

EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Cyprus

1 INTRODUCTION

Are considered as citizens' initiatives all activities mobilising large numbers of volunteers (e.g. in workplaces, schools, local communities, etc.) to support immigrants' long-term integration and/or open up the public to integration matters and diversity. **These initiatives most notably involve people-to-people or mutual learning activities** matching migrants with mentors, peers or people volunteering their time or space. These initiatives may concern housing, mentoring, child or university-level education, extracurricular activities for children, lifelong learning, language learning, information provision, assistance with public services, translation, job preparation, awareness-raising/advocacy, etc.

Given EWSI's thematic focus, the emphasis is placed on citizens' initiatives focusing on long-term reception (e.g. during the asylum procedure) and integration (of beneficiaries of international protection and/or other categories of migrants), and not on the **initial front-line humanitarian reception for asylum-seekers** (e.g. food, clothing, shelter before entering the reception phase).

2 LONG-ESTABLISHED VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

Description of initiatives that have been running for several years.

In Cyprus, several established bodies and organisations offer volunteering activities to support migrant's integration:

Red Cross Cyprus

Due to its geographical location, Cyprus is one of the most accessible points of entry for migrants wanting to settle in Europe. In 2014- 2015, the [Cyprus Red Cross Society](#) (C.R.C.S.) has roughly helped 5000 migrants who faced serious humanitarian problems. Doctors with a variety of specialties volunteer for its medical scheme for example. CRCS also support multiple migrant protest events, in favour of an improvement of their living and labour conditions. As of 2013, it takes active part in the functioning of the Detention Center in Menogia, with the aim to cover the humanitarian needs and responds to the legitimate needs of detainees. [More activities for refugees](#)

Red Cross Cyprus also cooperate with other organisation within the framework for programmes. Together with the British Red Cross and other National organisations and ministries, it took part C.R.C.S. took part in the program "Positive Images" which prepared educational material for primary schools with the aim of encouraging children to adopt a more positive attitude towards migrants.

CARDET

Projects related to migration and integration conducted by the non-profit Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational are implemented with the help of volunteers:

- *Learning for Female African Migrants' Solidarity – LeFAMSol* focuses on creating a pool of human resources "Self-Help Desks" for several target groups including sex workers. It capitalises on ethnic networking to achieve a multiplier effect.
- *Meeting the health literacy needs of immigrant populations – MEET* aims at strengthening the recognition of diversity and multiculturalism and including migration-related competences in health care services, through the development of an innovative community health education model for social and health service providers.
- *Intercultural Mentoring tools to support migrant integration at school – INTO* promotes strategies and methods that help students with a migrant background at risk of Early School Leaving to maintain their motivation, through the development, testing and validation of an Intercultural Mentoring Programme based on the empowered peer education methodology.

Future Worlds Center

As a non-profit organization, which promotes the power of the emerging new technologies and the science of structured democratic dialogue to accelerate positive social change, [Future Worlds Center](#) (FWC) offers unpaid internships to people that are interested in working with marginalised social groups, including asylum seekers. Since 2006, it offers specialised support services to victims of torture, violence, and trafficking.

KISA

Established in 1998, KISA [strives for](#) an all-inclusive and multicultural society, free of racism, xenophobia and discrimination and where equality and individual rights are respected. With the help of volunteers and internships, the NGO operates a Migrant and Refugee Centre that provides free information, support, mediation services to ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees and victims of trafficking, racism, and discrimination. It also advocates for the integration, empowerment and self-organisation of migrants.

KISA is active member of European and international NGOs and networks such as the EIF (European Integration Forum), ENAR (European Network Against Racism), PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants), EAPN (European Antipoverty Network), EMHRN (Euro Mediterranean Human Rights Network), UNITED for Intercultural Action, Migreurope and FRA (Fundamental Rights Platform).

CARITAS- Cyprus

The Caritas Cyprus Migrant Centre is an autonomous entity of Caritas Cyprus composed of representatives of parishes working with migrants (Limassol, Nicosia, Larnaca and Paphos). The centre provides legal, social and administrative advice to migrant groups such as domestic & agricultural workers, asylum seekers and refugees, victims of trafficking, college students or spouses of Cypriot and EU nationals, throughout the island. Its advocacy activities aim at securing their basic needs. For both types of activities, volunteers are involved.

Intercultural Center - Nicosia

The “Intercultural Centre” is a program ran by the Nicosia Municipality Multifunctional Foundation. It offers various classes as well as counselling and guidance for adult immigrants, both EU Citizens and Third Country Nationals, residing in Nicosia municipal area. Founded in 2008 with the aim to provide quality social care services which support immigrants in terms of professional and social inclusion, the [centre](#) also operates as an internet café. Volunteers are welcome. [Read more](#)

Several other volunteering opportunities targeting young people are available at the [Youth for Exchange and Understanding Cyprus](#), the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) or the [Youth and Volunteering Programme](#).

3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS’ INITIATIVES

Description of major initiatives started only recently, particularly since the large numbers of refugee arrivals in 2015.

Since the large numbers of refugee arrivals in 2015, many citizens are acting as volunteers autonomously, without being members of any organisation. They are self-motivated and offer their support in various ways, including entertainment for young children and language lessons, mostly around the refugee facilities in Kokinotrimithia, Kofinou.

In addition, many of the long-standing organisations mentioned above, such are the [Red Cross](#) and [Caritas](#) offered their support to newcomers. Apart from humanitarian help (food and clothing), they also offered psychological support and guidance through administrative processes of integration. C.R.C.S. also responds immediately to requests to trace people who are lost because of migration and tries to reconnect families.

4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

Description and comparison of the profile of volunteers active in old versus new initiatives.

In Cyprus, the largest number of volunteers are the ones that belong to a specific organisation. In recent years, a small amount of volunteers started offering their help autonomously. These volunteers are driven by a self-motive to help and support people in need wherever they can and in ways that are possible for them. Most of the volunteers are people from the host community and a small number of them are immigrants.

5 INNOVATION ASPECT

Description and comparison of innovative or entrepreneurial aspects of the old versus new initiatives.

There is a direct involvement of people that are supporting migrants voluntarily. Conducted activities are related to their actual competencies. This support is in line with the needs of the different groups of migrants, e.g. children, women etc. as migrants are not considered as a uniform group of people but rather as a group where different groups have diverse needs.

6 ADDED VALUE

Description of the added value of such initiatives (both long-established and new), including the uniqueness of their activities compared to the existing practices of the (1) state and (2) NGOs.

People that are acting by themselves and become volunteers by free will are driven by a self-motive do not search for recognition. They offer their help voluntarily because they believe in solidarity. These people know their competences and their strong points and they offer their help in areas where they feel comfortable of doing so, for example teachers will provide immigrants with language lessons or students that have a talent in dancing or singing will provide entertaining activities.

7 IMPACT

Description and comparison of the impact of old versus new initiatives.

Volunteerism is a relatively new and limited form of activity in Cyprus. Therefore, no concrete conclusion on its can be drawn.