

EWSI Analysis on Voluntary and Citizens' Initiative: Spain

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.

Spain does not have a long tradition of citizens' initiatives; instead, established NGOs or civil society organisations organise projects or programmes with specific which involve volunteers. These programmes tend to have a local or regional focus, as there are not many nation-wide initiatives.

One of the most interesting and successful initiatives in Spain has been the Barcelona Anti-rumours campaign which began in 2010. This initiative was part of the Barcelona's City Council strategy to counteract negative rumours related to cultural diversity, combining the creation of an anti-rumour citizen network, a public relations campaign, anti-rumour agents and variety of educational activities. In 2013, the anti-rumour strategy was adapted to and implemented in four Spanish areas (Fuenlabrada, Getxo, Sabadell and Tenerife Island). In 2014, the Council of Europe, with the financial support of the European Commission, launched the 18 months (until June 2015) project [*Communication for Integration* \(C4i\)](#), under the umbrella of the Intercultural Cities programme and based on the anti-rumour experience of Barcelona. The goal of C4i was to explore whether this new, anti-rumour approach could be adapted to different cities around Europe.

The results of its implementation were quite outstanding in all 10 of its partner cities: Amadora and Loures in Portugal, Bilbao and Sabadell in Spain, Limerick in Ireland, Botkyrka in Sweden, Nuremberg and Erlangen in Germany, Lublin in Poland and Patras in Greece (hereinafter C4i cities). Though most of these strategies were led by local governments, there are a few cases of NGOs taking the lead in anti-rumour strategies, like Doras Luimní in Limerick.

An example of successful national initiative is the [You are young, you will succeed!](#) project. It was organised by Fundación Bertelsmann and co-funded by public funds: the Ministry of Education, United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the Instituto de la juventud (INJUVE). The project ran for 3 years, from 2010 to 2012. Students participated in a contest presenting innovative ideas or projects to improve integration in schools. The project reached over 3 million students and 430.000 teachers.

A more local initiative that has moved a large numbers of volunteers to support immigrants' long-term integration and which involved people-to-people and mutual learning activities is the Ruiseñor project, carried out in different cities throughout Spain, which is based on the [Nightingale Mentoring concept](#) born in 1997 in Malmö, Sweden, to facilitate meetings between university students and school children. The aim of the project is to promote cultural, social and linguistic integration of foreign students and simultaneously raise awareness on cultural diversity for university students, as well as promoting coexistence between people of different backgrounds. The mentors accompany newcomer boys and girls one afternoon per week to different parts of the city, places of entertainment, cultural activities, etc., with the aim of accelerating the process of social and cultural integration of new students. In Spain, it has been carried out at the University of Girona since 2006, and has now been expanded to universities in Barcelona, Navarra, and Tarragona. The project has also been carried out in Gipuzkoa, under the coordination of the NGO SOS Racismo Gipuzkoa.

In relation to the integration of refugees, the [Ariadna Network](#) is a good example. Its main is to promote inclusion in the labour market and prevent discrimination. It focuses its activities on asylum seekers, refugees, and other individuals under international protection. It has further transversal objectives such as the integration of a gender perspective, the promotion of new information technologies, environmental sustainability and the implementation of the partnership. The network aims to inform asylum seekers of the socio-economic reality of their host communities, and provides them with the necessary tools for their social and cultural development, thus enabling them to place themselves in a favourable position in the labour market. As for the main activities of the Ariadna Network, it carries out direct actions with beneficiaries (workshops to develop their social and labour skills; job placements; programmes for self-employment initiatives) and complementary actions, such as awareness-raising, and training of technical staff, mostly carried out jointly by members of the Network. The Ariadna network is made up by NGOs, the Spanish Commission to Help Refugees (CEAR), the Spanish Red Cross, La Merced Migraciones and 4 hosting centres for refugees that belong to the Directorate General of the Integration of Immigrants, which in turn is part of the Ministry of Employment and Immigration. These centres are located in Mislata (Valencia), Sevilla, Vallecas (Madrid), and Alcobendas (Madrid).

3 NEW VOLUNTEERS/CITIZENS' INITIATIVES

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

Since September, with the increase in refugees reaching Europe, different discourse and initiatives have emerged in Spain on how to handle this issue:

1. **Network of Refuge cities (red de ciudades-refugio)**

The most famous of these has been the Network of Refuge Cities which was initiated by the mayor of Barcelona, Ada Colau, and gained the support of other Spanish cities: Madrid, Oviedo, A Coruña, Málaga and Alicante. The city councils in Madrid and Barcelona announced in September 2015 that they would introduce [measures to assist refugees](#).

The city of Barcelona had originally announced a registry for families who offered their home to host refugees. This idea was later retracted, as it is the social entities and NGOs who are in charge of hosting tasks, though citizens were encouraged to participate by volunteering. [Read more](#)
In December 2015, the Barcelona City Council launched the first actions under the Refuge City Plan (Pla de Ciutat Refugi), focusing on the field of volunteering and information. The city council has already established mechanisms for channelling the great solidarity and interest expressed by civil society in Barcelona to address this problem.

The citizen participation in this plan is shaped under the Citizen's Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona ([Acord Ciutadà per una Barcelona Inclusiva](#)), an entity for joint action and cooperation between the municipal government and civil society, which integrates over 600 associations in the city. A group of entities and NGO representatives of the various sectors involved (local, voluntary, youth and children's entertainment and universities), some of which have an extensive experience in this area is created. The group, which operates autonomously, is in charge of creating a catalogue of offers, services, resources, materials and activities aiming to respond to the needs of refugees throughout the various phases of the reception process. It has also begun to define the catalogue of social actions and work in which volunteers will be able to contribute. [Read more](#)

2. **United Nations' pioneer project will test in La Rioja**

With the final aim of enabling refugees arriving in Spain to take root in the country, rebuild their lives as quickly as possible, contribute to its economic and cultural development and be active members of La Rioja, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) [announced](#) in February 2016, the potential launch of a unique experimental pilot project in La Rioja. Alongside the most common elements in the reception of refugees (language teaching, health information, etc.), a social support plan for families should be included in the new initiative. This is articulated through families of La Rioja who accompany the refugees during a defined period

3. **Refugees in University**

In 2015, alongside the widespread "Refugees Welcome" campaign, a student movement emerged in Spain supporting free education for refugees all around the world. As a response, in September 2015, the Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) adopted a [series of measures](#) to help refugees.

Therefore, without prejudice to the individual actions that each university has adopted, the CRUE has agreed to provide access to refugee students who were university students in their home country. They also agreed to facilitate the collaboration with Spanish universities for refugees who are university professors in their home country; to promote volunteer activities among students, in collaboration with other administrations and agencies.

Nonetheless, bureaucracy and fees are still a problem for many refugee students wanting to study in university. [Read more](#)

4 PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

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

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5 INNOVATION ASPECT

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

Even though public interest has risen in relation to refugees, mostly public entities (city councils), in collaboration with existing NGOs and established civil society organisations, have taken on the responsibility of offering solutions and initiatives to respond to this crisis. Therefore, in Spain, it is not possible to measure a change after the Refugee Crisis in citizen initiatives as these have not emerged as such but rather have been absorbed into existing platforms. Furthermore, efforts such as allowing citizens to host refugees in their home have not been able to go ahead, as this work corresponds to existing organisations.

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.

Such coordination by local authorities of reception activities can be considered an unprecedented. In addition, a greater involvement (or willingness to involve) of citizens in public entities' initiatives is clear.

7 IMPACT

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

At this stage, it is not possible to evaluate the impact of such initiatives.