

EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Luxembourg

1 DEFINITION

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 a context of numerous arrivals of asylum seekers (2000+ in 2015: more than the double compared to the previous year), the reception initiatives are more visible than integration initiatives, as humanitarian activities are predominant. Spontaneous initiatives need a framework brought by existing NGO's, traditional humanitarian organisations as Caritas or Red Cross and more recently, the involvement (or come back) of ASTI, the Support Association for immigrant workers, in the field asylum. Those 3 structures use their professional know-how to mobilise and retain volunteers and deliver a logistic aid for autonomous initiatives. The government integration office OLAI provides a telephone helpline to dispatch volunteers and the National Lottery offered 12 million euros to finance all kind of initiatives in favour of asylum seekers and refugees.

Caritas and Red Cross have been working in the field of integration of asylum seekers for decades. ASTI invested in the refugee sector in the 90s following the war in former Yugoslavia. All three are part of the Luxembourgian Refugee Council, together with CLAE, Amnesty International, ACAT and ASTM.

1. **ASTI** (*Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés*)

Awareness-raising and advocacy for access to nationality, asylum and equal rights for migrants, as well as to influence the public opinion about migration issues, in concertation with other NGOs, trade unions and political parties. This work is based on volunteer engagement and is coordinated by the political spokesperson of ASTI. In order to be independent, this work is only supported by private donations.

In 1998, ASTI launched a service to help migrants with their paper work for several procedures including family reunification access to work market, etc. In 2014, the **information desk** offered support to 2,129 persons. 2 volunteers support the work of the social worker. This service is financed by private donations. With the recent large number of arrivals, the demand for such a support will likely increase.

Oral direct translation of conferences and civil meetings by non-professional translators.

As Luxembourg has 46% of non-Luxemburgish residents and 3 official languages, it is very difficult to choose a common language for conferences and civil meetings. ASTI offers a non-professional oral translation team for different languages and a mobile oral translation box which are mostly used by municipalities, NGOs and schools. No other structure offered such service. In 2014, there were 848 demands for this service which is financed by public funds. About 50 persons compose the team of oral translators.

ASTI launched Luxembourgish **conversation tables** and linguistic coach 'service' for foreigners to practise the language. Volunteers are available one or two times per week. A training course for volunteer is being prepared, based on existing courses in New Zealand. These activities are free of charges and do take place in café's, at premises of the NGO or according to participants' personal preferences. ASTI was the first structure to use this method in Luxembourg, but in the last months, similar actions are there are appearing throughout the country. Given the future large demand from newcomer asylum seekers or refugees, ASTI is promoting, through contact with the university and municipalities, the creation of more conversation tables for all 3 national languages: French, German and Luxembourgish.

In terms of education activities, ASTI uses the **Kon-lab Method** to teach languages to children between 3 and 9, for German, and 3 and 6, for Luxembourgish, since 2012. It has excellent results when it is used regularly (min. 10 minutes per day) with children having a mother tongue other than the one used in their country of residence. About 25 children currently benefit from this programme which is cited in the "*plan de réussite scolaire*". ASTI has a partnership with Dysphasie.lu which organises the training of the adults using this tool for language training with the children. Our program is supported by national funds.

Children's **self-evaluation method** for homework has been used at ASTI for more than 20 years for pupils aged between 6 and 12 years. The children have to fill in a self-evaluation sheet (at least 2 times per week) in order to estimate how they handle alone their home works. Besides, contracts are signed with both parents and children with predefined rights and duties for each partner. This method allows parents, especially those with little education, to understand the school system. In Luxembourg, ASTI is the only structure to use this method which is used for around 60 children per year. No partnership has been developed.

Since 2015, ASTI also runs a housing centre for asylum seekers in Mersch, financed by the government as a pilot project.

2. **Rroundtable (Ronnen Desch)**

initiated by the Cooperation and Development Platform (Cercle de Coopération) bringing together municipal and national politicians, NGO representatives, Unions, employers, sport and cultural organisations for information exchange.

The first round took place on 12 April 2016, with an attendance of around 60 people while the the second round held on 14 June 2016 gathered more than a hundred participants.

Ronnen Desch is run by volunteers and the core NGO's Red Cross, ASTI, Caritas and Amnesty. It is an

3. **Agence du bénévolat.**

This agency is facilitating volunteering by assisting, orienting and dispatching potential volunteers to existing structures, such as the ones below.

4. **Caritas**

offers information, counselling, (legal) assistance and orientation services to asylum seekers in their main languages. Recently an Arab assistance has been set up. Caritas organises the so called "passerelles classes" for young people over 16 who no longer are obliged to attend school, as well as Luxembourgian and French language courses. Caritas is in charge of a few housing structures for asylum seekers. In the little town of Wiltz, the NGO has been running for years a neighbourhood project to foster the integration of refugees. Caritas has always volunteers supporting its professional team. New volunteers joined Caritas in 2015, particularly those with a knowledge of Arabic.

5. **Red Cross**

runs a Migrant-Refugee Service and is in charge of the first reception Centre "Lily Uden in the city of Luxembourg and several housing structures for asylum seekers. Red cross has opened a new service : LISKO with 12 social workers aiming to help beneficiaries of international protection to integrate society

6. **The platform CLAE**

provides individual assistance as well as training programmes for immigrant's associations leaders. It also runs a major annual multicultural event: Festival of migrations, cultures and citizenship, as well as French language courses.

Within the framework of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), Clae, offers a professional information, referral and networking system for third-country nationals legally residing in Luxembourg and recognised refugees. With individual interviews, career plans are set up, people receive help with their CVs, cover letters and the recognition of their diplomas, and are provided with administrative information and referral to existing facilities. Thematic group workshops (on self-esteem, development of skills, etc.) are organised to provide tools to promote labour market integration and an active job search.

CLAE was founded in 1985 and is funded by government.

7. **Maison des Associations** (bringing together Spanish, African and Portuguese Federations) runs language courses and cultural activities like Millefeuilles. This is about presentations of literature pieces from all over the world brought by citizens coming from all parts of the world and in many languages.

3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

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

Multiple small initiative emerged in Luxembourg:

1. Students of the European school provide language courses to refugees.
2. In September 2015, the Catholic Church launched his initiative "[Reaching out](#)" after the archbishop's participation in public manifestation. 5 weeks later, 157 people showed their interest, 32 local contacts were established in the parishes, 5 teams established contacts in refugee centres, 40 people participated in a dedicated training for volunteers and money was collected.
3. Project [HARIKO](#) was launched in September 2016, this project brings young artists together in a former shopping centre. These artists offer cultural workshops. Among the beneficiaries", many asylum seekers. The project is run by Red Cross and many volunteers.

Online initiatives were particularly active:

1. Facebook page "Refugees Welcome to Luxembourg" This page was created on a private initiative to raise awareness for the cause of refugees in Luxembourg. It informed on different ways to support. It had 8997 followers. The young initiators called for clothes and got a huge response. The initiative stopped in October calling for a roundtable.
2. "[Mothers for Refugees](#)" has 3,000 + fans on Facebook will become a non-profit organisation.
3. "[We can help](#)": organised for instance a charity evening on 12 December 2015.
4. [Catch a smile](#): Young volunteers collect materials to bring to the camps in Greece and Italy
5. [I am not a refugee – Luxembourg](#). Meet & connect with the refugee and asylum seekers who get to speak their minds and share their stories.

The long-standing organisations allocated additional means to cope with the new arrivals:

1. Telephone helpline by OLAI, the government's reception agency,
2. The helpline receives about 50 calls a day. Interested citizens get a leaflet with an overview of volunteering offers. Volunteers must sign a charter.
3. OLAI organises information sessions, with the help of volunteers, in the municipalities where reception centres will be installed. CLAE and Maison des Associations orient volunteers to OLAI and other organisations working in the field.
4. ACAT found a new volunteer to represent ACAT in the Refugee Council.
5. Amnesty International opened a weekly assistance service for asylum seekers. The service is run by new volunteers.
6. On its website, Maison des Associations offers a great overview of the fields where volunteers can help.
7. ASTI trained 20 volunteers to mentor of 20 refugees. These volunteers and refugees come from all the parts of the country

Several one-shot events were organised:

1. 23.04.2015: Large Circle of Silence of 500 people among which many MP's and the archbishop
2. 16.06.2015: 200 citizens in front of the JAI Council at the European Convention Center
3. 08.09.2015: Spontaneous welcome in Weilerbach to a group of Syrians arriving through the EU relocation Scheme.
4. 16.12.2015: Concert Artists for refugees in the prestigious Philharmonie. Revenues were allocated to ASTI, Caritas and Red Cross.
5. 10.12.2015: Launch of the website linkingluxembourg.lu providing information on asylum to fight racism and xenophobia. The project was initiated by ASTI and the National Youth Service (SNJ).
6. 04.01.2016: Visit with asylum seeker of the Museum of Modern Art.
7. 31.01.2016: Meet and Greet at Harico where the business community exchanged ideas on how to facilitate the professional integration of refugees in Luxembourg.
8. 14.02.2016: On Valentine's day, asylum seekers distribute roses on the weekly market in the capital to thank nationals for the good welcome. An initiative of ASTI.

4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

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

“New” volunteers often lack of experience in the field. Collaboration with long-established organisations allows them to learn. Many are active in sport and culture. The Red Cross notes that the many non-nationals who volunteered are now joined by more nationals but also Arabic speakers and former asylum seekers having gained the status join the movement of volunteers. In addition, some companies assign staff members to help the Red Cross.

5 INNOVATION ASPECT

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

There is a significant increase in the number of volunteers for both the old and new initiatives. In contact with the new initiatives, long-standing organisations showed their capacity to adapt and launched new initiatives while new ones are becoming formal structures or joining existing organisations.

The real innovative aspect is the greater coordination (in a small country!) emerging from this situation. Usual migration actors collaborate with cultural structures, sport federations, unions, employers, public authorities.

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.

There might be a dynamisation of the existing initiatives, new volunteers bringing new ideas, particularly in the cultural field.

7 IMPACT

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

Thanks to the multiplicity of initiatives, the coverage of refugee crisis was in general positive.