



Administrative capacities for integration of refugees – case study of selected cities in Croatia

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Abstract

This paper examines the integration of refugees in the wake of one of the most pressing and destabilizing challenges that is facing Europe right now, and that will be the influx of refugees caused by the events in the Middle East. With the huge number of refugees flooding Europe the topic of integration has reemerged as an important issue once again and as such will be presented more concretely in this paper. The areas of employment, housing, education and health are broadly acknowledged by various authors to be key components in the integration of refugees into a new society. Therefore we will demonstrate the significance and also the main challenges Croatia is facing in those areas. Also this paper will seek to examine the profile of the Republic of Croatia in relation to the asylum seekers and analyse the regulation that has been brought both on national and local (Cities of Zagreb, Rijeka and Zadar) levels of government. The goal of this paper is to determine how successful is Croatia in its approach to the integration of refugees and more specifically how prepared are certain cities in Croatia when it comes to assisting in the integration of refugees.

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1. Introduction

A small number of Refugees, asylees and asylum seekers have found their home in The Republic of Croatia. These are the individuals who are fleeing persecution, conflict, war, oppression, and human rights violations in their home countries and who have been granted the ability to reside permanently in The Republic of Croatia.

Cynthia Basinet once said "Displaced societies are of value. Their issues are our issues."

A very vital element of the Croatian Migration policy is the integration of foreigners and refugees into Croatian society. The government of the Republic of Croatia adopted the new action plan for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection on 23 November of 2017. This action Plan is for the period 2017 - 2019 and is drafted by the Office for human rights and the rights of national minorities. It specifically grants precise rights to the minority groups in the areas of labor, accommodation, education and language studying, etc. It additionally plans to raise consciousness on the problems facing this vulnerable group of foreigners and to prevent discrimination towards them. The new Plan is to a degree the continuation of the previous action Plan for the removal of barriers to the realization of individual rights in the field of integration of foreigners that covered the duration from 2013 to 2015.

Although Croatia did put some effort in regulating the question of integration she only scored a total of 44 out of 100 points on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)¹ and is placed into the halfway favorable category with only 3 points above from slightly unfavorable category which suggests that refugees in Croatia are in many aspects in much more unfavorable position than the majority population.

In this paper we will examine how prepared are Croatian institutions for the very important task of integrating refugees, asylum seekers and people that found them self in Croatia through resettlement and relocation programs. We will explain what integration is and on what levels and dimensions integration takes place. We will also explore other types of acculturation's other than integration. Considering the times we live in we will also examine

¹ The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a unique tool which measures policies to integrate migrants in all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA.

contemporary migration flow in to the Republic of Croatia and how it impacted Croatia regarding asylum applications. Because regulation is important part of integration, we will examine binding laws on integration, at international, European and national level as well as national policies that are related to integration. Then we will define difficulties in the main areas of integration, that being employment, housing, education and health. Because of the big importance of local government in conducting integration we will see if there are any regulation that directly relates to refugees in cities of Zagreb, Zadar and Rijeka. We will asses how Croatia is dealing with integration in general and propose some measures that are needed to make this process more successful in the conclusion of this paper

2. Integration

A standout amongst the distinguished accomplishments of the last century in the humanitarian field has been the establishment of the principle that the refugee problem is a matter of concern to the international community and must be addressed in the context of international cooperation. At the universal level, the most comprehensive legally binding global instrument, defining standards for the treatment of refugees is the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28th July 1951. In article 34 named Naturalization convention says the following; „The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings.“

We consider integration as the process in which a person becomes acknowledged and accepted member of the society he resides in. It is a part of a contemporary intercultural approach and it marks the two-way process of minority participation within the fundamental structural areas of the recipient country's society and their identification with that society. It therefore entails the responsibility to provide formal rights to minorities with the intention to enable them to take part in community lifestyles, but also to adapt to the standards and values of the recipient country's society without renouncing its very own cultural identity. However, the legal framework, even though in principle an essential prerequisite for the integration of minorities, particularly within the continental-European legal circles, does not assure complete integration of minorities into practice. Conditions for exercising rights are adequate

capacities, primarily on the side of state institutions (at central and local level). Namely, institutions (understood as organizations and their unspoken rules, actions and practices) might also encourage integration, however they also can impede or prevent the implementation of guaranteed rights in practice, both at the level of administrative organizations and at the level of individuals (Lalić Novak and Vukojičić Tomić, 2017: 2-3).

To put it more simply although this definition is flawed, integration is "... a situation in which host and refugee communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources - both economic and social -with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the host community" (Harrell-Bond, 1986: 7).

It is important to point out the fact that integration is a process and that integration policies should take into account time as one of the key factors of successful integration. Integration policies differ with respect to the goals of latter and the choice of the model largely depends on the dominant social values (Bužinkić and Kranjec, 2012: 14).

2.1. Four approaches to Acculturation

As a result of immigration, many societies emerge as culturally plural. That is, people of many cultural backgrounds come to live together in a diverse society, in lots of instances they shape cultural groups that are not equal in power. In all plural societies, cultural groups and their individual members, in both the dominant and non-dominant situations, need to address the problem of how to acculturate. Acculturation is merging of cultures due to extended contact among them. From the point of view of non-dominant groups assimilation is when people do no longer wish to preserve their cultural identity and are looking for daily interaction with other cultures, the process where subordinate groups emerge as indistinguishable within the dominant host society. In contrast, when people place a value on holding on to their authentic subculture, and at the equal time want to keep away from interaction with others, then we are talking about separation. Integration is the option when there's an interest in both maintaining ones authentic culture and interacting with other groups, right here there is some degree of cultural integrity maintained, whilst at the same time in search of to participate as an crucial part of the larger social community, its not about losing identity, instead it is about preserving identity and belief while at the same time being

capable of celebrating differences and work with others in civic society. There is also marginalisation when there's little opportunity or interest in cultural preservation, and little interest in having relations with others (Berry, 1997: 8-9). In today's debates the main focus is on Assimilation and Integration. The concepts of assimilations taken to be dominant in the US debate, and integration in Europe. We might use a culinary metaphor to make the point. Assimilation is rather like the process of making soup, where the ingredients lose their identity as they are blended together. Integration may be likened to a fruit salad where the individual fruits, with their varying colours and sizes contribute to the beauty of the dish.²

2.2. Dimensions and levels of integration

There is not one dimension of integration, integration is a multidimensional process that usually includes at least the three following dimensions in which people may (or may not) become an accepted part of society: legal-political, socio-economic and cultural-religious. These dimensions deliberately correspond to the three main factors that interplay with immigration and integration processes: the state, the market, and the nation. The *legal-political* dimension refers to residence and political rights and statuses. The basic question here is whether and to what extent are immigrants regarded as fully fledged members of the political community. Political participation (formal and informal) and acquisition of citizenship to give an example. The *socio-economic* dimension refers to the social and economic position of residents, irrespective of their national citizenship. Within this dimension, the position of immigrants can be analysed by looking at their access to and participation in domains that are crucial for any resident. Do immigrants have equal access to institutional facilities for finding work, housing, education, and health care? Do they use these facilities? What is the outcome of immigrants' participation compared to that of natives with the same or comparable qualifications? The cultural-religious dimension refers to the cultural and religious rights of minorities, and in particular their perception and practice of diversity in cultural, ethnic and religious respect in the society of the receiving state. Here again we find two extremes. At one extreme, new diversity may be rejected and immigrants required to adapt and assimilate into mono-cultural and mono-religious societies. At the other extreme,

² Cardiff University: Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK, Assimilation vs integration, www.sites.cardiff.ac.uk, accessed 18.2.2018

ethnic identities, cultures, and worldviews may be accepted on an equal level in pluralistic societal systems. Between these two extremes again are many in-between positions, such as accepting certain forms of diversity in the private realm but not, or only partly, in the public realm (Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas, 2016: 14-16; Penninx, 2007: 10-11).

Processes of immigrant's integration take place and can be measured at different levels. At the level of individual integration is generally measured in terms of the migrant's housing, job, education etc. On the second level we have organizations which includes minority organizations and organizations of the receiving state, including civil society organizations. And lastly on the third level of measuring integration we have institutions. Two types of institutions are of particular relevance, first being the general public institutions of receiving societies (national or local) which includes the educational system, institutional arrangements for public health and so forth. Laws, regulations but also unwritten rules and practices are a part of these institutions. The second types of institutions which can be of relevance for the integration are specific institutions of and for immigrant groups, for instance within the religious or cultural domain (Penninx, 2007: 11-12).

2.3. Importance of local government in the Integration process

Immigrant integration has become an explicit goal of cardinal importance in the policy agenda of the European Union and its member states since 2000. While immigration policy is a responsibility of national governments, it has also been increasingly recognized that migrant integration takes place, first and foremost, at the local level. Debates related to migration are conducted and framed at the national and European levels. Yet, local authorities are in practice and by and large administratively responsible for dealing with the demands and effects of migration and integration of migrants into local societies and economies. Local and municipal authorities, independently or in cooperation with other public agencies and non-governmental organizations, are providers of a large array of social services. They provide services in the area of health, education and social and child care, and they are also responsible for maintaining the social infrastructure of cities where many ethnic and migrant communities live. Having closer day to day contact, they have better knowledge of local society and conditions on the ground. The involvement of local government is not only in the context of implementing nationally set policies, but also in devising their own immigrant

integration strategies, and even in becoming a source of innovation. In the 1990s, cities in countries like Switzerland and Germany developed targeted integration policies when such policies had hardly been developed at the national level. Between 3/5 and 2/3 of the migrant population in Europe lives in densely populated urban areas or in towns. The ability and potential of local government to manage multi-ethnic diversity and promote integration has been amply recognized (Anagnostou, 2016: 4). The importance of local government is also seen in the influence some local politicians have had on the national immigration policy, for example in Denmark quite radically in the mid-1990s (Myrberg, 2015: 335).

3. Contemporary migration flow in the Republic of Croatia

3.1. Western Balkan route as a main migration corridor towards the Republic of Croatia

Influx of the large number of refugees into the European Union in 2015 and 2016 triggered huge amount of attention in the politics, media and the general public. The European migrant crisis, or the European refugee crisis, is a geopolitical label, politics, media and the general public used to describe the migrant situation in Europe (Rogelj, 2017: 191).

According to UNHCR data, eleven million Syrian citizens have become displaced because of the continuing civil conflict in Syria. UNCHR also reported approximately one million of Syrian citizens are within the European Union. The biggest proportion of Syrian refugees arrived to Europe at the same time as the countries alongside the Western Balkan route desired to create a corridor and allowed them to pass (Sardelic, 2017: 7).

People who enter the EU in Greece usually make their way towards western Europe. When the record number of migrants arrived in Greece, and tried to make their way towards western Europe via the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and then into Hungary and Croatia, that had a direct knock-on effect on the Western Balkan route. This led to huge and unprecedented numbers of migrants looking to re-enter the EU through Hungary's borders with Serbia. The stream of migrants moved to Croatia, after Hungary completed the development of a fence on its border with Serbia in September. In all of 2015, there was 764 000 recorded detections of illegal border crossings by migrants in this area, a 16-fold rise

from 2014. Syrians were the leading nationality followed by Iraqis and Afghans. Also uncommon and noteworthy number of Kosovo nationals crossed the Serbian-Hungarian border illegally earlier in the year.³

The route has become a famous passageway into the EU in 2012 when Schengen visa regulations have been relaxed for five Balkan nations – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and previous Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Some 20,000 people crossed the Hungarian border illegally in 2013 and nearly all of them applied for asylum after crossing. They had been encouraged by a change to Hungarian law that allowed asylum seekers to be transferred to open holding centres, which they abandoned quickly after being relocated to them. In July, the Hungarian government further amended asylum regulation and strengthened their border controls. All though migrant flows from Greece tailed off, overall numbers rose dramatically once more in 2014. Part of the reason for the rise was abnormal migration by nationals of the area, particularly from Kosovo, who joined the northward march led by Syrians and Somalis. On arrival in Hungary, they too asked for asylum, and had been accommodated in open refugee centres. They left the centres and headed to other European Union countries, mainly Austria and Germany, in which many again applied for asylum.⁴

For the second year in a row, detections within the Western Balkans strongly elevated. See table 1.⁵

Table 1.

2012	6 391
2013	19 951
2014	43 357

766 038 detections of unlawful border-crossing have been reported in 2015 from the borders with Western Balkan countries. Between January and February, most of the detections concerned individuals from Kosovo, also known as a local flow. After that as of March,

³ Frontex, Migratory Routes, Western Balkan route, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 1.3.2018

⁴ Frontex, Migratory Routes, Western Balkan route, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 1.3.2018

⁵ Frontex, Annual Risk Analysis 2015, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 3.3.2018

detections had been related to non-regional flow of migrants who had initially crossed illegally from Turkey to Greece and on their way to Western Europe, generally Germany. In July detections of non-regional migrants dramatically increased because of the growth in arrivals in Greece after April of 2015. This growth additionally coincided with the amendments made to the Asylum regulation of the previous Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia that allowed for a seventy two-hour period of legal transit and access to public transportation, with the measures introduced by the Hungarian authorities aimed toward curbing the irregular migratory flow entering from Serbia, and with a statement in Germany that there was ‘no upper limit to the right for asylum. Due to the ongoing pressure, Hungary built a temporary technical obstacle alongside its border with Serbia, which become finished in mid-September of 2015. This led to a sharp decrease of detections, and restrained the flow of migrants at boarder control points. Migrants applying for asylum at Hungarian boarder control points would be returned to Serbia. The primary flow of migrants for that reason quickly moved to the Croatian-Serbian land border, at a daily average of over 6 400 between mid-September and the end of October. As soon as the migrants were in Croatia, they had been transported via trains towards the border with Hungary. For this reason Hungary prolonged the construction of a temporary technical obstacle to its land border with Croatia, as a result moving the flow towards Slovenia as of mid-October.⁶

Detections within the region reduced sharply from 764 038 in 2015 to 130 261 in 2016 because the flow of migrants across the Western Balkans continued to mirror the influx on the eastern Mediterranean route. The decline was consistent all through 2016, from more than 60 000 in January to much less than 2 000 detections starting from September. The primary migratory movement throughout the Western Balkans was the flow from the Greek land border with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia towards the Hungarian land border with Serbia.⁷

The flow of migrants throughout the Western Balkans continued to somewhat mirror the influx on the eastern Mediterranean route, yet at a lower level compared with preceding years given the continuing efforts made on the route to diminish the flow (12 178 illegal detections in 2018). The detected illegal border-crossings at the EU’s outside border usually occurred at

⁶ Frontex, Annual Risk Analysis 2016, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 3.3.2018

⁷ Frontex, Annual Risk Analysis 2017, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 3.3.2018

the Serbian borders, with many migrants stranded in Serbia known to make numerous attempts to cross, frequently at different border sections.⁸

3.2. Profile of the Republic of Croatia in regards to asylum seekers and refugees

According to the latest population census in 2011 the Republic of Croatia has a population of 4 284 889 people. If we look at the citizenship of those people we will see that 4 259 476 of them are Croatian citizens, that's 99.4 percent to be exact. We can go a step further and compare their nationalities, that will show us that 3 874 321 or 90.4 percent of people living in Croatia are Croatian nationals. The largest national minority, Serbs, are represented by 4.3% percent of all the people living in Croatia, that is exactly 186 633. There is a much smaller number of people representing the other 21 national minorities. Similar number are to be seen also if we check the religious background as 86.3 percent of people in Croatia are declaring themselves as Catholics. According to the data presented here we can with great certainty state that Republic of Croatia is pretty homogeneous country and by default is not really experienced with different cultures.⁹

Number of people who are seeking international protection in Croatia is steadily increasing. Record number of asylum seekers happened in 2016. In 2006, for the first time in Croatian history, one person was granted asylum. After that, the number of granted asylums and also subsidiary protections began to increase. The first subsidiary protection was granted in 2008, when there was three of them. According to the Ministry of the Interior, as of 31st December of 2017, 369 asylums and 116 subsidiary protection were granted in Croatia, 2017 being the record breaking year having 183 asylums and 18 subsidiary protections granted.¹⁰

Here we will present two tables for easier understanding of the topic. One showing the number of people asking for an international protection and the other one showing the number

⁸ Frontex, Annual Risk Analysis 2018, www.frontex.europa.eu, accessed 3.3.2018

⁹The Croatian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population, Households and Dwellings 2011, www.dzs.hr, accessed 5.3.2018

¹⁰ MUP, Statistical Indicators of International Protection Claims by 31.12.2017M, www.mup.hr, accessed 7.3.2018

of refugees that were granted asylum protection as well the refugees granted the subsidiary protection. See table 2 and 3.

Table 2.

Asylum seekers	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	162	186	94	195	155	146	290	807	1193	1089	453	152	2234	1887 ¹¹

Table 3.

Protection/ Category	2006	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total sum
Asylum	1	3	11	5	4	21	7	15	36	85	183	369
M		3	6	4	4	15	4	12	31	50	132	261
0-13			3			3	2		3	7	33	51
14-17			1	1	1	3				5	4	15
18-34		3	1	3	1	4		9	21	29	80	151
35-64			1		2	5	2	3	7	9	15	44
F	1		5	1		6	3	3	5	33	51	108
0-13			3			2	2		2	15	22	46
14-17						1				1	2	4
18-34	1			1		3		3	2	15	17	42
35-64			2				1		1	2	10	16
Subsidiary protection		3	2	9	9	14	17	10	7	17	28	116
M		3	2	6	4	8	9	10	5	11	18	76
0-13				1	1	2	3			3	5	15
14-17				2	1	1	1	1		2	3	11
18-34		3	2	1	2	2	5	8	3	6	5	37
35-64				2		3		1	2		5	13
F				3	5	6	8		2	6	10	40
0-13				1	3	2	3		1	1	2	13
14-17							2				4	6
18-34				2	2	2	2			2	3	13
35-64						2	1		1	3	1	8 ¹²

The Republic of Croatia is also participating in the European scheme for relocation and resettlement of refugees in accordance to the conclusions of the European Council and decisions of Council of the European Union. By the end of 2017, a total of 81 persons were relocated to the Republic of Croatia and 40 of them were resettled. See table 4.

¹¹ Lalic Novak G. (2016) Azil: pravni i institucionalni aspekti, page: 199

¹² MUP, Statistical Indicators of International Protection Claims by 31.12.2017, www.mup.hr, accessed 7.3.2018

Table 4.

RELOCATION	Eritrea citizens	Yemen citizens	
Italy	17	4	
Greece	0	0	60
RESETTLEMENT			Syrian citizens
Turkey	0	0	40

4. National regulation of integration in the Republic of Croatia

The refugee status is regulated in Croatia by the United Nations Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees of 1951 and its 1967 Protocol, which the Republic of Croatia took over afterwards the notification of succession, after the break-up of SFR Yugoslavia, and entered into force on 8 October 1991. This convention is a foundation of the modern international refugee law (Hathaway, 2005: 91). The Convention is above the Law, and below the Constitution of the Croatia, which makes it hierarchically superior to the International and Temporary Protection Act, which entered into force on 2 July 2015.

According to the document from the Council of Europe called European Convention on Human Rights "The High Contracting Parties shall secure to everyone within their jurisdiction the rights and freedoms defined in Section 1 of this Convention", this includes foreigners and therefore refugees and asylum seekers.¹³ Article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights contains, for the first time at European level, a right to asylum. In its article 19 it prohibits collective expulsions and also states that "No one may be removed, expelled or extradited to a State where there is a serious risk that he or she would be subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment"¹⁴. When the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force on 1 December 2009, it changed the status of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, making it legally binding. As a result and according to the Article 51 of the Charter, EU institutions (in addition to EU Member States) are bound to conform with the

¹³ Council of Europe, European Convention on Human Rights, www.echr.coe.int, accessed 8.3.2018

¹⁴ The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>, accessed 8.3.2018

charter whilst enforcing EU law.¹⁵ The migration and integration policy is primarily developed under the influence and pressure of the EU accession process, specifically as a prerequisite for the use of financial resources from the EU program, and is still at an early stage of development.

The Law on International and Temporary Protection prescribes that an asylum seeker and a foreigner under subsidiary protection are entitled to; stay in the Republic of Croatia, family reunion, housing, work, health care, education, freedom of religion, free legal aid, social welfare, integration assistance in society, property ownership in accordance with the 1951 Convention and acquisition of Croatian citizenship in accordance with the regulations regulating acquisition of citizenship. An asylum seeker and a foreigner under subsidiary protection have the right to assistance in joining the society for a maximum of three years from the delivery of a decision on the approval of international protection. Inclusion assistance includes; creating an integration plan for an asylum seeker or a foreigner under the subsidiary protection in view of his/her individual needs, knowledge, abilities and skills, assisting an asylum seeker or an alien under subsidiary protection to achieve a plan, overseeing the plan's execution. The above mentioned activities are carried out by the Ministry of the Interior Deals. The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia carries out the coordination of the work of all ministries, non-governmental organizations and long bodies involved in the process of inclusion in an asylee or alien under subsidiary protection within the Standing Committee for Implementation of the Integration of Foreigners into Croatian Society and the related Working Group which prepares proposals for national strategic documents in this area.¹⁶

4.2. Public policies in regards to integration

The integration policy is mainly concentrated on the national level of government, and only the handful of the measures of the integration are implemented on local level of government

¹⁵ The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>, accessed 8.3.2018

¹⁶ Act on International and Temporary Protection, NN 70/15, 127/17

(Lalić Novak and Vukojičić Tomić, 2017: 9). In order to regulate the movement of migrants in the Republic of Croatia, the Government of Croatia adopted the Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for 2013-2015. The purpose of this document was to ensure that the movement of migrants in the Republic of Croatia would be beneficial to the economic, social and cultural development of the state and society. The action of the measure was made within the framework of the EU accession process, and it also contains measures for the integration of foreigners into the Croatian society.¹⁷ In 2013 the Action Plan to remove obstacles for the realization of certain rights in the field of integration of foreigners for the period 2013-2015 has been developed. Action plans primarily concern the integration of foreigners into Croatian society by ensuring their equal status in economic, social and cultural life with the Croatian citizens, with special emphasis on education, labor, employment and housing, with a goal of achieving permanent status of citizenship. Plan also developed measures for preventing and combating discriminatory procedures and behaviour towards foreigners and encouraged the active co-operation of all competent state administration bodies and local and regional government bodies, which are responsible for ensuring an adequate legal framework and its effective and consistent implementation on national, regional and local level. Given the particular vulnerability and specificity of the situation of asylum seekers and aliens under the subsidiary protection, measures from this Action Plan are directed to a greater extent to regulate the position and integration of these categories of foreigners.¹⁸ In April 2013, the Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Implementation of Foreigners' Integration into Croatian Society was established to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan, and the Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of the Republic of Croatia is responsible for coordinating the work of all ministries, non-governmental organizations and long bodies participating in integration of refugees (Lalić Novak and Vukojičić Tomić, 2017: 10-11). Although Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for 2013-2015 and Action Plan to remove obstacles for the realization of certain rights in the field of integration of foreigners for the period 2013-2015 are not in force anymore, they laid the foundation for continuing the development of integration regulation.

¹⁷ The Government of Croatia, Migration Policy of the Republic of Croatia for the Period 2013-2015, accessed 15.2.2018

¹⁸ The Government of Croatia, Action Plan for the removal of obstacles to the exercise of particular rights in the area of integration of foreigners in Croatian society, for the period of 2013 to 2015, www.pravamanjina.gov.hr, accessed 13.2.2018

The first Action Plan for Integration that the Republic of Croatia had so relied on the period from 2013 to 2015. After that time, the Action Plan for integration of persons who have been granted international protection for the period 2017 to 2019 was adopted. The latter Action Plan identified six strategic areas: social care and health care, housing , language learning and education, employment, international co-operation, inter-departmental cooperation, public awareness and professional staff on persons who have been granted international protection. Cause for the creation of this Action Plan is a particular vulnerability of the people who have been granted international protection, and the aim is to provide them with assistance and protection, helping them more easily through the difficult situation of the refugee-humanitarian crisis that hit them.¹⁹

The Republic of Croatia is making plans to invest 60 million Croatian kunas (eight million euros) for the implementation of the action Plan's measures. In view of the unique vulnerability of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, measures of current Plan are aiming at regulating their integration process, in accordance with international standards and with the national Act on International and Temporary Protection.²⁰

Because of the participation of Croatia in the European scheme for relocation and resettlement of refugees, Croatian government in 2015 adapted the Decision on Relocation and Resettlement of third country nationals or stateless persons who meet the conditions for approval of international protection, as well as the Decision on the establishment of the Interdepartmental Working Group for its implementation. With the decision on relocation and resettlement Croatia has pledged to accept an overall of 550 individuals, 150 of whom would be accepted through resettlement and 400 individuals would be accept through relocation. In 2018 Croatian government Decision on Relocation and Resettlement of third country nationals or stateless persons who meet the conditions for approval of international protection for 2018 was adapted. With that decision Croatia has pledged to accept a total of 100 individuals through resettlement.

¹⁹ The Government of Croatia, Action Plan For Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted International Protection for the Period from 2017 to 2019, www.pravamanjina.gov.hr, accessed 13.2.2018

²⁰ European Web Site on Integration, Migrant Integration Information and good practices, www.ec.europa.eu, accessed 15.3.2018

5. Current national policies directly relating to local and regional government.

Although the measures in the Action Plan for integration of persons who have been granted international protection for the period 2017 to 2019 were adopted at the national level, some of them are directly addressing the units of local and regional self-government, and will be listed in the text below.

Part of the measures relating to the social welfare are aimed at ensuring the fulfilment of the preconditions for life and coexistence in local communities. These are measure 2.1. which requires the appointment of expert workers in charge of exercising the rights of persons granted international protection in the social welfare system. Then we have, a measure 2.2. which aimed to carry out activities for raising the quality of life for people who have been granted international protection. Measure 2.3. sought to submit a recommendation to the local and regional self-government units to include persons who have been granted international protection in social welfare decisions. Finally, measure 2.4 is also foreseen and wishes to provide public food kitchens with a recommendation to provide food in accordance with the cultural and religious beliefs of foreigners or persons granted international protection. With regard to measures relating to language learning and education, a measure 11.2. seeks to strengthen the partnership between civil society organizations and educational institutions in the implementation of intercultural education projects and education on civic and human values. This measure aims to strengthen the capacities and implementation of integrative activities in the education system. In the area of inter-departmental cooperation we have measure 18.3. which wishes to establish a network of contact persons for realization of the rights of persons who have been granted international protection on a local level, with the aim of monitoring the implementation of the integration of persons granted the international protection of Croatian society. We also have the measure 19.2. that seeks to provide for an evaluation of the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Approved for International Protection with the purpose of improving existing procedural procedures and the frameworks

of integration. All of the measures mentioned above cite units of local and regional self-government as co-responsible for their implementation.²¹

6. Difficulties in the main areas of integration in Croatia

The areas of employment, housing, education and health are broadly acknowledged by various authors to be key components of integrating of refugees into a brand new society (Ager and Strang, 2008: 173). It is, hence, suitable to encourage development of programs that are working on those areas. Therefore, we ought to emphasize the significance of those areas and outline key problems Croatia has been experiencing in each of those.

6.1. Education and language learning

Education plays a key role in the social integration of refugees and has an impact on the refugees and the society they are involved in. Without access to education refugees are at risk of social exclusion in at least three dimensions. First, not knowing the language prevents communication and therefore integration with a dominant community. Second, without the openness of the education system towards refugees coming from third countries, it will be difficult to recognize their qualifications and degrees with whom they come, and which they are, to a greater or lesser extent, able to show and prove. And finally, without adequate education, it will not be possible to go to the labor market and thus the realization of the necessary conditions for independent existence (Tecilazić Goršić, 2017: 445)

Kristina Bednjanec, a legal officer in JRS says : "Language learning is by far the most important area in integrating refugees in to the society as it is very vital component for them to succeed in other areas of integration such as employment, dealing with bureaucracy,

²¹ The Government of Croatia, Action Plan For Integration of Persons Who Have Been Granted International Protection for the Period from 2017 to 2019, www.pravamanjina.gov.hr, accessed 13.2.2018

education etc. Unfortunately, it is the most problematic area in Croatia when it comes to refugees."

Both asylum granted person and person under subsidiary protection are entitled to education and the course of Croatian language, history and culture. They are entitled to primary, secondary and higher education under the same conditions as a Croatian citizen in accordance with special regulations. Courses of Croatian language, history and culture are mandatory according to the Act on International and Temporary Protection.²² The biggest problems are courses of Croatian language. They are not consistent and are rare. Refugees are often being called to complete them very late. There have been cases when a refugee would be able to take them more than two years after they were granted asylum. That becomes even more unusual when we see that according to the Act on International and Temporary Protection in case of non-fulfilling the obligation of completing these classes they need to reimburse the costs of the classes to the ministry responsible for education. When the classes are managed to get organized they are often held only on one level of knowledge, there is no variety between people who already have some knowledge of Croatian and the other that don't speak Croatian at all. Dealing with bureaucracy such as getting documents becomes very hard if language is not learnt. When it comes to education of juveniles in schools the good news is that as far as problems with bureaucracy, they are minimal.²³

6.2. Health care system

Unlike most citizens of a particular society, refugees often show the health difficulties that are caused by political persecution, imprisonment and torture. In addition, the quality of life they lead in the destination country (quality of accommodation, unemployment, social marginalization and low income) and care for their own existence and existence of their family, as well as the family members who have disappeared or remained in the country of origin have a great influence on their health, both mental health and physical. Focus should be on disease prevention, access to healthcare institutions (understanding of scope of their work;

²² Act on International and Temporary Protection, NN 70/15, 127/17

²³ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

overcoming language barriers; intercultural skills of employees) and the development of the rehabilitation programs to treat the traumatic experiences of refugees (Bužinkić and Kranjec, 2012: 14).

An asylum granted person and a foreigner under subsidiary protection have a right to exercise the right to health care in accordance with the provision regulating health insurance and health care of aliens in the Republic of Croatia. The health insurance costs shall be paid from the State Budget of the Republic of Croatia.²⁴ The problem they are facing is that they don't have MBO (Number of Insured Persons), they are only able to get it after they find employment so many doctors refuse to provide them with service because they don't know or don't want to deal with receipts, because in usual circumstances they have to put MBO on it. Also sometimes they don't want to deal with sending receipts to the ministry of health so it's easier for them to deny service to the refugees. Likewise, if a woman doesn't have MBO she will not be entitled to parental benefits even though her husband has it and that doesn't happen to Croatian people and is an obvious oversight. Furthermore a big problem is communication with doctors and hospital staff in general as a result of already mentioned language learning courses in Croatia that are extremely flawed.²⁵

6.3. Accommodation and housing

Although this aspect of the integration of refugees is often neglected when designing regulation, it is important to emphasize that the quality of housing affects the life of refugees in many aspects, primarily on quality of life, health, accessibility to contents and institutions etc. Practice of the country in the EU warns that the attention should be focused on the following areas and themes: the structure and functioning of the rental real estate market, because most refugees cannot afford to buy real estate; prevention of discrimination in society and prevention of possible homelessness (Bužinkić and Kranjec, 2012: 14). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) "The social determinants of health (SDH) are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age" Research

²⁴ Act on International and Temporary Protection, NN 70/15, 127/17

²⁵ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

shows evidence of the significance of housing to both physical and mental wellbeing for asylum seekers and refugees living in resettlement countries. Improving housing quality, affordability and increasing diversity in the sort of housing accessible to asylum seeker and refugee families all have the potential to lead to more positive and successful integration (Ziersch; Walsh; Due and Duivesteyn, 2017: 15-16).

According to the Act on International and Temporary Protection an asylum granted person and a foreigner under subsidiary protection are eligible for accommodation if they do not have the funds or means to provide it for themselves. They are entitled to a maximum two years of paid accommodation from the date of delivery of the decision that they have been granted international protection. The Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing provides accommodation to asylum granted persons and foreigners under subsidiary protection in housing units owned by the Republic of Croatia or housing units that are leased from private third parties.²⁶ The biggest problem in this area is time. In many cases it takes The Central State Office for Reconstruction and Housing up to seven months for them to provide refugees with accommodation and that is the time has been taken from the two years of paid accommodation they are entitled to. So in reality they don't have two years to adjust, in best case scenarios they have twenty-five percent less. State owned units are not utilized enough and leasing from private third parties faces many obstacles the first and the biggest one being prejudice and on top of that many of them don't want to deal with bureaucracy that comes with them leasing to the refugees. Private leases are also much more expensive making them not affordable. Big problem is also accommodating unaccompanied juveniles that came in to the country without an adult person supervision. They are being sent to the facilities for children with behavioral problems, which creates a huge problem because we are talking about impressionable children that in many cases then develop behavioral problems or even suffer abuse from other children in those facilities.²⁷

²⁶ Act on International and Temporary Protection, NN 70/15, 127/17

²⁷ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

6.4. Employment

Statistics in the European Union and Croatia show that refugees are groups with a high unemployment rate. They are at higher risk of long-term unemployment and are also facing large barriers on the path to employment. Very few European countries allow asylum seekers to work during the period they await a decision on their application for asylum²⁸. Because of that it is recommended that the process of integrating refugees in to the labor market should start as early as the moment of arrival of a refugee to a particular country so that the people in question can seek employment as soon as their asylum status is granted. Employment leads to financial autonomy and sense of usefulness, to self, family, and society (Bužinkić and Kranjec, 2012: 15).

An asylum granted person and a foreigner under subsidiary protection can work in the Republic of Croatia without a residence permit or work permit or a receipt of employment registration. They have the right to adult education related to employment, vocational training and the acquisition of practical work experience under the same conditions as a Croatian citizen.²⁹ Biggest obstacle here is again language as without proper language knowledge possibilities of finding and keeping a job are at best narrow. Second to that comes bureaucracy. Most recent problem with bureaucracy is with banks, often they refuse to issue a bank account to refugees or make it much more difficult than it was supposed to be. They repeatedly ask for additional proof of asylum and subsidiary protection even though refugees have a special kinds of identity cards where there is stated that the international protection is granted. Furthermore, recently there was a situation where a bank worker refused to give refugee bank statements without giving explanation for his refusal of service. Big problem is also that Croatia does not have elaborated system to recognize different qualifications which then leads to more trouble in finding a job that a refugee is trained to do.³⁰

²⁸The European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, www.ecre.org, accessed 20.3.2018

²⁹ Act on International and Temporary Protection, NN 70/15, 127/17

³⁰ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

7. Integration and regulation in the urban areas in the Republic of Croatia - case study of cities Zagreb, Rijeka and Zadar

In 2010 the Charter on Integrating Cities was launched in London when it was signed by 17 European Mayors. Since then several new European cities and one non-European city (Toronto) became signatories. This shows us that many city leaders and their government have made some serious effort to make integration more successful in urban areas. When talking to the Solidarity Cities³¹, Mayor of Nicosia, Constantinos Yiorkadjis said: "Without the immediate response from cities, the tragic situation, which unfolded in many European countries, would have been catastrophic". Unfortunately, not one city in Croatia has signed this charter. In this chapter we will examine how prepared are cities of Zagreb, Rijeka and Zadar for the challenges that they are facing regarding integration, how are bodies of local government in those cities are regulating integration and are there any existing current and future projects that will be dealing with that matter. The reasons mentioned cities are picked for this case study are following: Zagreb because it is the capital of Croatia, Rijeka as the future European Capital of Culture and Zadar because just recently that is the place where there have been resettled 40 refugees of Syrian Citizenship.

7.1. City of Zagreb

Zagreb is the capital of the Republic of Croatia, and the most populated city in Croatia. As the largest and capital city, Zagreb is the cultural, scientific, economic and administrative center of the Republic of Croatia. Thanks to being the largest traffic center in Croatia, developed industry with long tradition and scientific and research institutions, Zagreb is the most developed economic city in Croatia. According to the 2011 census, there are 790 017 inhabitants living in Zagreb. There is 735 824 Croatian nationals and 656 571 Catholics. The number show that the capital of the Republic of Croatia is a pretty homogeneous city as the

³¹ Solidarity Cities is an initiative on the management of the refugee crisis proposed by the Mayor of Athens and launched in the framework of the EURO CITIES network. It aims to constitute the framework under which all cities actions and initiatives are presented highlighting the political leadership of cities in addressing this challenge.

ratio of Croatian nationals (93,1%) and Catholics (83,1%) in relation to all the other nationalities and religions are on the bigger side.

In the Social Welfare Decision of the City of Zagreb the social welfare rights determined by this decision are exercised by citizens of the Republic of Croatia residing in the City of Zagreb and by asylum seekers and persons under subsidiary protection residing in the City of Zagreb with international protection granted in accordance with the Law on International and Temporary Protection. Social welfare consists of financial assistance to assistance and care allowance beneficiaries and users of personal disability checks as well as for personal needs of elderly home users. It also provides assistance to children in dairy meals, family package assistance, provide holidays, right to free annual public transport, temporary accommodation and other forms of help. It goes without saying that in order to acquire some of this social welfare benefits certain criteria must be reached; those criteria are dependent on what kind of social welfare benefit are needed.

Jesuit Refugee Service, which has been helping the refugees for 25 years now, finally carried out what was long wished for, to launch the "SOL" - The center for Integration of Refugees in Zagreb. The concept of the center for the integration of Refugees "SOL" is to empower refugees, assist their integration and familiarize and connect them with the local community. Within the center refugees will acquire organized support centred on studying Croatian, as the first step of integration, and mediation in retraining and employment. Additionally, JRS will arrange and conduct a chain of workshops committed to children and women, as well as intercultural meetings among locals and refugees in order to create a relationship of trust and future friendly and business cooperation³². Just recently JRS has been granted to conduct 70 house of Croatian language classes for 96 participants in partnership with Libar. Classes will be conducted at the center for Integration of Refugees in Zagreb "SOL".³³ Another notable organization that helps refugees with integration is FC Zagreb 014, football club that fights against racism and prejudice. It is the place for people of different backgrounds, religions and nationalities that perform as a unique team. Football academy has also recently been

³² Jesuit Refugee Service, www.jrs.hr

³³ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

launched, involving local children, along with refugee children.³⁴ Law clinic of the Faculty of Law in Zagreb also has the division called "Help to aliens and asylum seekers'. In January of 2013, the Legal Clinic entered into a contract with the Ministry of the Interior to provide legal aid and legal information to asylum seekers located at the Porin Hotel in Dugava. Realization of the project started in February of 2013 when the first members of the group who were led by an academic mentor doc. dr. sc. Goranka Lalic Novak visited the shelter in Porin.³⁵ The Association Are you Syrious, which operates in Croatia through providing support to refugees seeking or receiving asylum here, has recently opened a shop in Zagreb where it receives grants for migrants. Store space, besides receiving and storing goods, offers migrants several computers they can use to look for work or contact their families.³⁶

7.2. City of Rijeka

Rijeka is the largest Croatian port, the third largest city in Croatia and the administrative center of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. The city of Rijeka according to the last census has 128 624 inhabitants. 106 136 (82,5%) of those are declaring themselves as of Croatian nationality and 92 559 (71%) of them are Catholics. Rijeka is the most diverse city out of the three mentioned here.

When City Council of Rijeka adapted its Social Welfare decision in march of 2017., it failed to directly include refugees on its list of beneficiaries. The decision states that the social welfare rights established by this Decision can be acquired by the Croatian citizens residing in the city of Rijeka and foreigners and persons without citizenship with permanent residence in the city of Rijeka. According to the Croatian Foreigners Act, permanent residence may be granted to a third-country national who, until the date of his application to the Republic of Croatia, has had legally resided in Croatia for five years, including a temporary stay, asylum or subsidiary protection. That comes as a very counterproductive measure as it makes integration process more likely to fail considering how important early years in the integration

³⁴ JRS, I Get You report from 2017, <http://www.jrs.hr>, accessed 5.4.2018

³⁵ Law Clinic Zagreb, www.klinika.pravo.unizg.hr

³⁶ Are you Syrious opened a shop in Zagreb where it receives grants for migrants, voxfeminae.net

process are. Also in order for a refugee to acquire permanent residence he has to amongst other things have a self-support resources and must know the Croatian language and Latin script. If we do not provide them with adequate tools early on they will most likely have trouble fulfilling those requirements later.

The City of Rijeka presented its candidature for European Capital of Culture 2020. The program pursues to enhance the European cultural variety, celebrate the cultural relations that unify the Europeans, create a meeting-place for the Europeans coming from different backgrounds, promote their multiculturalism, multilingualism and mutual understanding and inspire the feeling of European citizenship. Migration, along with water and labor, is the main thematic backbone of the Rijeka - ECC program because they are recognized as one of the main features of the city, through its history and the present. So, for the most part, they devoted them to the entire program direction - the Kitchen. The Organization for Intercultural Cooperation – FLAVORS OF HOME cooks Middle Eastern specialties for local community and also employs people of migrant background, asylum granted person, asylum seekers and refugees, hence a vulnerable group of people who have found themselves on a very narrow labor market in Croatia. The organization looks for the best ways to integrate migrants and refugees and promotes social entrepreneurship and their economic emancipation.³⁷ Within the Week of Humanism in Croatian Nation Theater Ivan pl. Zajc from Rijeka has had an open discussion on the topic of "Artistic Association and Refugee Integration".³⁸

7.3. City of Zadar

Zadar is a Croatian town on the Adriatic Sea, the center of the Zadar County. Zadar is the second largest city in Dalmatia and the fifth in the Republic of Croatia. According to the 2011 census, Zadar has 75 062 inhabitants. Zadar has 70 674 (94,1%) inhabitants of Croatian nationality and 66 474 (88,6) Catholics. Out of the three cities we sampled here Zadar is the most homogeneous.

³⁷ European Capital of Culture 2020, www.rijeka2020.eu

³⁸ The Arts Council and Refugee Integration, <http://www.mojarijeka.hr>

In December of 2017, City Council of Zadar adapted its Social Welfare decision which came into force in January of 2018. The Decision states that certain rights provided there may also be provisionally granted to persons who do not have a residence in the Zadar area if such rights are required because of their living conditions and they legally reside in the Zadar area. People with granted asylum as well as their families are stated as one of those groups of people. Those rights include but are not limited to the right to assistance for housing costs, the right to a food service in a community kitchen, the right to a temporary accommodation service in a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

The Republic of Croatia is participating in the European scheme for relocation and resettlement of refugees in accordance to the conclusions of the European Council and decisions of Council of the European Union. In accordance with that 40 Syrian refugees have been resettled in Zadar recently. Seven families in which there are 26 children are temporarily housed in a hostel in Plovanija, while the International Organization for Migration (IOM) headquartered in Zagreb, as a government partner, is helping them with documents, finding new accommodation, jobs and with enrolling children in schools.³⁹

8. Conclusion

From 2004 to 2018, 9043 individuals have asked for an asylum in the Republic of Croatia, and only 369 of them were granted with the asylum, if we count the ones that were granted subsidiary protection the number rises to 485 individuals. Some unofficial numbers state that a third of them have had fled Croatia already. In the grand scheme of things, that's on the lower end of the spectrum considering some other European countries (for example Germany had 222 683 applicants just in 2017)⁴⁰. It's presumed that most of them are residing in the city of Zagreb what will explain why most of the non-government organizations are focused on that area and conduct most of their activity there. All in all, we can say that the Republic of Croatia has not really been hit with this so called "Migrant Crisis". Never the less, the Republic of Croatia still has to provide adequate mechanism for the integration of refugees

³⁹ Seven Syrian families will find a new life in Zadar, <http://www.057info.hr>, accessed on 13.4.2018

⁴⁰ Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration, <http://www.asylumineurope.org>, accessed on 13.4.2018

that have decided to stay on its territory. The way Croatia deals with integration is more through reacting to problems than setting a working mechanism prior to the need for them arising. We can witness that when we see how little local regulation actually exists in Croatia that are directly relating to the question of refugees. As a matter of fact, not one city has its strategic document in regards to integration and are at very best only mentioning asylees in their social welfare decisions. Without any doubt there are many problems here but things are starting to get better as institutions and their staff have slowly started to learn from their mistakes and adapt to the new situation.⁴¹ Still several measures are needed, both on national and local level of government.

National government should take advantage of more creative employment possibilities for people of different abilities and opportunities. The issue of refugees should be brought back to the political forefront to send a clear message to the public that hate speech, any form of racism or xenophobia will not be tolerated. Consult with non-governmental organizations and institutions when preparing new refugee laws and protocols. Provide financial support to initiatives that work with refugees daily. Encourage and provide education for public and state officials dealing with issues and rights of refugees and conduct courses in Croatian language on a continuous basis.⁴²

Local government should provide support to initiatives by providing them with a place for encounters, such as offices, sports facilities etc. Motivate schools and other educational institutions to organize lectures and activities to raise awareness and provide them with the necessary material and financial support. Initiate local public events to promote joint meetings and gathering of refugees and the local community and also like national government encourage and provide education for public and state officials dealing with issues and rights of refugees.⁴³ But most importantly, local government needs to develop strategic documents in regards to integration or at very least include refugees in to the existing local regulation.

⁴¹ Interview with Kristina Bednjanec from Jesuit Refugee Service conducted on 13.4.2018

⁴² JRS, I Get You report from 2017, <http://www.jrs.hr>, accessed 5.4.2018

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