://www.sirius-project.eu/>.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.refugee.info/greece/education--greece/european-qualifications-passport-for-refugees?language=en>.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.sirius-project.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/WP3%20Integrated%20report%20D3.2.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>.

each structure part of the SAI system should collect the skills of all its beneficiaries and make them available at the national level.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, as both the interviewees from Emilia-Romagna and UNHCR highlighted, no national database exists collecting this kind of information. According to the officer from Emilia-Romagna, who took part to several national meetings regarding the implementation of the SPRAR (now SAI) system, the idea of developing a database collecting the skills exclusively of asylum seekers and refugees was opposed because it was deemed necessary to use the national employment centre available to all resident population.<sup>27</sup>

The UNHCR officer maintained that the shortcomings of the national employment system are even more evident when refugees and asylum seekers are concerned, because of the further difficulties for them to access employment opportunities and services. Furthermore, a national database collecting refugees' skill would be necessary to implement those projects aimed at their working inclusion in order to facilitate the encounter between employers and potential employees.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, in the last years the working inclusion of migrants has gained interest and attention, and a number of studies and toolkits to improve their employability and to favour the encounter between business organisations and migrants have been published<sup>29</sup>. The European Union has also developed a "EU skills Profile Tool for Third Countries Nationals", with the aim of facilitating the employability of migrants, but, as highlighted by the UNHCR<sup>30</sup>, this instrument is rarely used in Italy, despite its potential importance for the implementation of the new EU Talent Partnership<sup>31</sup>. Exactly with the aim of filling this gap, UNHCR, in cooperation with Adecco Foundation for Equal Opportunities, has implemented a project that also aims to collect the skills of all asylum seekers and refugees with the creation of a database. The hope is to integrate this tool in the national reception system in order to offer a structured and national database to improve the communication between different areas and organisations.

In **Slovenia**, the national Employment Service most systematically gathers the migrants' skills, competences and education, including refugees'. From 2017, there are two people employed at the Employment Service of Slovenia assigned to overview and assist the employment of persons with international protection - one in the capital city, Ljubljana, and the other in the second largest city, Maribor. At the second or third session, as the counsellor stated,<sup>32</sup> the counsellor and the job seeker from third country fill in the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals.<sup>33</sup> However, some concerns were raised by

<sup>26</sup> Municipality of Brindisi, technical assistance, online interview, 31/05/2021.

<sup>27</sup> Region Emilia Romagna, Services for Social Policies and Immigration, online interview, 01/06/2021.

<sup>28</sup> UNHCR Italy, online interview, 07/06/2021.

<sup>29</sup> Massimo Gnone et al., 'Guida alle imprese per l'inserimento lavorativo dei rifugiati' (Progetto Tent, March 2020); Maura Di Mauro, 'Includere e Valorizzare le Competenze dei Migranti. Training Toolkit sul Diversity Management.' (Fondazione ISMU, 2021); 'Linee guida per l'identificazione e la valutazione delle soft skill dei migranti' (Fondazione ISMU, April 2020); Progetto BREFE, 'Metodi e Strumenti per Identificare e Rafforzare Le Competenze Trasversali Di Persone Migranti/Rifugiate per Il Mercato Del Lavoro. Guida Ad Uso Degli Operatori.', December 2020, [http://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it/images/GUIDA\\_BREFE\\_2\\_IT\\_dic20.pdf](http://www.piemonteimmigrazione.it/images/GUIDA_BREFE_2_IT_dic20.pdf).

<sup>30</sup> UNHCR Italy, online interview, 07/06/2021.

<sup>31</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_2921](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_2921).

<sup>32</sup> Telephone interview, 10. 8. 2021.

<sup>33</sup> See: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>.

NGOs. According to them, even though the public officials, counsellors at the Employment Service do their work correctly, sometimes they are missing a more active role; not all persons with international protection go to the Employment Service of Slovenia. Moreover, some NGOs went to the asylum homes and informally collect of refugees and asylum seekers competences, skills, education and wishes. Nevertheless, both methods are still missing some systemic components.

In the past these activities were carried only on a project basis. There was a project “Integration package for unemployed, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers”<sup>34</sup> (lead partner: The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia) carried out between 2010 and 2013, which had a planned activity of researching the existing competencies and skills, but during the implementation of the project the aim was redirected, and the competencies and skills of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees were eventually not surveyed.

Furthermore, Slovenia participated in the second round of the PIAAC Survey “Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competences” between 2012 and 2016.<sup>35</sup> PIAAC in Slovenia was implemented in the scope of the ESC Project Measuring the effectiveness of education and training to improve the competences of adult educators between the years 2013 and 2015. The aim of the Survey was: 1) to learn more about adult competences needed on the current labour market; 2) to learn how the use, development and deterioration of competences through life influence education, workplace and environment, 3) to research how competences are shaped by the economic and social circumstances of the individual, industry branch, region and country; and 4) to prepare reports and expert basis for education and other policies. In the “Report on the Survey: Adult skills PIAAC 2016: Thematic study cases” (Poročilo o raziskavi: Spretnosti odraslih PIAAC 2001: Tematske študije)<sup>36</sup> migrants are mentioned numerous times as one of the vulnerable groups, but there are no systematic representations of their surveyed skills. In the survey, for example, literacy skills, mathematical skills and the skills of problem solving (including teamwork) were measured, a question migration background was included, but the data cross analysing the migration background and the skills are not represented in the 570-page report.

Similarly, the NCNA (“New Challenges - New Answers: ECVET-based competence validation and labour market inclusion model for migrants and refugees in Europe” 2016-2018) project’s aimed to support the essential step in the process of labour market integration, and was thus developing an ECVET-based model for the assessment, validation and recognition of informally acquired skills and competences on EQF levels 2 to 3 in four labour market sectors with a high demand in Europe: metal, wood, construction, and tourism.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.zsss.si/projekti/integracijski-paket/>.

<sup>35</sup> PIAAC Slovenia: <http://piaac.acs.si/en/>.

<sup>36</sup> Javrh, Petra (ed.) (2018): Poročilo o raziskavi: Spretnosti odraslih PIAAC 2001: Tematske študije. Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije. See: [https://pismenost.acs.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Porocilo-o-raziskavi\\_Spretnosti\\_odraslih\\_PIAAC\\_2016\\_Tematske\\_studije\\_2017-1.pdf](https://pismenost.acs.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Porocilo-o-raziskavi_Spretnosti_odraslih_PIAAC_2016_Tematske_studije_2017-1.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> New Challenges, new answers: <https://www.ncna.eu/index.php/en/index.html>.

Additionally, on the national level there are “National professional qualifications” which can be obtained in two ways: 1.) at the end of educational path or 2.) through the certification procedure under the National Professional Qualifications Act (ZNPk)<sup>38</sup> through contractors. “National professional qualifications can be obtained for those professions that are adopted by the minister responsible for labour on the proposal of the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education.<sup>39</sup> However, this is an official Certification for obtaining a national professional qualification and does not survey the skills and competencies on a systematic way per se.

No evidence of skills assessment initiatives was reported in **Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia**.

### ***(Potential) Contribution of migrants to the labour market***

Considering the lack of unified, constant information on skills level it is quite difficult to give a clear evidence-based answer regarding the **potential contribution of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees to state and regional labour markets**.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, for instance, the contribution of migrants to the labour market cannot be assessed because of the existing legislation that prevents them to work before 9 months after they filed their asylum application.

In **Croatia**, it was assessed that the skills of migrants could be extremely useful to achieve national economic goals. At the time of reporting, the peak of the tourist season, there was for example a great need for labour in this sector: maids, assistant chefs and assistant waiters were most in demand. In addition to that, there is a strong demand for labour in construction and health care throughout the year.

In **Greece**, circumstantial evidence from small projects shows that migrants and refugee skills can cover up for deficiencies of the local labour force.<sup>40</sup> As one of the interviewees pointed out “in several occasions in our project, employers were amazed with the abilities of the refugees in the program to follow and improve production line”.<sup>41</sup> However, in order to move away from labour demanding sectors such as seasonal agricultural work that has been absorbing the largest part of migrant labour, more detailed information is needed.

In **Italy**, the growing interest towards the economic integration of the refugee and asylum seeker population is going hand in hand with the broader recognition of its potential impact on the local economy. The strategic importance of diversifying human resources to achieve economic goals and to face emerging challenges connected to a globalised economy is more and more acknowledged. On this regard, two recent reports on the opportunities provided by employees with a migratory background have highlighted the numerous added values of hiring a foreigner.<sup>42</sup> First of all, the diversification of the linguistic and cultural competences offered by migrant employees seems strategic for the

---

<sup>38</sup> National Professional Qualifications Act: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO1626>.

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.si teme/pridobivanje-nacionalnih-poklicnih-kvalifikacij/>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.intersos.gr/en/small-scale-integration-project/>.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Th. Tr. Date of interview 10/5/2021.

<sup>42</sup> Di Mauro, ‘Includere e Valorizzare le Competenze dei Migranti. Training Toolkit sul Diversity Management.’; Gnone et al., ‘Guida alle imprese per l’inserimento lavorativo dei rifugiati’.



development and the growth of the marketing sector and of external relations. Indeed, the availability of employees belonging to different cultural contexts and familiar with different languages and customs can help the company to expand its market to other national and/or cultural contexts.

In addition to this, both reports highlight that refugees and migrants, who often lived and worked in other countries, present a “global mindset” that enables them to be more flexible, open-minded, and creative. Their different experiences can, furthermore, enrich the capacity of the company to find innovative solutions to emerging problems. For this reason, the report from Fondazione ISMU recommends the valorisation of these employees especially in the sectors of innovation and management.<sup>43</sup> Finally, the report from the Tent project, which deals specifically on refugees, highlights the value of individuals who went through long trips, surviving difficult situations: because of the experience endured, they bring a new enthusiasm in the working environment, they are loyal to the employers and bring new energies and experiences in the team. This report also points out how investing in the reception and integration of refugees is an economically advantageous activity.<sup>44</sup>

It has been also highlighted, though, that, because of a series of reasons, it remains challenging to recognise all the competences of the refugees. As noticed also by the officer from the Grameen Foundation, the recognition of the university titles is essential for ensuring the valorisation of the refugees' technical qualifications. The lack of this recognition is still leading many refugees to accept lower qualified jobs, when they could be hired for higher positions. The importance of developing tools for the recognition of the soft job skills of the refugees and their valorisation in the private sector has been also stressed. The latter has also the potential to cover emerging gaps in the Italian labour market and to favour the diversification of products. On this regard, one officer from Brindisi noticed that in their region (Puglia) refugees have demonstrated specific skills in the sectors of agriculture and craftsmanship, which are both strategic within the regional economic context and help face the issue of the increasing lack of specific skills. For this reason, Puglia Region has successfully implemented initiatives aimed at promoting refugees' skills in this fields: for instance, farmers from Central and North Africa have been integrated into new businesses of high-quality agriculture.<sup>45</sup>

The case of **Serbia** is similar to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Also here, the lack of data on the national and regional labour market and the difficulties for asylum seekers to access working permits prevent the individuation of the skills that could contribute to economic performances. According to the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, among asylum seekers and refugees, out of 45 labour active persons, 29 are employed with regular incomes while 17 are unemployed. Employed people work in IT, HoReCa sectors, NGOs and as manual workers.

In **Slovenia**, the issue continually raised, beside the main challenge of (official) language barrier, is the recognition of qualifications, especially for migrants as refugees and other

---

<sup>43</sup> Di Mauro, 'Includere e Valorizzare le Competenze dei Migranti. Training Toolkit sul Diversity Management.'

<sup>44</sup> Gnone et al., 'Guida alle imprese per l'inserimento lavorativo dei rifugiati'.

<sup>45</sup> Municipality of Brindisi, technical assistance, online interview, 31/05/2021.

persons with international protection, who come into the country without documentation on their education and qualifications and who, a lot of times, gained their skills through informal education. On the other side, foreign labour is constantly deployed to cover the shortage of the Slovenian labour market (work permits for people from Ex-Yugoslavia, especially Bosna and Herzegovina and Serbia). This highlights the importance that the inclusion of refugees in the labour market may have for Slovenian economic goals.

### ***Gaps in the labour market of the ADRION countries***

Despite the situation described above, ADRION societies do need to fill gaps in certain economic sectors.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, according to the Labour market research made by Federal Employment Office there is a lack of skilled labour in the sectors of processing industry (43%), trade (22%), IT and communication (7%) and construction (7%).<sup>46</sup>

As mentioned also before, there is a strong demand in the construction, touristic and health care sectors on the **Croatian** labour market, also due to the recent robust emigration of Croatian citizens abroad.<sup>47</sup>

According to OECD and to the European centre for the development of vocational training (CEDEFOP), skills mismatch in **Greece** is extremely high. The ESI, a metric created by the CEDEFOP in order to provide an overall assessment of the EU's skills system, places Greece as second-last.<sup>48</sup> The metric is composed of three indicators: skills development, measuring the output of the educational system in terms of acquired skills, skills activation, measuring the extent to which the available skills are active and used in the labour market, and skills matching, measuring the degree of effective utilization of the skills of the workforce.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, lack of skills in Greece is a problem with 4 dimensions: lack of basic skills, lack of technical skills, lack of soft skills and lack of skills for specific occupations.

The lack of basic skills is an important aspect of the issue. Underachievement in basic skills remains high and is heavily affected by the socio-economic background of students. PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2018 shows that the share of low achievers among 15-years-old remains among the highest in the EU, having increased since 2009 in all three fields, namely reading, mathematics and science.<sup>50</sup> As a consequence, many upper secondary students lack basic skills. This fact explains in part that most of

---

<sup>46</sup> See for example [http://www.fzzz.ba/ckFinderFiles/files/Istrazivanje%20trzista%20rada%20BiH%20-%20WEB%20V2\\_compressed.pdf](http://www.fzzz.ba/ckFinderFiles/files/Istrazivanje%20trzista%20rada%20BiH%20-%20WEB%20V2_compressed.pdf) (p. 50).

<sup>47</sup> See for example: <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/eng/Areas/Croatia/There-s-an-urgent-need-for-foreign-labour-in-Croatia-191714>.

<sup>48</sup> CEDEFOP (2020), *Greece Skills Forecast 2020*, <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/greece-2020-skills-forecast>.

<sup>49</sup> Manpowergroup (2019), *2018 talent shortage survey*, [https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/Talent%20Shortage%202019/2019\\_TSS\\_Infographic-Greece.pdf](https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/Talent%20Shortage%202019/2019_TSS_Infographic-Greece.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> OECD (2020), *Education Policy Outlook Greece 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Greece-2020.pdf>.

employers report difficulties in filling jobs and it is an important issue for the growth of the Greek economy as, according to CEDEFOP, a greater percentage compared to the EU average of this job growth will be about jobs that need low qualifications (17% to 11%). Relative to the EU-27 average qualification mix, Greece is expected to continue to have a lower share of medium qualified and a higher share of lower qualified. Moreover, medium level occupations such as service workers and shop and market sales workers, as well as plant and machine operators and assemblers and craft and related trades workers, are expected to show higher levels of hiring difficulties in the forecast. For all those low-level and medium level occupations lack of basic skills is crucial for the productivity.

The lack of technical skills in Greece is a result of the low attractiveness of vocational education and training.<sup>51</sup> In a survey conducted by SEV (Hellenic Federation of Enterprises) in 2019,<sup>52</sup> 46% of employers report lack of technical skills and difficulties in filling job positions of technicians, expert craftsmen and mechanical machinery operators. In accordance with the above-mentioned survey, Manpowergroup survey reports as the hardest skills to find for the job positions of technicians (quality controllers, technical staff, etc.), engineering (chemical, electrical, civil, mechanical), sales and marketing (sales representatives, managers, graphic designers), IT cybersecurity experts, network administrators, technical support, etc. According to CEDEFOP, Medium level occupations such as service workers and shop and market sales workers, as well as plant and machine operators and assemblers and craft and related trades workers, are expected to show higher levels of hiring difficulties in the forecast. Moreover, this trend is expected to grow as currently the percentage of students that opts for vocational education is low and the forecast for growth of technical expertise is high. For example, CEDEFOP forecasts that there will be a growing need in Greece for assemblers - occupations in this group include mechanical machinery assemblers and electrical and electronic equipment assemblers, etc. as well as ICT operations professionals and user support technicians.

Regarding the soft skills gap in the Greek labour market, according to Manpowergroup survey, the most difficult to find are the following: Leadership & Social Influence (58%), Initiative taking (51%), Creativity & Originality (49%) and Critical Thinking & Analysis (48%). This survey is in accordance with OECD database of skills needs in Greece as adults lack significantly behind the EU average, as well as the OECD countries average, in the basic skill of critical thinking, in all social skills but particularly in social perceptiveness.<sup>53</sup>

Although there is a debate over the lack of skills, particularly in relationship with high unemployment levels and especial youth unemployment, there are few policies and initiatives to address the challenge of lack of skills through reforms of basic education, technical education and higher education and overall, the level of effort from

---

<sup>51</sup> OECD (2020), Education Policy Outlook Greece 2020, OECD Publishing, Paris:  
<https://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-greece-2020.pdf>.

<sup>52</sup> Available at:

[https://www.sev.org.gr/Uploads/Documents/52350/2019.9.18\\_MEMO\\_EREVNA\\_SEV\\_DEXIOTITES.pdf](https://www.sev.org.gr/Uploads/Documents/52350/2019.9.18_MEMO_EREVNA_SEV_DEXIOTITES.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> OECD statistical dataset: skill needs - national statistics:

[https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SKILLS\\_2018\\_TOTAL#](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=SKILLS_2018_TOTAL#) . Note: regional statistics are not available for Greece.

governments to improve the educational system is low and the outcome is poor, as reflected in the reports of OECD during the last years. The level of effort of the Greek government is disproportional to the magnitude of the challenge.

In **Italy**, the national labour market is characterised by a growing demand for professions in the field of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In 2019, the largest part of the labour demand concentrates in the Northern regions, with about 50% in North-West area and the 26% in North-East area. The 20% is from Central regions, while about 6% of the job vacancies refer to Southern regions of Italy.<sup>54</sup> This is indicative of a significant North-South divide in levels of technology in industry and services sectors.

In addition to the polarised labour demand in the Northern regions, the current challenge concerns the skill gap on the supply side of the market, both in hard and soft competencies. In Italy, only one third of ICT graduates from secondary education enrolls in the university, despite the high placement offered by the courses. The evidence is confirmed by recent educational attainment statistics from Eurostat that place Italy in the bottom part of EU rankings with the lowest number of university graduates together with Romania. According to the Observatory on Digital Skills (2019),<sup>55</sup> although in recent years the number of ICT graduates increased, the “mismatch” remains high, calling for a deep reform of education system.<sup>56</sup>

The issue is at the heart of the political agenda as the fourth industrial revolution, also known as “Industry 4.0” or “4IR”, is strictly related to the developments of ICT competences. Indeed, the new wave of manufacturing and production processes are based upon the adoption of automation, digital technologies, big data and the Internet of Things (IoT). Closing the gap is crucial for future economic prospects and for social progress as well.

Regarding the hiring of non-EU citizens, recent findings from the “MILE” project indicate as main barriers in Italy the complex and frequently changing rules and procedures for the eligibility for work.<sup>57</sup> The same applies to obtain or renew the visa, but also to find a house or a general practitioner. Language skills and the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad are indicated as main barriers by the companies interviewed during the project. In addition, other companies state the need to ease the acquisition of information about migrants' eligibility and skills, organisations that facilitate the matching between demand and offer of labour, and specific training for migrants. Finally, some organisations

---

<sup>54</sup> [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/posto-assicurato-o-quasi-i-laureati-digitali-ma-cresce-skill-gap-ACNxau6?refresh\\_ce=1](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/posto-assicurato-o-quasi-i-laureati-digitali-ma-cresce-skill-gap-ACNxau6?refresh_ce=1).

<sup>55</sup> Osservatorio delle competenze digitali 2019. Available at: [https://competenzedigitali.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Osservatorio\\_CompетенzeDigitali\\_2019.pdf](https://competenzedigitali.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Osservatorio_CompетенzeDigitali_2019.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> See also “Cedefop (2020). Skills forecast 2020: Italy. Cedefop skills forecast” available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/italy2020-skills-forecast>.

<sup>57</sup> MILE - Migrants Integration in the Labour Market in Europe, ‘Voices of European Employers: Challenges and Benefits of the Inclusion of Migrants in the Labor Market. Evidence from Italy, Austria, Greece and Spain’, July 2019, [https://welforum.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/D2.1\\_Research\\_DEF\\_unit0-min.pdf](https://welforum.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/D2.1_Research_DEF_unit0-min.pdf).

underline the need for more investment for vocational and language training, as well as for cultural integration.

In **Serbia**, The Law on National Qualifications Framework in Serbia was adopted in April 2018 ("Official Gazette of RS" no. 27/2018 of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2018, 6<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> January 2020). Following that law, Sector Skills Councils have been established in several fields.<sup>58</sup> Sector profiles have been created as an analytical foundation of relevant and updated data on social economy status and perspectives of the sectors, offer and demand of qualifications, indicating the directions of future labour development changes. However, sector profiles contain data from the past years, ending in 2015. More recent data on labour market are available within the Analysis of the fastest-growing jobs in the ICT sector and the Analysis of the fastest-growing jobs in the Agribusiness sector, which look at the match between the workforce needed by these sectors and that supplied by Serbia's education system. In both cases, the workforce demand and supply are analysed individually, by interpreting data obtained from relevant state institutions, as well as data collected through a survey and interviews with major companies.

Information and Communications Technology has been the fastest growing sector in Serbia in the past three years, providing a basis for the growth of its digital economy. The sustained increase in demand for ICT products and services (primarily in the domain of software development), by other sectors of the economy, as well as by individuals and households, enabled not only the creation of new jobs and occupations, but also the transformation of traditional ones. The conclusion of the analysis is that in upgrading secondary and higher education curricula, special attention must be given to identified ICT sector recruitment needs. The major share of surveyed ICT companies is anticipating an increase in the demand for ICT products and services in the forthcoming period. The ICT sector has a sizeable segment of demand for occupations that are not strictly related to this sector's core activity, specifically human resources management, legal affairs, marketing and similar. This fact points to the need for introducing multidisciplinary tracks and curricula (primarily at university level) to create workforce with qualifications profiles, as well as undergraduate work placements as mandatory during the course of studies. In fact, according to the companies' opinion, presently there is no connection between the business sector, i.e. the practical needs of ICT sector companies, and the skills students acquire at college. A work placement programme can offer the opportunity to familiarize with new technologies and software applications and acquire skills to apply these through practical assignments in ICT companies.

As for the Agribusiness sector, almost two-thirds of the surveyed companies reported having difficulties in recruiting adequate candidates for the job. A 76% share of surveyed companies reported skills gaps among workers hired to perform jobs with a complexity

---

<sup>58</sup> These fields are: Social Sciences, Journalism and Information, Health and Social Welfare, Industrial Development, Information and Communication Technologies, Electrical Engineering, Automatics and Electronics; Education, Other Services, Agriculture, Food Production, Forestry, Fishery and Veterinary, Business Administration, Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Statistics, Transport and Transportation Services, Trade, Hospitality and Tourism, Arts and Humanities.

level that requires completed secondary school or further specialization, of which the biggest share reported skills gaps related to specific job-related requirements. Companies rated the lack of work experience as the second biggest issue hampering the smooth performance of work-related activities, while lack of soft skills related to the workers' social capabilities for teamwork, for communicating with the rest of the staff or buyers, and similar, was ranked third. Gaps in soft skills, as well as those strictly related to the technical characteristics of the job, have a relatively similar share of around 25% across surveyed companies. Much greater gaps in professional and technical skills in jobs employing workers with completed secondary school indicate a greater mismatch between the knowledge students acquire in secondary schools and the knowledge actually required in practice. The surveyed companies indicate that the lack of functional practical training in a large share of educational profiles in secondary schools is one of the major skills gaps they have to deal with. In these regards, around half of the surveyed companies reported that newly hired workers are always or often referred to further training. Yet, this has also to do with the employers' practice of hiring workers who are not formally trained for the jobs they perform in the company. This is certainly the case with companies in the agribusiness sector, as 57% of the companies in the sample reported they hired workers whose formal education does not necessarily correspond to the job in which they are hired.

In addition to existing workforce needs, the companies were invited to provide their projections concerning the future demand for certain occupations. Around 40% of surveyed companies stated that they envisaged a significant increase in the demand for certain occupations: almost 30% of them emphasized that the growing automation and mechanization of production processes imposes the need for mechatronics engineers with predominantly a high level of knowledge in automation, mechanics and electronics, in combination with knowledge of food technology basics. Another occupation that is expected to register a growth in demand is that of technologist, with a focus on food or fruit and vegetable production, depending on the company type. Other occupations that will be sought after in the future include plant protection engineer, environmental protection engineer, along with a couple of simple occupations such as butcher, driver and shift manager. Finally, some gaps are determined by the fact that, according to the companies, the best, most qualified and most experienced workers are leaving for working abroad.

Lack of specific skills in the national/regional labour market in **Slovenia** are primarily identified through the shortage evidenced by the Employment service of Republic of Slovenia, where they have the evidence of which occupations are needed the most. This is then also the basis to issue work permit for foreigners.<sup>59</sup> There are also identified "shortage occupations"; the deficit areas and educational programs are determined by the Scholarship Policy (2020-2024), adopted by the Government of the Republic of

---

<sup>59</sup> Especially with Bosnia and Herzegovina (from 2013) and Serbia (from 2019), there are bilateral agreement. The agreement determines the conditions of employment of BiH citizens and procedures for issuing work permits, but does not include the right to reside in Slovenia.

Slovenia. Scholarships for shortage occupation<sup>60</sup> are intended to encourage young people to enrol in educational programmes for occupations for which there is a recognised shortage since there is a lack of workforce in the labour market for these occupations. For 2021, the set of deficient professions includes (and consequently the Scholarships in the following areas and educational programs have been published): stonemason, mechatronic operator, mechanical installation installer, metal designer - toolmaker, electrician, vehicle body repairer, baker, confectioner/ candy maker, butcher, upholsterer, carpenter, bricklayer/mason, plumber, tinsmith/sheet-metal worker-roofer, drywall builder, painter and decorator, potter-layer of ceramic tiles, forester, chimney sweep, glassworker, glassmaking technician.<sup>61</sup>

### ***Access to education programmes for asylum seekers and refugees***

Within this framework, in which we have surveyed the labour market needs in the ADRION area as well as the skills of incoming asylum seekers and refugees (and the few information we have about that), it is also relevant to consider if and how these target groups can access education programmes. Education is in fact a powerful resource that can benefit both immigrants and society by increasing skills, knowledge, employment opportunities and not last territorial development. Let us have a brief tour of all concerned countries. Although data and definitions used across Europe do not allow for direct comparisons, we have found evidence in all involved countries that asylum seekers and refugees have access to education programmes, either as a right or obligation under state legislation<sup>62</sup>. Below we report some specifications for each country.

As for **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, asylum seekers and refugees can access education programs. They can attend elementary and secondary school in local language. In Una-Sana Canton (USC), more than 100 refugee and migrant children started attending four schools (two in Bihać and two in Cazin) with the support of UNICEF and Save the Children and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Classes are provided by teachers trained in the "HEART" methodology by Save the Children. A UNHCR representative told us that the Agency will do profiling of asylum seekers in September 2021 in order to make a list of needed education programmes,<sup>63</sup> which will be held in Education Center of the Employment Office of Bihać. Last year UNDP implemented a project through which human capacities of the Employment Office of Bihać were increased and needed equipment purchased.

---

<sup>60</sup> One of the main aims is "the possibility of employment in areas where foreigners are traditionally employed". See: <https://www.srips-rs.si/stipendije/deficitarne>.

<sup>61</sup> In bilingual educational programs (Hungarian), the set is as follows: mechatronic operator, mechanical technician, chemical technician and economic technician.

<sup>62</sup> On the point of comparability, see for example: <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/09/Access-to-education-europe-19.pdf>.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with a UNHCR officer in Bihać. Date of interview 21/06/2021.

In **Croatia**, the children of immigrants, asylum-seekers, foreigners under temporary protection and foreigners under subsidiary protection have the right to primary and secondary education<sup>64</sup>. If asylum-seekers' children do not know or do not have a sufficient ability in the Croatian language, they attend pre-enrolment language classes in the school that they are assigned to. Recognition of foreign qualifications for continuing education or entering the labour market is also intended to ease integration. It is carried out by the Agency for VET and Adult Education, as well as Education and Teacher Training Agency and schools. It is quite common, due to valid reasons, that refugees do not have the necessary documents to prove their skills and knowledge; assessment of their prior learning is necessary. Croatian legislation and practice recognise that lack of documents alone cannot be the only ground for refusal to recognise foreign qualifications. Steps have also been taken towards education and professional training of teachers to help them support the learners with an immigrant background. "Special attention was paid to citizenship education, projects and collaboration with non-government organisations to ensure intercultural education and for human and citizenship values. EU funds will be used to support migrants with better services and education staff with better training, with a common goal of better and more efficient integration of migrants in Croatian society"<sup>65</sup>.

The main effort of the **Greek** state towards refugee education has been towards the inclusion of refugee children in the formal education system. The International Protection Act (IPA)<sup>66</sup> frames education as a right and an obligation on children seeking asylum in Greece, adding that children that do not enrol on or attend classes because they do not wish to join the education system shall face reduction of material reception conditions, while parents shall face the same sanctions applicable to Greek citizens.

Institutionally, the attempt to extend basic education to refugee children began in 2016, when the Ministry of Education took specific measures for that purpose following the containment of thousands of refugees after the closure of the "Balkan route". A specific framework, drawn through a combination of old and new legislation and regulations in the form of Joint Ministerial Decisions (*Κοινές Υπουργικές Αποφάσεις*, ΚΥΑ), specifically targeted refugee children starting a transitional plan for the school year 2016-2017 and a full plan for the year 2017-2018.

The education system for refugee children contains three features:

**Kindergarten** inside Reception and Identification Camps (in the islands) and mainland camps;

**Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (*Δομές Υποδοχής για την Εκπαίδευση Προσφύγων*, DYEP)** to prepare children living in Reception and Identification Centres

---

<sup>64</sup> See the Act on International and Temporary Protection, accessible here: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e8044fd2.html>.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/sv/news-and-press/news/croatia-education-better-immigrant-integration>.

<sup>66</sup> L 4636/2019, Gov. Gazette A' 169/1.11.2019.



(RIC) and mainland camps for regular classes. DYEP consist of afternoon classes on the premises of primary and secondary public schools;

**Reception Classes (Τάξεις Υποδοχής, TY) within Educational Priority Zones (Ζώνες Εκπαιδευτικής Προτεραιότητας, ZEP)** addressing children who lack the necessary Greek language skills to fully integrate into the education system without additional support. In the ZEP, students follow the mainstream curriculum alongside Greek peers in morning classes, and take 3 hours of preparatory classes focusing on the Greek language. ZEP are divided into ZEP I (no or basic knowledge of Greek) and ZEP II (moderate knowledge of Greek) courses.

The framework is supplemented by the appointment of Refugee Education Coordinators (Συντονιστές Εκπαίδευσης Προσφύγων, SEP) who act as a bridge between the education system and refugee families residing in RIC, mainland camps and urban areas.

Intercultural education experts highlight that the establishment of DYEP has created a “segregated school for a particular number of students”. They also note that in many cases ZEP have been transformed into a segregated system in practice.<sup>67</sup>

As far as adult education is concerned, there are the following:

The Centers for Migrant Integration (Στα Κέντρα Ένταξης Μεταναστών - Κ.Ε.Μ.), which are run by local municipalities. There are taught mainly Greek language courses and there are 11 such centres scattered around the country<sup>68</sup>

Integration educational Centers through project HELIOS (run by IOM). They offer Greek language courses and work oriented skills.<sup>69</sup>

Centers for Life Long Education (ΚΕΔΙΒΙΜ) where a variety of courses are offered, however not specifically targeted to refugees.<sup>70</sup>

Several NGOs that offer mainly Greek language courses from beginners to advanced, but in some cases also courses oriented to skills intended for the labour market.<sup>71</sup>

In Italy, the legislation provides that all children up to the age of 16, both nationals and foreigners, have the right and the obligation to take part in the education system. This provision extends also to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children of asylum seekers. As for upper education, the International Telematic University “UNINETTUNO” introduced the “University for Refugees - Education without Boundaries” to let refugees

---

<sup>67</sup> <https://rsaegean.org/en/excluded-and-segregated-the-vanishing-education-of-refugee-children-in-greece>.

<sup>68</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/mathimata-ellinikis-glossas/>, <https://www.accmr.gr/en/services/service/>.

<sup>69</sup> <https://greece.iom.int/en/hellenic-integration-support-beneficiaries-international-protection-helios>

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.inedivim.gr/en>.

<sup>71</sup> Some examples are: <https://www.gcr.gr/en/pyxida-multicultural-center-en>; <https://g2red.org/>; <https://caritas.gr/en/intervention-en/economic-integration/>; <https://habibi.works/>; an example of vocational courses offered, <https://www.solidaritynow.org/blue-refugee-center/>.

and immigrants access the university from different countries worldwide. This tool allow access to degree, master's and vocational training courses through the recognition of their educational qualifications and previous professional competences. Courses are offered in five different languages (Italian, French, English, Arab, Greek). In the same vein, the University of Bologna and the Municipality of Bologna promoted the “Unibo for Refugees” project, a specific programme for the integration of refugee students that allows the enrolment to different teaching programmes and single learning courses. Asylum seekers with the necessary qualifications can benefit from a wide support including introductory Italian courses with exemption from fees, scholarships and catering services. In addition, following this experience, the University of Bologna has recently launched the “Educational Interpreting project”, a service offered in different departments to ensure an inclusive accessibility to education. At this stage, the pilot project provides interpreting services in English language for different courses within the department of management and political science. Similar initiatives have been implemented at different levels within Italian university institutions. Eleven universities together with the UN refugee agency UNHCR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other organizations launched in 2018 “University corridors” to give refugee students the opportunity of continuing to pursue their studies in Italy. The project, called University Corridors for Refugees (UNI-CO-RE), involves the universities of L'Aquila, Bologna, Cagliari, Florence, Milan, Padua, Perugia, Pisa, Sassari, as well as “luav” in Venice and “Luiss” in Rome.

In **Serbia**, a person granted asylum is entitled to preschool, primary, secondary and higher education under the same conditions as citizens of Serbia. It is also important to highlight that primary school is free and mandatory, and that underage asylum seekers are to be ensured access to education immediately, and no later than three months from the date of asylum application. Secondary education is also free of charge, but is not prescribed as mandatory. The Integration Decree foresees assistance by the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations to persons recognised as refugees in entering the educational system. The Commissariat is to assist recognised refugees who are children and enrolled in pre-school, elementary and high-school education, as well as illiterate adults, who are to be enlisted in adult literacy programmes in cooperation with the Ministry of Education.

The assistance provided to children includes provision of textbooks and education material, assistance in having foreign degrees recognised, learning support and financial support for engaging in extracurricular activities. The Professional Instruction on the Inclusion of Refugee/Asylum Seeker Students in the Education System of Serbia further regulates access to education for refugee children. If the refugee children have proof of prior education, the enrolment is made according to their age and level of education completed. On the other hand, if they do not have any proof of prior education, the enrolment is based on a test which has an aim to assess the level of their knowledge. For each student, the school is required to develop a Support Plan that should include the adaptation and stress management programme, the intensive Serbian language programme, individualised teaching activities programme, and the extracurricular activities programme.

“The Integration Decree also foresees Serbian language courses and courses of Serbian history, culture and constitutional order for persons recognized as refugees. Persons entitled to Serbian language courses are those who do not attend regular schools in Serbia, those who do, and persons older than 65. Persons not attending regular schools are entitled to 300 school periods of Serbian languages classes during a single school year, while those engaging in businesses requiring university education may be provided with another 100 periods in a school year. Persons attending school have the right to be provided an additional 140 school periods of Serbian language classes, whereas those above 65 are provided with 200 school periods of the Serbian language adapted to the needs of everyday communications. The courses may be provided at regular or foreign language schools, whereas the adapted Serbian language classes may likewise be provided by enterprises suggesting a suitable programme and capable of employing the required staff. The classes are to be provided in the area where these persons reside, and if this is not possible, transport costs are to be covered by the Commissariat. The Commissariat is to enlist the person in question in a Serbian language course within two months from the decision to grant asylum becoming final. If the person does not attend the courses without good cause, they lose the right to new or additional language classes.”<sup>72</sup>

The **Slovenian** Government office for the support and integration of migrants, Sector for integration, declares that “all persons with international protection are provided with assistance to achieve a level of independence through active participation, which enables them to be fully integrated into life and work in our country. After obtaining the status, the individual or family is assigned an integration consultant, who acquaints them with all the necessary information for the fastest possible integration and prepares a personal integration plan for them. The personal integration plan includes learning the Slovene language, learning about the culture, history and constitutional order of the Republic of Slovenia and other integration activities and may be amended or supplemented if necessary.”<sup>73</sup> Language courses are part of the “Initial integration of migrants” (*ZIP - Začetna integracija priseljencev*). The programme Initial Integration of Immigrants is a free programme for learning the Slovenian language, which also includes learning about Slovenian society. Third-country nationals are eligible to attend this course. Courses comprise 180 or 60 + 120 hours, depending on the residence permit the migrant has. The programmes of initial integration of immigrants are free of charge; the costs are covered by the Ministry of the Interior and the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). You cover your own travel expenses and the cost of learning aids and materials. Furthermore, on the webpage of the Government office for the support and integration of migrants, Sector for integration, it continues “persons with international protection are equal to the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia in exercising their rights in the fields of pre-school education, primary, secondary, higher education, higher education and adult education.” In any case, there are discrepancies between the declarative levels promoted

<sup>72</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/report-download\\_aida\\_sr\\_2016update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/report-download_aida_sr_2016update.pdf).

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.gov.si teme/sprejem-oskrba-in-nastanitev-prosilcev-za-mednarodno-zascito/>.

on official websites of government institutions and the implementation process as well as literally understanding of “equal rights” instead of applying equity.

According to the Government office for the support and integration of migrants, Sector for reception and support, “applicants for international protection shall be granted the right to primary education in accordance with the regulations governing compulsory primary education no later than three months from the date of the application. They are guaranteed access to education in vocational and secondary schools and access to higher education, higher education and adult education under the conditions that apply to citizens of the Republic of Slovenia. They are also guaranteed participation in Slovenian language courses.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***Information society and digital literacy***

The REInSER team finds strategic underlining also the linkage between digitalization of the ADRIAN societies and opportunities in this field for asylum seekers. For this purpose, we looked at the level of digitalization in each country, the opportunities offered to asylum seekers in this sector and the potentialities of investing in digitalisation both for the economic development of the region and the integration of asylum seekers.

The first dataset investigated with this purpose is the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020, which monitors the level of digitalisation in EU Member States, measuring five main dimensions in this field: connectivity, human capital, use of internet, integration of digital technology and digital public services. If we look at the general ranking that take into consideration all these dimensions, it is immediately evident that all ADRIAN countries that are EU Members are below EU average, some ranking at the very bottom. Respectively, Slovenia ranks 16<sup>th</sup>, Croatia 20<sup>th</sup>, Italy 25<sup>th</sup> and Greece 27<sup>th</sup>. These data already show the foremost importance of investing in this sector, in order to increase the competitiveness of the region.

If we look to the individual countries, lack of relevant infrastructure for quick and reliable access to the internet is one of the biggest problems in **Greece**. For example, only one in five households has access to very high-capacity networks (VHCNs - fibre and cable technologies) and Greece is the poorest performer on VHCN coverage (7%) with no coverage to rural areas. The absence of rural VHCN coverage demonstrates the regional disparities in digital opportunities. Also, Greece ranks last in percentage of households with a fixed broadband subscription of at least 100 Mbps, and it offers the most expensive prices at broadband (converged fixed and mobile offers). Regarding digital skills, according to Eurostat (ICT users), the percentage of the population in Greece that has basic or above basic skills in 2019 is 51% close to the average 56% in the European Union. However, Greece lacks behind in advanced skills and development as, only a small percentage of its population possesses skills that eventually would allow them to work in and develop the digital economy. Moreover, Greece has the second highest percentage of people who never used the internet in the EU. In e-commerce (i.e. SMEs selling online,

---

<sup>74</sup> <https://www.gov.si/teme/sprejem-oskrba-in-nastanitev-prosilcev-za-mednarodno-zascito/>.

e-commerce turnover and selling online cross-border), as well, Greece performs one of the worst scores in the EU, and the percentage of enterprises in Greece that apply digitization processes is the lowest in the EU. Finally, Greece has not taken advantage of digital technologies, so far, in order to fully establish effective an e-government that will increase transparency and openness. As a consequence, Greece has the second lowest score in the EU in this dimension.

The category in which **Italy** ranks the lowest is Human Capital. Here, Italy ranks last in the EU, revealing its deficiencies especially in terms of digital literacy: only 42% of people aged 16-74 years have at least basic digital skills (58% in the EU) and only 22% have above basic digital skills (33% in the EU). Furthermore, the percentage of ICT specialists in Italy is still below the EU average (3.9%) and only 1% of Italian graduates are ICT graduates (the lowest in the EU).<sup>75</sup> In the other dimensions, Italy ranks higher positions but always below EU's average. Progresses have been registered in the fields of connectivity and digitalisation of public services and it is noticeable the fact that in the terms of 5G preparedness, Italy ranks among the best countries. Nevertheless, the unsatisfactory results in terms of digital literacy challenge the effective use of the emerging technologies in this field. In this context, all interviewees, who have expressed an opinion on this issue, agreed that digitalisation is a very important goal and that not enough has been done to achieve satisfactory levels of digital literacy both among Italian citizens and the migrant population. According to the officers from Brindisi and Emilia Romagna, the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has made even more evident the existing issues in this field and the urgency of promoting initiatives aimed at filling the gap. Furthermore, they noticed how the results obtained in the recent digitalisation of the public services risk being neutralised by the high number of people unable to access them.<sup>76</sup>

**Slovenia** has improved its score in all five dimensions which DESI Index measures, but advanced in ranking only in the integration of digital technology dimension. Namely, in the human capital dimension, the score has risen from 46.3 to 48.3 and is now close to the EU average score of 49.3. While the score in the use of internet also risen from 49.8 to 51.7, Slovenia continues to lag behind the EU average score of 58.0. While in the connectivity dimension Slovenia has improved its score from 48,6 to 50,2 it is now just above the EU average score of 50.1 and has lost several ranks. Slovenia improved its score in the integration of digital technology from 39.1 to 40.9 and ranks now very close to the average EU score of 41.4. Slovenia also improved the score in the digital public services dimension substantially from 64.5 to 70.8 just slightly below the EU average score of 72.0. Regarding the digital literacy, the last official available data<sup>77</sup> show that in 2015, 26% of people aged 16-74 in Slovenia had very well-developed e-skills (in the EU-28: 28%); basic

<sup>75</sup> 'Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2020. Italy'.

<sup>76</sup> Region Emilia Romagna, Services for Social Policies and Immigration, online interview, 01/06/2021; Municipality of Brindisi, technical assistance, online interview, 31/05/2021; Grameen Foundation, written interview, 31/05/2021.

<sup>77</sup> Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2016): E-veščine in digitalna ekonomija. See: <https://www.stat.si/dokument/8922/e-VESCINE.pdf>.

e-skills had 25% (in the EU-28: 27%), e-skills were deficiently mastered by 21% (in the EU-28: 23%), and 28% of these persons were without e-skills EU-28: 22%).

Digitalization in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina cannot be measured in comparison to EU countries of the ADRIAN region, since they are not included in the DESI Index. Nevertheless, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia provides some interesting data on this country: 19.8% individuals never used a computer, while the number of computer users increased by 2%, 3.1% and 6.4% when compared with 2019, 2018 and 2017; 74.3% of households in the Republic of Serbia have a computer, which is an increase of 1.2% and 2.2% in relation to 2019 and 2018, respectively. The percentage of computers in households varies depending on the territory: in Belgrade it amounts to 91.5%, in Vojvodina to 66.8%, in Šumadija i Zapadna Srbija to 68.6% and in Južna i Istočna Srbija to 71.2%. The differences are visible when comparing the availability of computers in urban and other parts of Serbia: 81.6% versus 61.8%. In relation to 2019, this gap has slightly increased, which is backed up by growth rates of computer availability in urban and other parts of Serbia. The growth rate in the urban parts of Serbia is 2.1%, while decrease of 0.3% is recorded in the other parts of Serbia, relative to 2019. Furthermore, 81% of households have an Internet connection, which is an increase of 0.9% and 8.1% relative to 2019 and 2018, respectively. The highest percentage of Internet connection was observed in Belgrade, amounting to 94.1%. In Vojvodina it amounts to 75.3%, in Šumadija i Zapadna Srbija to 77.5% and in Južna i Istočna Srbija to 77.3%. Broadband Internet connection can be found in 80.8% of households which is an increase of 1.2% and 8.3% relative to 2019, and 2018, respectively. The percentage of this type of Internet connection is the highest in Belgrade, 93.9%, in Vojvodina, 74.7%, in Šumadija i Zapadna Srbija, 77.5% and in Južna i Istočna Srbija, 77.3%. The survey indicates that 37.0% of Internet population use Internet services instead of personal contacts or visiting public institution or public authorities.

Despite the general poor results of the region in terms of digitalisation, the opportunities of investing in this sector are numerous. For instance, in **Bosnia and Herzegovina** IT has an advantage over other branches of industry on several grounds: in terms of job quality and high salaries (50% higher than the average salary), the fact that it is not a significant importer, that it produces “environmentally friendly products”, it records the fastest growth exports, revenues and employees, requires less initial investment to create and develop and create new jobs. Strong growth of IT companies has caused an increase in demand for software engineers, which has become one of the most sought-after occupations in the labour market and there is almost no unemployment of computer and information engineers in BiH. In 2019, out of the total number of companies in the IT sector, 75.2% generate revenue of up to half a million KM<sup>78</sup>, 20.7% of companies up to 5 million KM, and 4.1% of companies more than 5 million KM. The number of workers in the IT sector has grown significantly and amounts to 1,569 or 35% in the last three years.

---

<sup>78</sup> 1 Bosnian KM = 1.95583 Euro, <https://www.bbi.ba/en/kursna-lista-i-kalkulator>.

Also the **Slovenian** ICT sector is slowly growing. Namely, according to Zupan (2014),<sup>79</sup> there were 5,676 companies in the ICT sector in 2012, and similar to the international level majority (96%) of it consisted of service subsector. Data obtained by the *Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia*<sup>80</sup> show that between 2005 and 2016, the share of enterprises in the ICT service subsector increased by 188%. Within this sector, the share of enterprises in computer programming, consulting and other related activities increased by 230%. Additionally, according to the latest data available by the *Statistical office of the Republic of Slovenia*<sup>81</sup> in 2019, the ICT sector was comprised of 8,776 enterprises, 3% more than in the previous year. These ICT sector enterprises represented 5.9% of all enterprises active predominantly in market activities. The number of enterprises active in the ICT manufacturing sector decreased in comparison with 2018 by 3% and in the service ICT sector increased by the same share. The number of enterprises increased the most, i.e. by 5%, in 2019 in activity Data processing, hosting and related activities, web portals (J63.1) and for the same share in the activity Wholesale of information and communication equipment (G46.5). The same data from the Statistical Office of The Republic of Slovenia show that in 2019, the Slovenian ICT sector employed 28,965 persons, which is 4% more than in the previous year (in 2018 the share increased by 5%). The persons employed in the ICT sector represented 4.3% of all persons employed in all enterprises active in predominantly market activities. 12% of all persons employed in the ICT sector were employed in the ICT manufacturing sector and 88% in the service ICT sector. In comparison with the previous year, the number of persons employed increased by 1% in the ICT manufacturing sector and by 5% in the service ICT sector.

When it comes to **digitalisation and refugees and asylum seekers' integration**, in most of the countries no information was found, highlighting the almost total lack of investments in this specific field. Nevertheless, when this topic was touched, all interviewees agreed on the importance of the IT sector also for the integration of refugees. In **Italy**, for instance, the topic of the digital literacy is considered very relevant also for the integration process. This not only because digitalisation represents an opportunity for economic integration and growth - especially in a country, such as Italy, where there is lack of specific digital skills in the labour market - but also to ensure the survival of all other activities. For instance, the officer from Emilia-Romagna Region has highlighted that during the pandemic many migrant associations have lost contacts with the coordinating platforms because of the incapacity to use digital technologies and, probably, stopped completely their activities. For this reason, the region is now promoting a series of training activities aimed at improving the digital skills of migrant associations and intercultural mediators.<sup>82</sup> Finally, digitalisation is considered also to support those refugees who are getting familiar with the services offered by Italian institutions and organisations. ICT can indeed provide useful tools to facilitate the still difficult access to

<sup>79</sup> Zupan, Gregor (2014): Sektor informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije v Sloveniji. Uporabna informatika, 4, XXII.

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/News/Index/7527>.

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/news/Index/9084>.

<sup>82</sup> Region Emilia Romagna, Services for Social Policies and Immigration, online interview, 01/06/2021.

the services. An example is the juma map developed by UNHCR, which provides a map where to find all services dedicated to refugees and migrants, accessible with any digital device.<sup>83</sup> Similar considerations were raised in **Greece**, where the development of an e-government is seen as an opportunity to integrate refugees and asylum seekers and a means to protect and support their human rights by providing information about processes and requirements.

### 3. Main economic challenges

A comparative overview of the economic challenges in ADRION area reveals two main facts. First, in general, the overall performance varies consistently across countries, although they share similar critical issues regarding the barriers to entrepreneurship. These include common institutional weaknesses hindering the development of a healthy business-environment. Then, access to finance, lack of information and business support appears as further common aspects, among the others. However, looking at the regional disaggregation the analysis reveals that the significant structural disparities play an important role in explaining the overall country performance. Not surprisingly, this applies especially for Italy and Greece, where the implications of the wide regional heterogeneity are a long-standing concern in the European regional development policies. Second, the integration approach of refugees and asylum seekers in ADRION countries differ considerably, as well as the level of policy development. The Italian approach, characterised by a higher level of overall integration and policy development, differs from Slovenia, Serbia, Greece, and Croatia, constituting a cluster with the same approach but with different level of policy development. Information for Bosnia-Herzegovina do not allow a full comparison, at least at this stage of analysis.

Regarding the inclusive entrepreneurship policies and programmes, within the framework of EU 2020 Strategy, the support for the entrepreneurship of migrants is a specific commitment.<sup>84</sup> However, specific national programmes targeted to asylum seekers and refugees seem to be rather limited and fragmented across countries, except for projects implemented within “The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund” (AMIF), while a variety of initiatives have been identified in Slovenia. In addition, social entrepreneurship is not widespread similarly across ADRION countries. In Italy, social enterprises have a longer tradition, while in Slovenia and Greece this form of legal entity is a recent phenomenon with the number of social entrepreneurs rapidly increasing in the last decade. Finally, is worth noting how a common definition of social enterprises across countries is still missing.

---

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.jumamap.it/map/>.

<sup>84</sup> See European Commission (2013). Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan. Reigniting the entrepreneurial spirit in Europe. COM(2012) 795 final.



***The environment for business and entrepreneurship and its barriers in ADRION countries.***

In Slovenia, according to GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor) report about 48% of people perceive promising business opportunities in their environment.<sup>85</sup> This share has been steadily increasing: 20.5% in 2015, then 25.3% in 2016 and 34.60% in 2017 and 42.17% in 2018. Slovenia is on the scale. The data also show that 54.33% of people are convinced of the ease of starting their own company (significantly more than in 2018, when this value was 39.2%), which is the European average (53.59%). In the last few years, Slovenia has seen a strong increase in the social acceptance of entrepreneurship, as in 2016 this share was only 63.9%, and in 2019 a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship was expressed by 76.7% of the population of our country (Rebernik et al. 2019). Self-confidence in entrepreneurial capacity is also growing, representing the proportion of individuals who believe they have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience for entrepreneurship, perceive business opportunities in the environment and are afraid of failure would not distract from the entrepreneurial path. In 2019, 49.6% of individuals trusted their entrepreneurial capabilities, while in 2016 only 37.6%. Although in 2019 authors noticed increased self-confidence in entrepreneurial capabilities and greater social acceptance of entrepreneurship in Slovenia compared to the previous year, in the later stages of the entrepreneurial process this improvement was unfortunately not detected. Regarding the factors influencing how difficult or how easy it is to set up a new business and successfully run it into an established business, a study by Rebernik et al. (ibid.) showed that the highest average score (on a scale from 1 to 10) in 2019 among all framework conditions in Slovenia was recorded by the *physical infrastructure required for the operation of companies*, which achieved a score of 7.06. This is followed by the *dynamism of the internal market, government programs for entrepreneurship and business and professional infrastructure*. Compared to the previous year, five framework conditions have slightly improved, according to experts. The biggest deterioration compared to 2018 is recorded in *entrepreneurship education and training after high school* (vocational education, colleges, business schools, etc.). The framework conditions for entrepreneurship, which are the lowest rated in Slovenia, continue to remain the same as for several years; these are *education for entrepreneurship at primary and secondary level, government policies in the field of regulation* (non-stimulating taxes and regulations and bureaucratic barriers), *insufficiently stimulating cultural and social norms for entrepreneurship, weak support for government policies and insufficient transfer of research and development*. The authors of the study (ibid.) also offer NECI index (national entrepreneurship context index) which provides an assessment of the environment for entrepreneurship in the national economy and confirms the influential importance of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in promoting entrepreneurship, facilitating the creation of new businesses and the transition of start-ups to established ones. Especially because innovative entrepreneurship with high added value is possible promote only through a quality business ecosystem that requires interconnected and coordinated

---

<sup>85</sup> Rebernik et al. (2019) A Variety of Entrepreneurial Motives.

actors operating in a legally, morally and ethically regulated national framework. According to Rebernik et al. (2019) in 2015, entrepreneurial activity in Slovenia was most laden by governmental policies and prevailing cultural and social norms. The latter are not favourable to individuals who want to establish or develop a company. Important inhibitor factors were also (in)prevalence and (in)equality of education, training and weak financial support for entrepreneurship. Excessive taxes and unstimulating tax legislation are most often mentioned as the biggest deterrents in government policy, followed by bureaucratic hurdles and over-regulation in all areas and non-transparent and insufficiently flexible legislation. At this point it is important to mention that in 2007 came into force Supportive Environment for Entrepreneurship Act,<sup>86</sup> whose main purpose was improvement of the availability and access to financial resources, strengthening of the financial market in Slovenia and stimulating private and other sources of financing for investments in the corporate sector, especially for the provision of start-up and venture capital. The law also determined the regulation of the procedure for allocating funds and sets the legal basis for the establishment of implementing institutions. Likewise, it defined the business environment, which represents the promotion of entrepreneurship, the elimination of administrative barriers and the improvement of companies' access to information and services. In 2015 was adopted *Amending the Supportive Environment for Entrepreneurship Act* which lays down measures to promote entrepreneurship and organization in this field, as well as procedures for allocating funds intended for the creation of a supportive environment for entrepreneurship. At the bottom line it can be said that the entrepreneurship legislative framework is well arranged, but there is still no satisfactory social consensus on the importance of entrepreneurship and its role for economic growth and social development.

In **Italy**, the level of development of the business and entrepreneurial ecosystem, as measured by Global Entrepreneurship Index (GEI), is far below top countries and below the EU average. However, the index increased significantly in the recent years, indicating first encouraging signs of a catch-up process with European best performers. In 2019 Italy is among the top 10 biggest gains in GEI score globally. Despite the promising overall performance, the sub-index "Entrepreneurial Abilities" is still reason for major concerns, representing the weakest area with very low scores in the pillars "Human Capital" and "Competition". Other weaknesses relate to "High Growth" pillar, measuring entrepreneurial aspirations in terms of high growth potential and business strategy sophistication, and to the potential "Opportunity Perception" by considering the state of property rights and the regulatory burden that could limit the real exploitation of the recognized entrepreneurial opportunity. It is worth noting that "Cultural Support" pillar, expressing how a country's inhabitants view entrepreneurship as work choice and how the level of corruption affects this view, decreased by about 15% in the last decade (for further details see GEI report 2018 and 2019). In general, the "fear of failure" that prevent from starting a business is more likely to be declared as a barrier by Italians compared to other EU countries. In the period 2013-2017, it has been cited as a barrier to business creation

---

<sup>86</sup> Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 102/07, <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO5073>.

by the 57.4%, compared to the 46.2% of EU average (OECD 2018).<sup>87</sup> Youth are as likely as adults to cite “fear of failure” as a barrier to start-up. Evidence from interviews with stakeholders added further interesting details about migrants and refugees interested in entrepreneurial activities. According to UNHCR officers, for non-EU citizens access to general information is undoubtedly one of the main barriers to entrepreneurship in Italy. In addition, the variety of regional legislations does not facilitate the mobility among regions of migrants/refugees, as very often procedures and requirements vary across regions, while the *red-tape* in general further hinder the integration process. Finally, they underline how the poor language skills of Italians can be a significant barrier in this process.

In **Greece**, according to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), the 69.5% of population (18-64 years) agrees with the statement that most people in the country consider starting a business as a desirable career choice.<sup>88</sup> This is the second highest percentage in the EU, slightly below those of countries with entrepreneurial mind-set tradition like the UK (69.6%) and the US (70.30%), and above the global average (68.5%). Those results align with our perception that entrepreneurship is a feasible and desirable work choice in Greece. However, setting up a business and succeeding in it is not an easy task in Greece. For at least the last two decades, the primary barriers to entrepreneurship in the Greek market have been bureaucracy, the taxation system, corruption, and the labour market. According to the World Bank’s “Doing Business” index, in 2010, Greece was at 109<sup>th</sup> place out of 183 economies, far below any other Eurozone economy. Nowadays, the business environment in Greece has improved as the country has implemented several reforms for a more business-friendly environment, during the decade, as part of its commitment to European Commission, International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Stability Mechanism bailout packages. Consequently, according to the World Bank’s “Doing Business” index, Greece ranks 79<sup>th</sup> out of 190 in ease of doing business and 11<sup>th</sup> in starting a business. Moreover, according to the data from the Heritage Foundation’s Index of Economic Freedom, Greece’s economic freedom score is 60.9, making its economy the 96<sup>th</sup> freest in the 2021 Index. Its overall score has increased by 1.0 point, primarily because of an improvement in judicial effectiveness. Greece is ranked 44<sup>th</sup> among 45 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is below the regional and world averages, but this is a significant improvement as Greece’s economy has returned to the ranks of the moderately free for the first time in a decade. However, according to the same index there are still significant challenges in excessive government spending, in the weakness of rule-of-law institutions, in public and private corruption, and financial and investment freedom.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, entrepreneurship aspirations are positive, but there are problems with structural issues such as ease of forming a company, although important regulatory simplifications (for example in property registration) are still needed. Establishing a business in BiH can be a time-consuming process. According to the World

---

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/ITALY-IE-Country-Note-2018.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.gemconsortium.org/>.

Bank (2019), registering a business can take around 80 days to complete. Given the complex administrative set-up, it is not surprising the legal and regulatory framework of BiH reflects this situation. There are also the other obstacles: 1. Access to finance is very challenging and acts as a significant barrier to both innovation and entrepreneurship. There is a particular need for access to affordable seed capital. This is similar to the challenge being addressed by some of the rural micro-finance programs in Asia. 2. Connection to markets outside BiH and the Western Balkans region is challenging for new entrepreneurs. 3. There is a considerable amount of energy and effort already being injected, but significant scope for improving the skills of entrepreneurial teams. 4. The trading channels and payment methods accepted suggest our entrepreneurs are using basic business models, almost entirely face-to-face and strongly cash-based. 5. Three quarters of all businesses in the survey supplied larger organisations, which may be accounted by the very large public-sector base.

In **Croatia**, the quality of the entrepreneurial environment it is of poor quality.<sup>89</sup> What is particularly striking are: government policies and openness markets, i.e. barriers to entry. The longevity of market barrier problems is linked to assessments of government policies according to the speed and ease of regulatory functioning by which Croatia is the worst among EU countries that participated in the GEM survey during that seven-year period. Also, according to Doing Business data for 2018, which provides in-depth insight into ranking of business climate, Croatia is on the 58th place out of 190 countries included in the ranking. However, what is devastating is that Croatia has fallen by 7 compared to the previous report places.

In Serbia, issues range from securing initial financing and the financial sustainability of a business, through an overregulated and unpredictable business environment, disloyal competition, lack of institutional protection, to lack of information. Problem can be often found in the lack experience, capital and a proven track record -the essential elements for starting and running a viable business. The three most difficult obstacle are: access to finance; fiscal and para-fiscal system; and lack of information, skills and mentorship. Moreover, people with innovative and internationally oriented businesses are faced with outdated business environment which hampers their growth. They face severe issues with on-line payments, outdated laws and procedures, institutional persistence on the use of stamp, VAT refund delays, among others.<sup>90</sup>

### ***Entrepreneurship as inclusive way for asylum seekers and refugees in ADRION countries.***

In **Slovenia**, refugee integration into the labour market in general remains a challenge. Slovenia is primarily considered a transit country with relatively few refugees and asylum

---

<sup>89</sup> Evidence from Global Entrepreneurship Monitor in 2018 and presented in the following web article <https://uniri.hr/vijesti/sto-cini-hrvatsku-nepoduzetnickom-zemljom/>.

<sup>90</sup> Danijela Bobić, "Youth Entrepreneurship in Serbia", Center for Advanced Economic Studies, 2017. <http://odskoledoposla.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Mapping-barriers-to-youth-entrepreneurship.pdf>.

seekers, but nevertheless faces the challenge of introducing new measures to stimulate refugee integration into the labour market and into society generally. Language and cultural barriers, but also systemic obstacles - such as discrimination at the workplace, a lack of diversity management skills and a lack of mechanisms for recognition of education, qualifications and skills - hinder successful job search for refugees. Some of the changes could enhance their prospects, with focus on best practice examples of refugees already in employment and employers that train or employ them, but also examples of successful entrepreneurs among refugees. No support is currently being provided for self-employment or (social entrepreneurship) but may be a suitable solution for some refugees. Counselling on small grants is needed to enable them to engage in self-employment. Tailored subsidies could address this problem. Incentives should be directed at building small businesses that not only create wealth for individuals but also deliver social goods and promote local integration of refugees. This could be an opportunity for the less developed, peripheral areas/regions, with possibilities to find ways to create economic development opportunities for refugees and the local population. Targeted incentives for creating economic growth through small business development could generate economic development and increase the capacity of the local community to continue hosting refugees. Considering that economic factors are very important in refugee integration, it makes sense to invest more in programmes that support refugee economic viability. Refugees' business support organizations/incubators could be a model for the development of their businesses and to assist the labour market integration through offering support to (social) entrepreneurship. It is important to outline the key role of three stakeholders: 1) Government/public authorities and administration should be providing adequate and targeted financial incentives that would enable refugees support by the principle of "one stop shop". 2) (Social) Enterprises and business support organizations could be sharing experiences and specific knowledge also for refugees, defining measures and actions to be implemented, supporting other social economy enterprises through mentorship programmes, sharing best practices and knowledge, raising awareness of the community members of the importance of entrepreneurship. 3) NGO representatives are important as the organizations working on the field and having first-hand experience about the needs and problems faced by refugee population. In this manner they offer valuable experience for establishing connections between refugees, GOs and (social) entrepreneurs.

In **Italy**, results of the first set of interviews indicate entrepreneurship as a solution to address the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Public officers from regional and local governments, international cooperation experts, no-profit organizations officers, and social economy experts generally agreed on this point, each providing personal comments and sharing direct experience. In Italy, several initiatives have been implemented through national or local funds, or through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) set up by European Commission for the period 2014-2020. According to the direct experience of UNHCR officers, AMIF support for migrants entrepreneurship in Italy employed many resources with very low impact and low sustainability over time. Italian evidence seems to reveal that long term migrants and

refugees, with at least one or two years of experience in the hosting country, have higher probability to be successful in their own businesses compared to newcomers. However, although this can be partly related to the identified barriers to entrepreneurship, individual characteristics and specific factors of the business environment concur to the explanation, requiring therefore in-depth investigation of the phenomenon of migrants' mobility and business attitude. At the same time, in Emilia Romagna the AMIF support for specific actions aimed at improving digital literacy of migrants has had high impact on recipients, including many local associations and the network of migrants reception. Officers from Emilia Romagna region also raised an interesting racial issue concerning a regional initiative supporting the entrepreneurship of migrants with a strong adverse reaction from local entrepreneurs.

In **Greece**, with the business environment becoming friendlier, migrants and refugees could take advantage and thrive as entrepreneurs. Legally, there is no barrier; non-EU legal residents in Greece have legal access to the labour market and general support measures. Indeed, since 2014, the residence permit for dependent employment, and the permit for independent work have been combined into one. Therefore, Greece ranks the highest score (100/100) in access to self-employment for refugees and migrants in the Migrant Integration Policy Index. According to the experience of the UNHCR in Ecuador, supporting refugees to create their small businesses could promote the local integration of thousands of refugees but also generate economic development opportunities for the host population. However, migrants and refugees may need support to start up and sustain their businesses as their knowledge of the host-country language, regulation and business environment is limited.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, although entrepreneurship could be used as a way to include asylum seekers in our country, migrants cannot get employed or start a company according to the Law on Asylum. Asylum seekers can get employed nine months after applying for asylum, if their status is not approved or denied sooner by the relevant authorities.

**Croatia**: no relevant information provided regarding the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees.

In **Serbia**, the establishment of a new company is always investment. Depending on their financial status some of the asylum seekers may see start-up as an option. However, in the integration challenges for 2019, the Republic of Serbia the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration has stated the following: "The Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection stipulates that the Republic of Serbia enables the naturalization of refugees. This is the obligation that the Republic of Serbia has undertaken by acceding to the Convention on the Status of Refugees, which envisages that the signatory states, with minimal costs, enable the assimilation and naturalization of refugees in the shortest possible time to the maximum extent. However, due to the unclear legal framework, asylum seekers cannot apply for citizenship". This situation may or may not influence asylum seekers' decision on starting a business in Serbia.

***Programmes and policies promoting entrepreneurship for asylum seekers and refugees and their pros and cons in ADRION countries.***

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Serbia** no programmes promoting entrepreneurship for asylum seekers and refugees have been implemented.

In **Slovenia**, the Employment Service has been running a program for several years now called *On-the-job training for unemployed persons with international protection*. Beneficiaries of international protection participate in job training. For this purpose, a bilingual dictionary with the most common words encountered in the workplace was introduced in Slovenian and the native language of the participant. So far refugees have participated in such job training in the fields of construction, marketing and metallurgy, as well as in NGOs, restaurants and retail. The other program implemented by the state we identified is *"Promoting the employability, education and social inclusion of migrant workers and their families"*, which was implemented during the period 2009-2015. The goal of this program was to increase equality of employment opportunities for migrant workers, improve their social inclusion and economic independence, reduce social dumping and violations of workers' rights. During the period 2010-2013, Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia in collaboration with the NGO Slovene Philanthropy implemented the project *Integration package for unemployed migrants, refugees and asylum seekers*. The aim was to contribute towards higher access to employment and training for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers providing basic educational programmes. Likewise, a list of competencies for national occupation qualification was established - "guardian of the rights of vulnerable groups", which was proposed for formal approval by the Vocational Training Center. During the project was also promoted the certificate of multiculturalism and corporate social responsibility, based on indicators such as the openness of the company to the multinational staff. AMIF project *BEST - Boosting entrepreneurial skills as tool of integration of migrants to labour markets* which ends in July 2021. The project through an interactive and supportive learning environment enables migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to discover their potentials and face the challenges of (self) employment. During the project was organized free course with the purpose to encourage participants to take an active approach to the labour market, to get acquainted with various forms of employment and tax legislation and present the advantages and disadvantages of various forms of employment. INTERREG project *SEE ME IN* (duration 2019 - 2021) aims to help entrepreneurs with a migrant background to overcome specific challenges regarding inclusion and skill shortages. To this end, during the project a hub will be established to support their entrepreneurial activities and to create supportive environment to empower migrant businesses. The solutions will be tailored to the specificities of each partner country and selected sectors. Likewise, project collaborators are developing a modular and flexible platform that will offer key tools for management, business processes, and marketing and communication. Another INTERREG project was *Urban Diversity* (duration 2017-2020) whose aim was to connect migrant entrepreneurs and their families from Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Graz (Austria) through creativity and thus

promote diversity in both cities. To that end during the project were developed transnational communication platforms and creative environments that encourage cooperation between migrant entrepreneurs, creatives, local authorities, and residents of both cities. All project activities paid special attention to promoting political, economic and social equality of migrant entrepreneurs and their active involvement in all spheres of social life and creative production, with special emphasis on education and the acquisition of special skills, knowledge, new business ties and opportunities. In the period 2018-2019, Zavod Globa, an NGOs working mainly with migrant population implemented project titled *Cultural heritage - a rich way to enter the labour market*.<sup>91</sup> The purpose was to strengthen the cultural competencies of migrants, refugees or asylum seekers based on their cultural heritage and consequently contribute to their greater employability and employment. On the one hand such approach allows migrants to enter the labour market directly and prevents them from slipping into poverty or social exclusion. On the other hand, it gives general public opportunity to be in positive and direct contact with people of diverse cultures, which can dispel stereotypes, prejudices and create knowledgeable and tolerant individuals from the wider society who are more inclined to social inclusion of people from diverse cultures. However, as demonstrated, in Slovenia a few programs organized by NGOs or as piloting activities in different projects can be identified. But the major problem is that these institutions and organizations are not sufficiently supported in their activities and their interventions are not sustainable due to lack of the constant (financial) support of the state, which means, when the project ends the program ends as well. And on the other hand, there is a lack of state programs for promotion of entrepreneurship for asylum seekers and refugees, especially action-oriented programs.

In **Italy**, inclusive entrepreneurship policies and programmes aim to guarantee equal opportunity to create a sustainable business. To this aim, initiatives include improvements in legal and regulatory advice, easy access to finance, or instruments to build and develop entrepreneurial skills, and strengthen entrepreneurial culture and networks. Within the framework of EU 2020 Strategy, the support for the entrepreneurship of migrants is a specific commitment (see the Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2020). However, although asylum seekers and refugees are key targets, these categories seem to be rather limited in the national programmes in Italy, together with people with disabilities and seniors (OECD 2018).<sup>92</sup> According to the recent evidence of the SAME project, despite a wide range of initiatives promoted by central and local government institutions, third-sectors organisations, or trade-unions and trade associations, Italy seems to lack a coherent and targeted framework for migrants' employability when compared to EU countries. Therefore, it is complex to draw a coherent picture. Generally, "CNA World" is identified as a successful practice in securing effective legal and regulatory advice for migrants. Within the Italian National Confederation of Crafts and Small and Medium Enterprises (CAN), CNA World aims at supporting migrants that intend to become or are already entrepreneurs. Since 2009, it has been offering, through a permanent helpdesk, personal

---

<sup>91</sup> Zavod Global: <https://zavodglobal.org/kulturna-dediscina-bogata-pot-za-vstop-na-trg-dela-1/>.

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/smes/ITALY-IE-Country-Note-2018.pdf>.



support scheme and tailor-made legal and regulatory advice.<sup>31</sup> Key success factors concern the tailor-made approach and the group business training. On the other hand, mentoring is the less widespread service, while training and assistance services are not provided in foreign language. On the side of financial initiatives, “Rete-microcredito” is created by European Microfinance Network and targeted to youth and immigrants. It supports both social and entrepreneurial initiatives with micro-credit and supporting services. However, the initiative is extremely differentiated among Italian regions and no evaluation of its impact is available yet. The evidence is mixed with some research highlighting a slow take-up of micro-credit products and an unequal distribution across regions. Finally, in addition to micro-credit, public procurement instruments supported the entrepreneurship of vulnerable groups, although its development and effectiveness seems limited due to low trade mark-ups and risk of corruption crimes (OECD 2018).

In **Greece**, since 2015, there have been various programs that promote entrepreneurship for refugees and asylum seekers in Greece founded and operated by visionary individuals and NGOs. To our best knowledge, there has been no such program offered by the state. The main challenge for the sustainability of those programs is that there are fragmented, small-scale initiatives, inherently short term as most of them are funded by EU programs or private donations. A good example is the Changemakers Lab initiative, founded in 2015 at Plomari, Lesbos by a Greek expat in South Africa, Vassili Sofiadeli and funded by various EU programs and private donations. Changemakers Lab supports locals, refugees and social entrepreneurs to develop their skills, co-create sustainable businesses and attract foreign direct investment, stimulating local economic development, job creation opportunities and integration on Lesbos. The large NGO “Solidarity Now” has accumulated a lot of experience in promoting refugees’ and migrants’ entrepreneurship. Those programs are funded from various sources; for example, with the support of the IRC (International Rescue Committee) “Solidarity Now” delivered business training workshops in Athens. As it is a large NGO, professionally run and structure, it has a dedicated fundraising department to ensure continuity of its programs. Moreover, it operates in Thessaloniki, the “Blue Refugee Center” supported by UNHCR and funded by the EU, that offers training and non-financial support to refugees to implement their entrepreneurial aspirations.

In **Croatia**, to promote the potential of immigrant entrepreneurship and identify barriers that hinder its development, CEPOR - SMEs and Entrepreneurship Policy Center organised a round table on immigrant entrepreneurship in early 2019. In this event, research and policy context of immigrant entrepreneurship in Croatia and the European Union were discussed, as well as immigrant that started entrepreneurial activity in Croatia. Immigrant entrepreneurs pointed out that, when setting up and developing their businesses in Croatia, they generally did not encounter institutional support from public administration at local and national level. Lack of official information in English is usually the first barrier, followed by insufficient knowledge of English of staff working in institutions important for starting a business in Croatia. In addition, in the case of non-EU residents, the required financial capital is another barrier when starting entrepreneurial activity, which is significantly higher than the minimum amount of share capital required when citizens of

the European Economic Area (EEA) start a company. According to Article 78 of the Foreigners Act, a third-country national is required to pay share capital in the amount of HRK 100.000 and employ three Croatian citizens as opposed to EEA citizens who establish and register a company under the same regulations as Croatian citizens. According to provisions of art. 389 par. 2 and art. 390 par. 2 of the Companies Act, the minimum amount of share capital for a Ltd. is HRK 20,000, and before entry in the court register, founder must pay at least a quarter of the assumed share capital, and the rest within one year from the date of company's entry in the court register.

## Policy recommendations

1. The analysis of the national legislations in regard to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the labour market has highlighted important differences within ADRION countries. The difficulties to access working permits for this group, especially in Western Balkan countries, can be considered as one of the reasons that pushes the majority of those who applied for asylum to leave the country before a decision on their case is taken, as highlighted in the Comparative STA report 1.1.2. On the other hand, as also shown in this report, the possibility to enter the local job market is essential for the economic integration of these individuals and can favour the economic growth of the entire region. In light of this considerations, the adoption of norms that favour the access of refugees and asylum seekers in the job market at an earlier stage of the integration process appears highly recommendable. The latter approach is also beneficial to avoid that asylum seekers and refugees, as vulnerable groups in the society, become recruited into criminal organisations.
2. The comparative overview of the main economic challenges reveals two main facts. In general, although the overall performance varies consistently across ADRION countries, they share similar critical issues regarding the barriers to entrepreneurship. An overall effort is highly recommended to tackle institutional weaknesses hindering the development of a healthy business-environment. In addition, regional specific policies facilitating access to finance and providing targeted business support may reveal crucial for the entrepreneurship development of SMEs.
3. In addition, a key issue to be addressed by policymakers - bearing in mind economic growth forecasts - is the lack of a qualified workforce, caused by the current demographic trends, which are gradually reducing the supply of labour, and

increasing emigration of qualified workers, especially tertiary education graduates. Measures are therefore needed to attract suitable workers from abroad, reinforcing workforce mobility, tackling legal barriers to employment and improving working conditions and salary level.

4. Another problematic issue emerged in this report is the mismatch between the skills young people acquire during their education and those sought by employers. The adoption of an appropriate system of skills needs anticipation for future human resources development is, therefore, recommendable. With this aim, the development of IT services aimed at systematically collect workforce skills to favour their meeting with market's necessities may prove beneficial.
5. In connection to the above recommendations, a boost on digitalisation is highly recommended. This report has highlighted how ADRION countries score very poorly in terms of digitalisation, while a broader use of IT technologies in every sector of society can boost innovation, economic growth and job creation. It appears, therefore, essential to invest more in this sector to reach EU standards and support the competitiveness of the region. Efforts have to be particularly spent on digital literacy and on the development of e-governments, which are both essential for strengthening digitalisation in general.
6. Digitalisation can certainly be a crucial tool also for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, who in turn can contribute to fill gaps in the labour market. However, in most of the countries we retrieved scarce policy attention as well as lack of investments in this field. At the same time, all our interviewees agreed on the importance of the IT sector, both for the integration of refugees and for territorial development. It is thus highly recommended to develop and fund specific programmes on these matters.
7. To favour economic integration, it is recommendable supporting the systematic regulation of private sector initiatives to facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market through various state mechanisms (incentives, subsidies). This could encourage employers to take measures to facilitate their integration into the labour market. Incentives to learn state language(s) in the workplace and measures to provide support/assistance with integration into the working and (also) local environment would be welcomed.
8. The improvement and broader use of the "EU skills Profile Tool for Third Countries Nationals" can be recommended to boost economic integration, innovation and growth. In fact, the analysis of the initiatives aimed at collecting refugees' skills to favour their integration in the job market highlights the lack of comprehensive national policies on this matter. This despite the fact that many stakeholders interviewed in this study claimed the necessity of developing such tools, not only to offer refugees with more job opportunities, but also to avoid the skills mismatch. Indeed, it has been noted that many skilled refugees end up accepting low skills jobs while their expertise could represent an added value in higher positions.
9. The implementation of state programs for promotion of entrepreneurship for asylum seekers and refugees (especially action-oriented programs) should follow a long-term approach, and not the short-term, project-based perspective currently

predominant. In most ADRION countries, the institutions and non-governmental organizations running projects targeting asylum seekers and refugees are not sufficiently supported in their activities, as they do not receive constant financial support of the state, which means that, when the project ends, the programme ends as well.