

EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Slovenia

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.

[Nevidni delavci sveta](#) (IWW – Invisible workers of the world)

IWW, which also operates under the name 'Svet za vsakogar' (World for everybody), is an activist non-institutionalised citizens' initiative active in the squat Social Centre Rog (ex-bicycle factory) in Ljubljana since 2005. The initiative is inspired by similar social centres operating in Italy, Spain, Germany, etc. Activists organise events for the integration of migrants and asylum seekers but also offer the space for the latter to organise their activities: cooking sessions, meetings, language courses, parties, quality free time, etc. Approximately 10 Volunteers, in cooperation with other non-formal initiatives in Slovenia and elsewhere, work for approximately 50 beneficiaries.

Apart from IWW, there are no other more long-term citizens' initiative in Slovenia. Integration of migrants have usually been left to state organisations and programmes or NGO's. For example:

1. [Zavod Nur za kulturo, izobraževanje in usposabljanje](#) (Institute for culture, education and training)
Its mission is to increase the intercultural dialogue between Middle East countries and Slovenia. In cooperation with non-governmental organisations, individuals and businesses, it organises language courses, cooking classes, information sessions, etc.

Since its establishment, it also works with immigrants (mostly from Middle East), advising them and helping them develop their skills. The institute counts approximately 10 volunteers for approximately 30 beneficiaries. They cooperate with other non-formal initiatives in Slovenia and elsewhere.

2. Organisations of the Bosnian community in Slovenia (in Jesenice, Koper, Kranj, Ljubljana, Medvode). Their main activities are: advisory support to Bosnians living in Slovenia and assistance to labour market integration. Volunteers form a broad network of people who have different and sufficiently rich experience with employment, editing documents, searching for accommodation. Their cultural programmes put emphasis on the Bosnian culture, music and traditions. There are around 10 volunteers for 150 beneficiaries. They cooperate with other non-formal initiatives in Slovenia and elsewhere.
3. [Slovenian Philanthropy](#) is carrying out numerous activities for several target groups: applicants and beneficiaries of international protection, as well as young migrants. They offer psychosocial assistance and support, various activities for leisure, learning aids, guardianship for unaccompanied minors, and much more. There are around 10 volunteers for 250 beneficiaries. They cooperate with other non-formal initiatives in Slovenia and elsewhere.
4. [Association of Nigerians in Slovenia](#) has been operating since 2005. It was established with the main aim to promote intercultural dialogue between the Slovenian society and Nigerians and Africans living in Slovenia. The Association is responsible for the overall integration of the Nigerian people, good relations among Nigerians, greater tolerance towards minorities. It promotes and participates in humanitarian and development activities and encourages the promotion of Nigerian culture. There are around 10 volunteers for 50 beneficiaries. They cooperate with other non-formal initiatives in Slovenia and elsewhere.

Other NGO's deal with integration issues occasionally, although it is not their main activity. It is the case for the Institute for African studies, Humanitas, Institute UP Jesenice, Society for development of voluntary work Novo mesto, etc.

3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

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

[Staknimo..glave](#) (Let's put our heads together) is a non-formal initiative inspired by non-formal organisations in Italy, France, and Germany that emerged in August 2015 in Ljubljana. 10 volunteers organise roundtable debates, sharing good practices of integration of migrants. They cooperate with other non-formal initiatives.

[Protirasistična fronta brez meja](#) (Anti-racist front without borders) originated in Ljubljana in September 2015. They are inspired by initiatives in other countries worldwide which are striving for open borders, freedom of movement and helping refugees to get the asylum status and decent life. The 30 volunteers cooperate with other non-formal initiatives.

4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

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

The number of volunteers in recent months is significantly higher than before the “migrant crisis” (August 2015 in Slovenia). As Slovenia is still mostly a transition and not destination country for refugees, citizens’ initiatives are mostly oriented towards initial front-line humanitarian help. Long term strategies for bigger groups of refugees are initiating but at the moment, nobody knows how many refugees will actually stay in Slovenia. Non-formal initiatives made a [video](#) inviting refugees to stay in Slovenia (apply for asylum) and offering them important information in Arabic and English.

5 INNOVATION ASPECT

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

In the Slovenian case, such a comparison is not possible, as non-formal integration initiatives are rare. However, an innovative aspect common to both new and old initiatives, in comparison with state integration programme, is flexibility.

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.

Non-formal initiatives are usually filling the gap, organising activities which help migrants socialise and network but also encourage self-organisation and autonomy.

7 IMPACT

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

So far, citizens’ initiatives haven’t been so strong to systematically influence the state policies. However, they cooperated with some NGO’s (mentioned above) with which they exchange good practices. At the moment, initiative Staknimo glave (Lets’ put our heads together) is trying to mainstream the idea of housing asylum seekers in private houses and to promote cultural integration through free tickets for cultural events, inclusion in cultural work, the organisation of workshops for children, etc. But so far, no real integration process specific to “new” migrants from Middle East is implemented.