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Reception Policies, Practices and Humanitarian Responses

Synthesis Report

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Focus: WP 4 focuses on **reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the current refugee crisis**. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization (especially promoted by the 2016 CEAS and by the ENP), relevant differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of research (**Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Sweden, UK, Turkey and Lebanon**). WP4 will map the policies and practices of reception and humanitarian responses of 11 countries, and migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices. The main objectives of the WP4 to be achieved are as follows: a) to develop a mapping of policies and practices of reception in the countries being researched; b) to develop a typology of these policies, practices and responses; c) to assess the coherence of these policies and practices with respect to international and EU standard; d) to study migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices; and e) to provide basic information in the area of reception for the development of all subsequent WPs.

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About the project

RESPOND is a Horizon 2020 project which aims at studying the multilevel governance of migration in Europe and beyond. The consortium is formed of 14 partners from 11 source, transit and destination countries and is coordinated by Uppsala University in Sweden. The main aim of this Europe-wide project is to provide an in-depth understanding of the governance of recent mass migration at macro, meso and micro levels through cross-national comparative research and to critically analyse governance practices with the aim of enhancing the migration governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and third countries.

RESPOND studies migration governance through a narrative which is constructed along five thematic fields: (1) Border management and security, (2) Refugee protection regimes, (3) Reception policies, (4) Integration policies, and (5) Conflicting Europeanization. Each thematic field is reflecting a juncture in the migration journey of refugees and designed to provide a holistic view of policies, their impacts and responses given by affected actors within.

In order to better focus on these themes, we divided our research question into work packages (WPs). The present report is concerned with the findings related to WP4, which focuses specifically on reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the current refugee crisis. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization (especially promoted by the 2016 CEAS and by the ENP), relevant differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of research (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Sweden, UK, Turkey and Lebanon). WP4 will map the policies and practices of reception and humanitarian responses of the afore-mentioned countries and migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices. The main objectives of WP4 are as follows:

- to develop a mapping of policies and practices of reception in the countries being researched;
- to develop a typology of these policies, practices and responses
- to assess the coherence of these policies and practices with respect to international and EU standard
- to study migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices
- to provide basic information in the area of reception for the development of all subsequent WPs.

The last point will be achieved through an additional comparative report that will be based on the data from individual country reports.

Executive summary

Mass migration entails multifaceted economic, political, social, and legal challenges and brings together a diversity of actors (e.g. state institutions, international and transnational organizations, non-governmental organisations, host communities and migrants) with unequal power and divergent priorities and interests. Much of the debate on migration is centred around the notion of ‘crisis’ and around its impact on the polarization of politics in especially Western countries. In this regard, migration as an overall topic has increasingly played a significant role in shaping the present and future of our societies.

In recent years, the so called “refugee crisis” has triggered considerable policy change in many countries along the Eastern Mediterranean route. We understand reception as a hybrid policy field with a strong attachment to social policy. In many countries, welfare production used to be (or has become) a highly collaborative endeavour which spans different levels of political decision making (e.g. national, regional and municipal) and involves a high degree of subcontracting and public-private collaboration.

Reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the migration of refugees in contemporary Europe and beyond are of great concern for state actors, non-state actors, institutions, private individual actors and refugees. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization at the EU level, many differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of this Synthesis Report. The previously published country reports in WP4 mostly discussed how the period of reception of refugees has become gradually extended. Most of the country reports demonstrated that there is a growing politics of deterrence of the nation-states while “Welcome Culture” in Europe has deteriorated to a great extent. Neo-liberal forms of governance, the emerging mechanisms of the so-called resilience of refugees, the problems of multi-level governance of migration and reception are also other contested areas to be covered by the country reports.

The WP4 findings address the modalities and consequences of subsidiarity as a key element of refugee reception. Based on a broad notion of subsidiarity as the capacity of a system to delegate tasks among different elements both vertically and horizontally, the WP4 examined a) politics of allocation and dispersal of refugees as a collaborative practice between federal states, regional states and municipalities, b) the involvement of non-state actors, be it NGOs or subcontracted for-profit organizations in the provision of housing and other reception services, c) the role and margins of appreciation of social workers and other street-level bureaucrats, d) proactive forms of self-confident and subversive participation of civic grassroots initiatives which provide services and also seek to facilitate the local political mobilization of refugees (e.g. through anti-deportation protest), and e) asylum seekers’ and refugees own perception and their responses to reception policies. As will be seen in this paper, reception is a very crucial transitional passage for individuals and has a major impact for their further integration.

Introduction

“2015 Refugee Crisis” has triggered considerable policy change in many countries along the Eastern Mediterranean route. Reception policy area is one of these areas where policies and practices have considerably changed. Reception is a hybrid policy field with a strong attachment to social policy. Reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the mass migration of refugees in contemporary Europe and beyond are of great concern for state actors, non-state actors, institutions, private individual actors and refugees. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization at the EU level, many differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of this Synthesis Report. The WP4 individual country reports mostly discussed how the period of reception has gradually become extended in a way that has created limbo situations in the lives of individual refugees and asylum seekers. Most of the country reports demonstrated that there is a growing politics of deterrence of the nation-states while “Welcome Culture” in Europe has deteriorated to a great extent. Neo-liberal forms of governance, the emerging mechanisms of the so-called resilience of refugees, the problems of multi-level governance of migration, externalization of migration policies and reception are also other contested areas that the country reports extensively covered.

Multi-level governance was originally defined by Hooghe and Marks (2001) as the dispersion of authority away from central government – upwards to the supranational level, downwards to subnational jurisdictions, and sideways to public–private networks. As seen in the formation of protection and integration policies in the field of migration and asylum, there is also a similar trend in the making of reception policies: a shift from state-centric level to both supra-national level and to local public-private level. In this report, the latter will be depicted more in the sense that the neo-liberal forms of governmentality of nation-states have paved the way to the local turn in the making of reception policies and practices (Scholten and Penninx, 2016). However, the local turn, which has both empowered, and delegated the power of nation-states to, municipal authorities as well as to NGOs, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and private individuals, is not only a result of neo-liberal forms of governmentality, but also an outcome of the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations in 2016.

While we observe different examples of a restrictive turn and local turn in all member states, the restrictive approach has also been externalized through bilateral deals such as the EU-Turkey Statement which was put into force in March 2016.¹ The deal and its aftermath has made it evident that the EU member states did not have a solidarity in managing the so-called refugee crisis that erupted in the summer of 2015. Adopted on March 18, 2016, under the terms of the agreement, newly arriving irregular migrants and asylum seekers who did not apply or whose applications for asylum were declared inadmissible would be returned to their first point of entry, Turkey. Under the terms of the statement, the EU agreed to provide €6 billion to Turkey through the Facility for Refugees in order to continue supporting mechanisms and guarantee funding for further projects to assist Syrian refugees residing in Turkey.²

¹ For more detail see http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-1723_en.htm

² For details of the EU – Turkey Statement see https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20180314_eu-turkey-two-years-on_en.pdf.

The deal with Turkey was built on the back of the failing Dublin III Protocol and the 2015 EU Agenda on Migration, which sought to establish a relocation system to distribute asylum seekers among member states while welcoming additional migrants. While most Member States do not share a unified approach to immigration policy, the so-called “refugee crisis” posed a particular threat to the solidarity of the EU (Geddes and Scholten, 2016). The lack of solidarity has mainly triggered the deal. The Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting held on 14 September 2015 hosted tension and conflict over a relocation proposal, which was eventually adopted by qualified majority, establishing a two-year plan to relocate 160,000 Syrian refugees from Greece, Italy, and Hungary to other Member States. Tensions came from leaders supporting more stringent policies as not to increase Europe’s attractiveness to migrants. Slovakia fought refugee quotas by taking legal action with the European Court of Justice, while other member states suspended Schengen regulations and closed their borders. At the end of January 2016, when less than 500 refugees were resettled from Greece and Italy, it became obvious that reluctance on the part of member states would prevent any significant impact (Zaccaria, 2019; Benvenuti, 2017). Despite this conflictual picture among the Member States caused by the Statement, the deal conforms to an understanding of justice as non-domination due to the fact that it has recognised the sovereignty of each Member State as well as Turkey being responsible for governing the mass migration issue in accordance with their discretion (Sjursen, 2017). The EU - Turkey deal is the turning point for the stabilisation of ‘migration flows’ which gave EU Member States the opportunity to introduce more restrictive measures domestically, including reception policies. This shows the chronology of down-sliding ‘trend’ of welcome culture.

EU member states have not demonstrated a good degree of solidarity during and after the refugee crisis. Although the European public mostly exhibited a “welcome culture” in the beginning of the crisis, this was a rather temporary situation. EU member states are also very diverse as far as their legal and political stance on reception is concerned. The WP4 findings address the modalities and consequences of subsidiarity as a key element of refugee reception. The WP4 examined a) politics of allocation and dispersal of refugees as a collaborative practice between federal states, regional states and municipalities, b) the involvement of non-state actors, be it NGOs or subcontracted for-profit organizations in the provision of housing and other reception services, c) the role and margins of appreciation of social workers and other street-level bureaucrats, d) proactive forms of civic grassroots initiatives which provide services and also seek to facilitate the local political mobilization of refugees (e.g. through anti-deportation protest), and e) asylum seekers’ and refugees own perception and their responses to reception policies. As will be seen in this report, reception is a very crucial transitional passage for individuals and has a major impact for their further integration.

The definition and scope of reception in EU legislation can serve as a common point of departure and a heuristic assumption to grasp various possible dimensions of ‘reception’. For instance, Direction 2013/33/EU points out a number of “material conditions” of reception including “*housing, food and clothing* provided in kind, or as *financial allowances* or in vouchers, or a combination of the three, and a *daily expenses allowance*” (Article 2 (g)). The direction also touches upon matters of *education* (Article 14) and basic *health care* which ought to be provided during the period of reception, and formulates criteria for proper accommodation (e.g. an adequate standard of living, protecting vulnerable populations, qualified staff, see Article 18). Even though the time frame of ‘reception’ is not clearly defined in EU legislation,

there is an implicit definition: *reception starts as soon as the border of a given state has been crossed and an application for international protection has been made. It ends either with the “effective expulsion” of unsuccessful applicants or with the acceptance of their request for protection*, which, in the terminology of RESPOND, makes them subject to ‘integration’.

The Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 (2013/33/EU) laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection specifies that standards for the reception of applicants that suffice to ensure applicants for international protection a dignified standard of living and comparable living conditions in all Member States should be laid down.³ The Directive leaves a remarkable degree of discretion to define what constitutes a dignified standard of living and how it should be achieved. Though the Directive tries to harmonize the reception regimes of the member states, national reception systems differ greatly in setup and modalities for the provision of reception conditions. The European Agenda on Migration has also underlined the importance of a clear system for the reception of applicants for international protection as part of a strong common European asylum policy;⁴ it refers to the need for further guidance to improve the standards on reception conditions across EU Member States.

RESPOND has covered eleven countries in detail as far as the reception policies, practices and responses were concerned between 2011 and 2017: Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Iraq, Lebanon, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. In this report, following the summary of methodology applied in each case, a short account of the legal and political aspects of migrant reception regimes in these countries and migrants’ responses will be given in accordance with the findings exposed in the WP4 individual country reports. Subsequently, the report will discuss in detail the common tropes that have repeatedly appeared during the field research in each country. The report will be concluded with a general analysis of the findings and policy recommendations.

³ EU Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013L0033>

⁴ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, “A European Agenda On Migration”, COM(2015) 240, 13 May 2015

Methodology

The RESPOND methodology reflects the multilevel governance architecture of the field of migration and reception policy within the EU-framework by shedding light on the Europeanisation and harmonisation of reception policies as well as by analysing the transposition of EU law into national legal frameworks and national developments in the 11 RESPOND countries. However, RESPOND additionally pays attention to the ‘meso level’ of Political stakeholders as municipal administrations and non-state actors such as NGOs as well as to the micro level of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers themselves. These dimensions and actors complicate conceptualisations of multi-level governance that portray the different levels as clearly definable; rather all three levels together as well as a focus on actors, implementation and practices as well as narratives indicates a complex regime approach that is challenged by the movements of (forced) migration.

The report content is based on empirical work from 11 country reports that primarily cover interview material conducted with stakeholders active in the field of reception and individual asylum seekers and refugees. In total more than 200 stakeholder interviews, and more than 540 interviews with asylum seekers and refugees were conducted in 11 countries during the period of 2018-2019. In country reports all these interview materials analysed through a common coding scheme and different types of qualitative analysis software programmes (e.g. Nvivo, Atlas.ti) were used. The interview material in each country report was supported with secondary sources and careful investigation of legal and policy documents, particularly to analyse the legal political framework of migration governance, including reception at macro level. The synthesizing report is built on these country reports, and provide a summary of these reports aiming to reflect on several recurring themes.

Countries in General

EU Member States present a variety of policies and practices as far as protection and reception regimes are concerned. National differences in welfare standards (Brekke and Brochmann, 2015) and in access to accommodation, work, health services and education (Zaun, 2016) for asylum seekers persist. The length to process asylum seekers' claims highly differs from one-member state to the other. The average duration of asylum procedure ranges from 2.5 months (Belgium) to 10.5 months (Luxembourg) (Angeloni and Maria Spano, 2018). There is also dissimilarity among EU Member States about allowing asylum seekers to work while their application is pending (Constant and Zimmermann, 2016). For instance, the applicants who are still awaiting a decision on their asylum can immediately have access to the labour market in Greece and Sweden, or they can apply to work after 2 months in Italy, or after 3 months in Austria, or after 6 months in Spain, or after 9 months in Hungary. However, some countries such as Austria, Germany, and Hungary impose further labour market restrictions (Wagner et al., 2016). Whereas in the UK, those who arrive as refugees via one of the resettlement programmes face a substantially different policy environment across all dimensions of integration. Refugees can have free access to secondary healthcare; access student finance and free ESOL (language) classes straight away; have no formal restrictions on employment; are allocated a case worker to assist them in linking up with services, and can access mainstream benefits on the same basis as UK citizens. Moreover, the characteristics of reception arrangements for asylum seekers vary considerably across EU countries -a point which will be discussed in upcoming publication on reception typologies (Nagel and Kaya, 2020) ranging from open reception centres to detention facilities (Mouzourakis and Taylor, 2016). Conditions in many of these accommodation facilities present serious concerns and are not suitable for residence of asylum seekers. Non-EU states covered by the RESPOND research such as Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon have even more diverse policies and practices with regards to reception of refugees such as the introduction of temporary protection regulation in Turkey (Mencütek, 2018).

In the following section, the depiction of each country will be made in accordance with a classification separating the EU member states from the non-EU states in alphabetical order. In the categorization of countries we have used EU membership as grouping the countries where this research is conducted. EU member states if they do not opt out are obliged to transpose directives, e.g. Reception Directive and other CEAS measures into their national legislations. This legal framework and governance structure make them different from non-EU countries. Having said so, the categorization is only used for developing a systematic analysis in this report.

EU Member states

Austria⁵

The legal basis for reception into the federal system of Austria was created in 2004 under the Basic Welfare Support Agreement (*Grundversorgungsvereinbarung*, GVV No. 80/2004). This legal framework was later developed to cover the Reception Conditions Directive 2013/33/EU. The Agreement regulates power and cost-sharing between the federal government and the nine Austrian provinces, stipulating the provision of suitable accommodation, adequate care and the granting of monthly pocket money. During the time of the substantive asylum procedure, the provinces are responsible for the provision of Basic Welfare Support, admitting asylum seekers into their system according to an allocation formula that takes into account the number of inhabitants and the availability of open spots. Municipalities are responsible for the implementation of housing during reception, yet they are excluded from policy formulation.

During the so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015, the shortage of reception facilities led to a series of conflicts between different levels of government involved in the regulation of asylum seekers’ distribution and housing. Following the introduction of a federal constitutional law, stipulating an obligatory admission quota for all municipalities, the number of accommodations increased. However, the distribution across all provinces has remained uneven while Vienna admitted the largest share. As the number of new arrivals decreased since the EU-Turkey Statement put into force in March 2016, newly created small scale facilities were closed down.

One of the pressing issues of asylum seekers in Austria remains to be their exclusion from the labour market. In 2018, young asylum seekers were banned from apprenticeships in order not to attract more immigrants as well as to prevent those still in asylum process putting down roots. It seems that there are only seasonal work and charitable employment facilities left for the asylum seekers in Austria to hold onto. Asylum seekers affected by this condition are subject to negative consequences including a general sense of frustration, isolation and the lack of meaningful social relationships, dependency on social aid, and a turn to black market activities.

Language and education courses provided at the provincial and municipal level have proved to be an important part of everyday life in reception, creating a routine and a sense of social normality. The landscape of language courses is rather confusing and there are difficulties in the matching of participants and finding the right course providers. The system of services and allowances generally displays discrepancies across federal provinces. While civil society, NGOs and some local government actors helped overcome the reception crisis, their involvement has received little acknowledgement from the federal state level (Josipovic and Reeger, 2020). Instead of promoting existing support and integration structures, the federal government has pursued a restrictive approach with the most recent plans pointing towards a

⁵ For more detail on the Austrian Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Austria Country Report by Josipovic and Reeger (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-austria-country-report>

centralization of competences in the realm of reception. This may imply a monopoly on the management of reception facilities and an isolation strategy, placing asylum seekers in remote areas with limited access to social and legal aid.

Germany⁶

Between 2011 and 2017, there has been a major change in the position of asylum seekers within the reception regime in Germany. The panic-driven climax of overcrowding numbers and emergency discourses in 2015/16 was later replaced by what many of the reception stakeholders in Germany perceived as a process of “normalization”. This kind of “normalization” was not only driven by domestic policy innovations alone. Instead, the Turkey-EU statement has proved quite effective in limiting the overall numbers of asylum applicants in Germany and thus, relieving the reception system. “Normalization” has also become a policy doctrine in itself and is closely associated with a paradigm of “integrated refugee management”, that seeks to regain control on the basis of spatial concentration and punitive measures.

Despite its immigration history since the 19th century, Germany is still a “reluctant” immigration country. To that effect, migration policy making has been defensive for a long time. Since the introduction of the very term “guest workers” for the early labour migrants in the 1950s indicates that the right to stay is transitory and based on appropriate code of conduct. Germany’s ongoing state of being a “reluctant” immigration country purports an asymmetric understanding of hospitality and stands exemplary for a human capital-centred strand of the public discussion of immigration with a specific focus on economic growth.

Furthermore, the strong federal structure of the German state fosters an incoherence of migration policies and practices within and across national, regional and municipal levels of migration governance. While border management and protection are national responsibilities, reception and integration remain to be the responsibilities of the regional states (*Bundesländer*) and the municipalities (Chemin and Nagel, 2020). However, regional states and municipalities differ remarkably in terms of reception practices. The multi-level setting of the German reception system along with the fragmentary nature of migration policy have created tremendous legal uncertainty, which contributes to the vulnerability and insecurity of asylum seekers. While the new reception policy paradigm of “integrated refugee management” provides the means for basic subsistence for a high number of asylum applicants, it confines the capabilities of refugees as far as the freedom of movement, self-subsistence and inclusion in the labour market, and civic participation are concerned (Chemin and Nagel, 2020).

⁶ For more detail on the German Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Germany Country Report by Chemin and Nagel (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-germany-country-report>

Greece⁷

For a long time, Greece has been known as a transit country, but the recent situation changed this, especially in the direction towards a protracted existence of asylum seekers and refugees in reception facilities. At the national level, Presidential Decree (PD) 220/2007 placed the reception and accommodation of asylum-seekers within the competence of the services of the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity. Prior to that, reception centres were under the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Order. According to this PD, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity became responsible for the implementation of a full set of measures for the reception and accommodation of asylum-seekers, including material reception conditions (Papatzani et al., 2020). Despite these legal provisions and the structural framework for the organization and implementation of reception, the functioning of the reception system has been problematic, especially due to the lack of capacity of reception facilities.

Greece continues to suffer from the lack of capacity in handling the demands of irregular migrants in the islands. Accommodation difficulties of asylum-seekers in the North-eastern Aegean islands continue to be a big problem. The imposition of the “geographical restriction” on the islands since the launch of the EU-Turkey Statement has led to significant overcrowding in the reception facilities. Prevailing reception conditions, particularly in the Hotspots, have reached a devastating level as the basic needs and human rights of asylum seekers are threatened and violated on an everyday basis. The camps in mainland Greece were established in remote areas without adequate transportation, resulting in the spatial segregation of asylum-seekers and are not suitable for long-term accommodation. Accommodation in the urban space through the UNHCR accommodation scheme “Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation programme - ESTIA” is a good practice with a very limited outreach.

The reception system in Greece also suffers from serious shortcomings regarding early access to education and labour market. Despite some progress made in the last few years, low rates of school attendance among immigrant children still exist. As regards employment, asylum-seekers and especially those who do not speak Greek have limited access to the formal labour market. Additionally, they face a wide range of administrative obstacles in order to obtain the necessary documents. Limited access to health care and psychosocial support remains to be another impediment for irregular migrants in the Hotspots on the North-eastern Aegean islands as well as in camps in the mainland. Basic needs of immigrants such as food, hygiene products and blankets are not being covered. Most of the reception centres and Hotspots across the country have already surpassed their capacity. The Greek welfare state – hit by the global financial crisis of 2008 – is inadequate to cover the relevant needs. Although there is no discrimination by law, asylum-seekers and refugees are usually excluded from specific allowances due to administrative requirements, while cash assistance for asylum-seekers refers, to present, to a limited number of beneficiaries (Papatzani et al., 2020).

⁷ For more detail on the Greek Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Greece Country Report by Papatzani et al. (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-greece-country-report>

Hungary⁸

The Hungarian reception system follows a centralised, top-down model regarding asylum and immigration policy. The rules of reception are set forth by the Asylum Act (Act LXXX of 2007) and its corresponding Government Decree (301/2007 (XI. 9.)) on the implementation of the Act (Gyollai and Korkut, 2020). The Asylum Act has gone through several amendments over the years, significantly deteriorating the situation of asylum seekers and the conditions of reception. Hungarian government established transit zones along the Hungarian-Serbian border fence, which have become the only reception facilities in the country over the past couple of years.

It is orchestrated at the national level featuring no municipal or regional characteristics. As of July 2019, the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (NDGAP) is responsible for all matters of immigration and asylum in Hungary including reception. Reception centres are run by NDGAP in cooperation with and with the supplementary services of NGOs. The supervisory body of NDGAP is the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The institutional structure of NDGAP comprises a head office in Budapest, and regional directorates in Pécs, Szeged, Debrecen, Miskolc, Székesfehérvár and Győr (Gyollai and Korkut, 2020). Since 2019, the Government has incorporated asylum authority under the authority of the Police and the remit of the Act XXXIV of 1994 on the Police and the Act XLII of 2015 on the Service Status of Professional Members of Law Enforcement Agencies.⁹ Both the Police and the Armed Forces have already been involved into reception policy especially concerning the so-called “crisis situation caused by mass migration”.

It seems that the Hungarian government operates its migration management and effectively reception policies amidst a full lack of accountability measures. The government discourse has monopolised migration policy to the extent that any opposition to its policies is branded as treason against the nation and Christianity. Gyollai and Korkut (2020) also indicate that the Hungarian government has become more authoritarian since being elected to office in 2010 , and dysfunctionalized checks and balances in the country. The trend started with curbing the influence of the courts, and continued with attacks on the civil society groups. Such political and administrative changes have made asylum seekers and refugees even more vulnerable since the so-called 2015 refugee crisis (Gyollai and Korkut, 2020).

Italy¹⁰

The Italian national legal system has been in compliance with Directive 2013/33/EU laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection. However, the Italian reception system has also developed in accordance with the model envisaged by the UNCHR

⁸ For more detail on the Hungarian Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Hungary Country Report by Gyollai and Korkut (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-hungary-country-report>

⁹ See Gov. Decree No. 126/2019 (V. 30.).

¹⁰ For more detail on the Italian Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Italy Country Report by Terlizzi (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-italy-country-report>

in the early 2000s that pointed to the need to establish a complementarity between ‘first’ and ‘second’ reception. As for first reception, facilities run by the central government were seen as the best response to the needs of asylum seekers upon their arrival. Services should include health and psychological assistance as well as legal counselling that should properly channel asylum seekers through the asylum procedure. As for the second reception, it was thought that NGOs would have better run the second reception activities by providing refugees and asylum seekers with accommodation in small facilities or apartments. The rationale behind this assumption was that asylum seekers often have to wait very long for the final outcome of their asylum application (Terlizzi, 2020).

There is a discrepancy between the legal-political framework and the actual functioning of the reception system in Italy. What is formally guaranteed to asylum seekers by law is not fully implemented in practice. Though the regional level formally enjoys responsibility, in practice this level of government is bypassed. While civil society associations play a crucial role in the provision of reception services, there is an insufficient collaboration between state and non-state actors.

The ‘hotspot approach’ suffers from many deficiencies as far as first aid and assistance are concerned. The activities taking place in hotspots lack a clear and solid legal basis. Hotspots are not regulated by any EU directive or regulation nor by primary Italian legislation.¹¹ The Italian reception system is also not equipped enough to classify migrants as asylum seekers or economic migrants depending on a summary assessment. Poor living conditions and severe violations of fundamental rights in hotspots as well as in pre-removal facilities continue to remain intact.

There are also other problematic aspects that are constituted by territorial differences in reception practices and discretionary interpretation of the rules, the excessive use of extraordinary reception centres, the access to clear (legal) information for asylum seekers, as well as to health services, housing, labour market and education system. Finally, there are also problems resulting from the approval of Decree-Law No. 113/2018 (the so-called ‘Salvini Decree’), which revoked the right of asylum seekers to be hosted in the SPRAR facilities.¹² This situation resulted in thousands of people being thrown into the street in a matter of days,

¹¹ Beyond the very loose policy framework governing Hotspots, no specific legal framework has been established for them. See the report prepared by Directorate-General for Internal Policies (2016: 29-30).

¹² The SPRAR project (Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers) is financed by the Ministry for the Interior through the National Fund for Asylum Policy and Services. Its aim is to support and protect asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants who fall under other forms of humanitarian protection. Applicants who have filed a request for asylum and have no means of subsistence (determined by the welfare check annual amount) are brought into the system of secondary level reception centres. Besides food and shelter, centres must provide services such as linguistic and cultural mediation, Italian language courses, vocational training and guidance and legal assistance so as to facilitate integration. Accommodation is granted for six months, which can be extended for a further six months and is in any case guaranteed until the decision of the Territorial Commission or, in case of appeal, until the outcome of the suspension request and/or the definition of the first degree proceeding. In 2018, SPRAR was renamed SIPROIMI – Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (Decree-Law no. 113 of 4 October 2018, enacted as Law no. 132 of 1 December 2018). See for further information <https://www.sprar.it/english>

which reinforced problems linked to the accommodation business and the black market. This results in increasing insecurity for asylum seekers (Terlizzi, 2020). In return, asylum seekers and refugees who drop out of the reception system often end up being exploited by criminal networks.

Poland¹³

The legal framework of asylum in Poland encompasses national, European, and international legislation. As far as reception is concerned, three legal acts are most important: Law of 13 June 2003 on granting protection to foreigners within the territory of the Republic of Poland (consolidated text, Journal of Laws 2019, item 1666 with amendments), Ordinance of the Minister of Interior and Administration of 19 February 2016 on the amount of assistance for foreigners seeking international protection (Journal of Laws 2016, item 311), and Ordinance of the Ministry of Interior of 23 October 2015 on the rules of stay in the centre for foreigners (Journal of Laws 2015, item 1828). Due to membership in the European Union, Poland participates in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Therefore, as an EU Member State, Poland is obliged to transpose directives and other CEAS measures into national legislation.

In Poland, reception in legal and institutional terms means assistance for foreigners in applying for international protection. Its basic scope is governed by the national provisions of the Law on Protection Act and two regulations regarding amount of financial assistance for asylum seekers and rules of stay in the centres for foreigners. The most important public body responsible for the reception policy is the Office for Foreigners, supervised by the Ministry of Interior and Administration, and in particular its Department for Social Assistance. Medical service providers for asylum seekers also play an important role – since 2015 it is a private entity called PetraMedica. Key actors in the area of public education for children include the Ministry of National Education, local public schools as well as local self-government authorities in the vicinity of the centres for foreigners. To this end, NGOs also provide various forms of support to foreigners both in and outside the centres (Pachocka et al., 2020).

Refugees and asylum seekers interviewed in Poland stated that the centres meet their basic living and social needs. However, staying in the centres is not conducive to pre-integration due to the location of centres outside cities, the inability to work legally during the first six months of the asylum procedure, the limited offer of Polish language courses or other activities. The scope of needs that can be met depends on the regulations and the availability of financial resources. Some immigrants do not invest in the pre-integration process. For instance, they are not willing to engage in Polish language courses, because they do not know whether they will get or not a positive decision on their case and stay in Poland. It is also difficult to socialize on a daily basis if accommodation centres are located in remote rural areas. The situation is different for immigrants in decentral housing, however, struggle with their small allowance still remains (Pachocka et al., 2020).

¹³ For more detail on the Polish Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Poland Country Report by Pachocka et al. (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-poland-country-report>

Sweden¹⁴

The central legislation for reception system in Sweden is formulated with the Act on Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others in 1994 (LMA) and with the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others Ordinance. The LMA was introduced in order to accommodate the large number of asylum seekers fleeing from the Balkan Wars in the early 1990s. The Act addresses which government entity should have the main responsibility for reception. An amendment in 2016, as an attempt to manage the 'refugee crisis', strengthened the LMA (2016 Amendment to the Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others): access to reception conditions was cut down for certain groups such as adults without children who have received a decision on refusal which cannot be appealed anymore, or those adults whose period for voluntary return has ended (Barthoma et al., 2020). Since the adoption of the *Lag om eget boende* (EBO) Act of 1994, asylum seekers and refugees are free to organise housing on their own. However, new amendments have been introduced to the 1994 EBO Act decided on 27 November 2019, which came into force on 1 January 2020, imposing restrictions on EBO housing arrangements. According to the new changes introduced into the EBO-legislation, asylum seekers will lose their financial support (daily allowance) if they choose to settle in certain socially vulnerable areas - in total 32 municipalities. Another important legislation introduced during this period is the Settlement Act of 2016, (2016:38), which came into force on 1 March 2016, making it compulsory for the municipalities to organise accommodation for refugees thus ensuring geographic dispersion. In Sweden, reception of newcomers is perceived by some municipalities as a 'burden' whereas others see it as a way to overcome the problems of an aging population and its subsequent impact on local welfare services. The centralised organisation of reception could be put into question considering varying capacity and infrastructure among municipalities, creating diverse reception experiences for asylum seekers. The capacity of the reception system as a whole was pushed to its limits in late 2015 and caused diverse backlogs and challenges in the reception system. Mainly, it resulted in extremely long waiting times for the processing of asylum claims, lasting up to over two years. This protracted reception situation created both practical and psychological problems – such as the lack of access to proper language classes and labour opportunities and uncertainty about one's legal status.

Establishing social networks, learning the language, adapting to the new culture, the asylum seekers root themselves in Sweden, while not considering return or alternative destinations. This makes a negative asylum decision dramatically devastating. Fear of deportation leads to an increasing number of adult refugees and unaccompanied minors living in Sweden in an irregular situation. The absence of legal status along with the lack of information about their rights in terms of access to public services have resulted in risks of physical and mental health deterioration, lack of protection and the risk of involvement in deviant activities (Barthoma et al., 2020).

Housing/accommodation is one of the main problems during the reception period. Housing is deeply connected with the idea of creating a 'new home' and thus, feeling safe. This is equally

¹⁴ For more detail on the Swedish Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Sweden Country Report by Barthoma et al. (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-sweden-country-report>

important as employment for the further integration of newcomers. Asylum seekers are very much disturbed with the regulations of Article 18 of the Directive 2013/33/EU. Being placed in shared accommodation facilities disregarding gender, age, health conditions and traumatic experience (vulnerable groups) makes them feel unsafe and being treated inhumanely. The isolated location of some facilities is associated with the problems and challenges related to the lack of infrastructure, obstacles in accessing health care services, poor representation of civil society organizations, and the feeling of being segregated as they are surrounded mainly by other asylum seekers. This creates the feeling of disconnection from the broader society. Notably, municipal facilities are called 'camps' by the majority of the asylum seekers interviewed, regardless of their location (Barthoma et al., 2020).

United Kingdom¹⁵

The reception system in the UK has a wider scope than that envisaged in Directives 2003/9/EC of 27 January 2003 – which has been transposed into British legislation - and 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection – which has not. The key legislative acts are the Immigration Act 1999 and the Asylum Support Regulations (ASR) 2000, but the entitlements of asylum seekers to reception conditions are laid out in several legal acts as well as in the UK immigration rules (Karamanidou and Folley, 2020).

Similar to the directive, asylum support provisions concern those who have a current application for international protection status, including the appeal stage and subsequent applications. However, asylum support in the UK is extended to refused asylum seekers who have exhausted legal challenges, but cannot be deported, who are entitled to some material reception conditions if they are destitute. The UK operates two domestic resettlement schemes – the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). Through these schemes, UNHCR-recognised refugees arrive directly to the UK from third countries – mainly from Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. While the experiences and needs of the resettled group upon arrival are comparable to those of asylum seekers, their access to social welfare is governed by the legal framework concerning recognised refugees (Karamanidou and Folley, 2020).

As far as reception conditions and services are concerned, there is a clear distinction between "recognized refugees" who come via a resettlement programme and the so-called 'normal' asylum seekers in the UK. Those coming to the UK via a resettlement programme are received at the airport by an official as a gesture of welcoming, but those applying for asylum arrive in the UK in 'irregular' ways and live in relatively difficult conditions. However, some entitlements differ depending on whether they have received refugee leave after July 2017, or humanitarian protection before July 2017.

¹⁵ Even though since January 31, 2020 the UK is no longer a member of the EU, in this report we have dealt with the reception policy of the country together with the other member states. For more detail on the UK Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 UK Country Report by Karamanidou and Folley (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-uk-country-report>

WP4 UK Country report reveals that the British reception system fails to safeguard and realise the human rights of asylum seekers. This is a perspective shared by both asylum seekers and third sector stakeholders as witnessed during the field research. This seems to be a planned failure, as the aim of the British reception policy is exclusion and deterrence (Karamanidou and Folley, 2020). It also operates as an internal migration control system that pushes people towards destitution in order to leave the UK (Karamanidou and Folley, 2020).

Non-EU States

Iraq¹⁶

Iraq constitutes a contrasting case within the RESPOND research framework as it represents both a source country and a transit and destination country for especially Syrian refugees. The Iraqi legal system lacks clear indications to organize and determine the reception process, therefore the Iraqi executive authorities have come up with a number of ad-hoc decisions in the light of the immigration of Syrian refugees during the Syrian Civil War. In its 32nd session on July 24th 2012, the Council of Ministers issued a decree which included the establishment of camps and service facilities in the relevant border areas (Al-Qaim and Rabeaa). In that document, reception was envisaged as a collaborative policy issue to be administered by the Ministries of Defence, Interior and Transportation as well as the governorates of Nineveh and Anbar and the Red Crescent (Warda et al., 2020).

In practice, Iraq has faced major challenges in implementing an adequate infrastructure of reception, which forced refugees to seek shelter in provisional housing arrangements, such as government school buildings. Many of these facilities lacked the most basic necessities of life and exhibited bad hygienic conditions. Likewise, Iraq has faced severe challenges in providing for the basic health of Syrian refugees on its territory. Many of them suffered from various digestive diseases or skin allergies and reported complications and a lack of public assistance in finding proper treatment. Whereas many Syrians were not granted the formal right to work since they were not recognized as refugees, the authorities turned a blind eye on those working in sympathy with their situation.

Iraq hosts around 247 thousand Syrian refugees as of early 2020.¹⁷ Iraq is not only preoccupied with the Syrian refugees; the country is also engaged in the problems of the internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since 2014, Iraq has experienced repeated waves of internal displacement. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) crisis induced displacement from the beginning of 2014 to the end of 2017. However, while ISIL spread across the country, IDPs started to return to their places of origin in the meantime, following the recapture of occupied areas in 2015. As for January 2019, 1.8 million IDPs remained displaced facing a situation of potential protracted displacement while 4.1 million have returned to their places of origin (IOM Iraq, 2019). As far as the WP4 Iraq Country report shows refugees

¹⁶ For more detail on the Iraqi Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Iraq Country Report by Warda et al. (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-iraq-country-report>

¹⁷ See <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/5>

inside the camps of the Al-Anbar Governorate were able to work inside the camps in fields, such as haircutting, sewing, blacksmithing, construction, and groceries (Warda et al., 2020). They were not allowed to work outside the camp. In the Kurdistan Region, most of the refugees expressed that their reception period was short, sometimes not more than a few days.¹⁸ The authorities in the region gave them freedom to leave the camps after being sponsored by an Iraqi or by relatives in the region who have had residency or were known to the security authorities.

Lebanon¹⁹

Lebanon does not have a comprehensive national legislation to dictate reception standards. Lebanon's fragile political and confessional balance has resulted in the lack of consensus among officials and the adoption of a "laissez faire" approach in terms of the reception of refugees. Asylum seekers and all other foreigners fall under the 1962 Law Regulating the Entry and Stay of Foreigners in Lebanon and their Exit from the Country. However, while its relevant provisions are not able to absorb refugees or asylum seekers, they are often considered as irregular migrants. During the mass migration of Iraqi refugees in early 2000s, the 2003 bilateral cooperative Memorandum of Understanding between the UNHCR and the Lebanese General Security Office (GSO) reasserted that Lebanon is a transit country, and that an asylum seeker is referred to as a person seeking asylum in a country other than Lebanon. This MoU offers unprecedented legal assurances to asylum seekers and clearly spells out the respective obligations of UNHCR and its government counterparts. However, the agreement contains a number of structural flaws and does not mention key refugee protection norms, such as that of non-refoulement. Similar to Turkey and Iraq, Syrian refugees were received in Lebanon within the discursive framework of "guesthood" with religious connotations.

Reception policies and practices in Lebanon are decentralised. Although Lebanon is party to various international conventions guaranteeing the basic rights of asylum seekers, they are not really internalized by the national legislation. Various state and non-state actors involved in multi-dimensional reception have failed to unify their efforts between the different levels of governance in taking the responsibility of asylum seekers. Indeed, in the absence of formalised national reception legislation, local municipalities and non-state actors have become important players in the reception processes of refugees and asylum seekers (Rahme, 2020).

Syrian asylum seekers face a variety of hurdles and formalities affecting their everyday lives such as difficulties in accessing the border, gender-related obstacles in regularising their legal status, and restrictions in accessing income generating opportunities, education, housing, services and allowances. The persistent exclusionary ad-hoc policies and practices at both the local and national level are carried out with the aim of deterring Syrian asylum seekers from staying, and further push them to perceive resettlement or repatriation as their only long-term viable options (Rahme, 2020). The data gathered from the interviews in the field reveal that Syrian asylum seekers are dissatisfied with the overall process of reception. WP4 Lebanon Country report also shows that negative lived experiences of the majority with security officials

¹⁸ Kurdistan region of Iraq

¹⁹ For more detail on the Lebanese Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Lebanon Country Report by Rahme (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-lebanon-country-report>

have served to further preserve the perception of Lebanon as a country of transit and not one of resettlement, and reinforce the element of temporariness of “hospitality” (Rahme, 2020).

Turkey²⁰

Turkey is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, maintaining the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, thus retaining resettlement to a third country as the most preferred durable solution for refugees arrived due to the events occurred outside of Europe²¹. Turkey has adopted its Temporary Protection Directive in 2014 from a similar European experience implemented during the Balkan refugee crisis in the 1990s – during a period when there was no Common European Asylum System, harmonised asylum rules, or structures such as the European Refugee Fund, Frontex and a European Asylum Support Office. Turkey only accepts During the Balkan refugee crisis, member states had to rely on ad hoc measures to provide an adequate humanitarian response. Bosnian refugees between 1992 and 1995 and Kosovar refugees in 1999 were offered protection. These practices were later standardised and embedded in the Temporary Protection Directive.²²

At the very beginning of the Syrians’ migration to Turkey in April 2011, the Turkish state had provided Syrians with temporary protection consisting of three elements: an open-door policy for all Syrians; no forced returns to Syria (non-refoulement); and unlimited duration of stay in Turkey. Syrians were previously framed as “guests” by the state actors, a political discursive frame which was later complemented with the religiously-loaded discourse of “Ansar Spirit”. The framing of Syrian refugees as “guests” is no longer sustainable, neither in terms of accommodating their urgent needs, nor in coming to terms with the increasing resentment among the local populations vis-à-vis the refugees. Turkey first introduced a Temporary Protection Directive for the refugees in 2014, based on Articles 61 to 95 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection which came into force in April 2014. The directive grants Syrians almost the entire spectrum of social and civil rights that refugees enjoy in western societies.²³

Local municipalities have also become active agents in providing Syrians under temporary protection with reception services. Article 13 of the Municipalities Law (No. 5393) clearly states that everyone living in the municipal territory needs to be granted the same rights and services irrespective of their being Turkish citizen or not. The principle of “fellowship” framed by Article 13 is a comprehensive principle, which is based on the idea of treating all the residents including foreigners equally (Kaya, 2020). However, the data show that this principle is not

²⁰ For more detail on the Turkish Reception policies, practices and responses see WP4 Turkey Country Report by Kaya (2020), available on <https://www.respondmigration.com/wp-blog/refugee-reception-policies-practices-responses-turkey-country-report>

²¹ For more detail see <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/refugees-and-asylum-seekers-in-turkey>

²² For the Council Directive of European Temporary Protection see <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2001:212:0012:0023:EN:PDF> accessed on 8 August 2019.

²³ For the text of the Temporary Protection Regulation (No.2014/6883) see <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/10/20141022-15-1.pdf>. For more information on the Temporary Protection Regulation see https://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_tr_2017update.pdf

sufficiently embraced by most of the municipalities when reaching out to the Syrians under temporary protection.

At the beginning of mass migration of Syrians to Turkey, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) was given the mandate to coordinate their reception needs. AFAD was established in 2009 in order to create a single Centre for the state's disaster management. It is an amalgamation of the General Directorate of Civil Defence under the Interior Ministry, the General Directorate of Disaster Affairs under the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement, and the Directorate General of Turkey Emergency Management under the Prime Ministry.²⁴ AFAD has a very particular role in mobilizing civil society organizations, which have always been very active in welcoming Syrians since the beginning of mass migration. AFAD acts as the representative of the state in humanitarian assistance. Until the time AFAD left the field to the DGMM in 2018 to coordinate the reception, protection and integration practices of the migrants under temporary protection, it was the main organisation that civil society organizations in the field communicated with when trying to reach the state. AFAD was also in charge of the camps established at the Syrian border to look after the first incoming groups of Syrians (Kaya, 2020).

In the first years of the migratory movement, the discourse of guesthood and Ansar spirit as well as the rhetoric of Islamism, neo-Ottomanism and populism made it easier for the Syrians to be received and to be offered all the basic provisions such as housing, education, health services, accommodation and allowances in the border cities (Şanlıurfa, Kilis, Hatay, Gaziantep) as well as in the temporary accommodation centres. Big cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Bursa became their cities of resettlement in the following years to find better education, accommodation, health and employment conditions. The Turkish case demonstrates that there are strong regional variations as far as the refugees' access to the labour market is concerned. Agrarian economies facilitate early access to the labour market in comparison to the industrial cities such as Istanbul and Izmir. In the big cities too, it was the cultural and religious intimacy which prevented them from seeking options to move on to Europe (Kaya, 2020).

The Syrians under temporary protection face difficulties regarding their access to the labour market, education, health services, social services, allowances, food and hygiene, substance, and domestic mobility. Many of the interlocutors interviewed in Turkey are not willing to apply for official work permit and/or Turkish citizenship as they would lose all the financial and in-kind assistance they receive such as from the EU's Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Program. Hence, most of the Syrians' precariousness still continues since they came to Turkey. Another highly important problem, which has lately become upsetting, is the growing hatred, Arabophobia, racism and xenophobia against all kinds of people coming from the Middle East including the Gulf region (Kaya, 2020).

²⁴ For the text of the Law on the establishment of the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (No. 5902), see <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/tur151519.pdf>

Recurring Themes

A comparative analysis of the WP4 individual country reports of Austria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Iraq, Lebanon, Poland, Sweden, Turkey and the UK reveals that there are several recurring themes. These include the liminal and often protracted experience of reception, strategies and mechanisms of agency, instances or the lack of ‘welcome culture’, politics of deterrence as well as more general trends of re-nationalization and neo-liberalization of governance, and the pervasive delegation of state responsibilities to the civil society actors.

Stuck in Reception

In the process of migration, ‘reception’ is the liminal period covering the initial phase in a new [the host] country starting from arrival and application for asylum to the final decision about this application. However, the experiences of refugees themselves show that reception can be extended for many years in a way that blurs the sociological and political distinctions of *reception* and *integration*. A comparative glance at the micro-level interviews in RESPOND shows that many refugees report strong feelings of uncertainty and concern as a result of a legal limbo situation and protracted asylum procedures which give rise to a notion of being “stuck in reception”. The absence of a clear legal status along with the lack of information about rights in terms of access to public services have resulted in risks of physical and psychosocial health deterioration and endanger future integration. The legal limbo is experienced by all kinds of asylum seekers and refugees irrespective of their age, gender and ethnicity. For instance, an administrator of Spånga-Tensta district in Sweden highlighted the scope of the problem as well as the severe consequences it may entail:

If we take unaccompanied minors for example, it has been a limbo with these children. There have been those who have not been granted a residence permit and have been told to be expelled, [...] they have not had access to any public accommodation actually, because they have not known if they should be sent home or not. So many times, many of them have ended up in such places, where either the Migration Board or NGOs, for example, Stadsmissionen in Stockholm, supported many of them with temporary hotel accommodation (Barthoma et al., 2020).

However, the challenge in many European and non-European countries goes beyond what could be judged as legal limbo situations. There is also a widespread sense that national and municipal actors often treat refugees as *objects* or *cases* rather than as individuals who have the right to enjoy basic human rights. When asked about how he felt during his interactions with officials during his reception period, a Syrian man living in Berlin replied:

It makes me angry. It makes me really angry because I can see it that they don't care about it. They are just using us for their...like, just trying to use us for their benefits, you know. All of them to be honest. And that makes me feel like: “come on, I am not an object, I am a person. You know? So, there is nothing in life that gives you the right to decide something for me. Even if I am a refugee. I am still a human being. I want to make my own decisions I have my own life and for example when you hear on the news that a Syrian guy did this, a Syrian guy did

that, yeah, of course, every place in the world there is good people and there is bad people don't come to me and tell me "your 'homey' did this!" I don't care about him. He is another person; I am another person. I don't care if we are from the same country or even from the same family. It is not my problem. He did something wrong, but you can't generalize it on every Syrian, you know, that's the only thing that starts me on the politics field you know, let's say (Chemin and Nagel, 2020).

The asylum application is an integral part of the reception process. In this regard, refugees navigate a variety of bureaucratic stages formed of long waiting times, paperwork, courts, interviews, translators, lawyers, police, immigration officers and other public officials and institutions. Their interactions with the national reception system in each European country offer important insights into the mechanisms of the reception regime. Tensions between human rights ideals and European legislation on the one hand and national and regional particularisms on the other are evident throughout all national reports. Such tensions are visible in different spheres of life of an asylum seeker ranging from initial application to housing and education to health care and freedom of movement. The divergence between national reception policies and European regulations is mirrored by the infringement procedures of the EU Commission against some EU member states such as Germany.

As the reception period is extended, asylum seekers and refugees try to find their ways to have access to different spheres of everyday life. Initially, the PIs of the WP4 defined "reception" as the liminal period between the arrival and application for asylum and the decision about the asylum application. However, the first-hand accounts of refugees and asylum seekers in several European countries demonstrated that experiences of reception in these countries can extend over many years in a way that leads to the end of demarcation of both sociological and political distinctions of *reception* and *integration*. A refugee living in European countries for a few years may not yet have achieved any significant legal status as his/her case (or appeal) is still pending whereas he/she may well be living a normal, "integrated" life and still be a step away from deportation.

A comparative study of the WP4 Country Reports on Reception Policies, Practices and Responses shows that there are some tendencies:

- a. Increasing efficiency to decrease the waiting time for asylum applications. This technically means that "reception time" is limited to make it possible to come up with a fast-track decision on the applicants (e.g. Germany and in Sweden an official SOU investigation proposed similar measures) so that they will be able to be deported, or become subjects of integration policies;
- b. Limiting asylum seekers' rights to a degree that everything is postponed until the outcome of the final legal decision. This is deliberately designed to prevent asylum seekers' settlement in the host country (e.g. UK); and
- c. Turning reception into a "meaningful time" with 'meaningful activities' linked with further integration measures. These are technically called as "early measures" (e.g. Sweden) with the assumption that the majority of 'newcomers' will stay in the host country.

These policy pathways depict the tension between economic efficiency and moral choices. The narrative aiming to turn reception into a meaningful time in opposition to the time 'wasted'

suggests more rights for asylum seekers even during their reception time (labour market, education, health services) whereas the efficiency narrative is a dominant one and built on rational-choice cost calculations in reception policymaking processes.

Politics of Hospitality and Deterrence

As Ross Langmead (2016: 171) put it very well, “hospitality is a strong concept which includes justice-seeking, political action, inclusion around our tables, intercultural friendship, pursuing a hospitable multicultural approach to [religious] life, practical assistance, long-term commitment, learning from those who are different, sensitivity to the power dynamics of ‘welcome’, a willingness to ‘let go’ as well as ‘embrace’, interfaith dialogue and discovering the intertwining of the guest and host roles which is embedded in ... theological understandings of God’s activity amongst us.” As elaborated in WP4 country reports, hospitality and ‘welcome culture’ were visible in many countries. The discourse of hospitality was very visible in Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey from the very beginning of mass migration, while it became more tangible in the European countries after the image of Ailan Kurdi baby shook the west in the summer of 2015 (Smith, 2015).

In both non-EU and EU countries, it was the Qur’anic, Biblical and theological understandings of guesthood that played an important role among the host communities (Saunders et al., 2016). The role of faith religious intimacy on welcoming refugees was extensively discussed in the WP4 country reports of Iraq, Lebanon and Turkey. However, there is also a similar theological understanding prevailing in many parts of the EU, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Ailan Kurdi incidence. It was both a political and practical move by many EU citizens who saw the need to protect vulnerable people who were in an immediate need. Many of EU citizens as well as the Churches opened their arms to asylum seekers (Chemin and Nagel, 2020). It was even possible to detect that many supporters of right-wing populist parties in Europe felt the same urge to help refugees and asylum seekers who needed their help (Kaya, 2019).

However, this ‘welcome culture’ did not really last too long in the EU countries. One of the main findings of WP4 is that refugees encounter several problems in everyday life due to the burgeoning of inhuman conditions in reception centres, long periods of assessing asylum applications, difficulties in the labour market, education and housing facilities, and paternalistic treatment of refugees. All these difficulties encountered by the refugees in the prolonged reception period seem to be a symbolic and political instrument to promote a *politics of deterrence*.

The RESPOND research teams conducted their research in different parts of Europe as well as in Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon. One of the common themes encountered by the European research teams was that most of the accommodation centres are located in remote rural areas. Some of these places allow for little interaction between refugees and the local community. Some are old buildings located in forest areas with weak transport links in the outskirts of towns or in between small villages. For instance in Germany, a refugee from Libya in his early 30s, described some of the problems he encountered in being a resident of such a place and expressed his anxiety about living there:

The village where I stayed, in Brandenburg. It's basically in the middle of nowhere, in the forest. The last bus to pass through the place is at 17:00, so you are stuck there, you can't go out and if you want to leave the place if you want to go out you can only visit families and people like that. They allow you three days, and if you don't come back after 3 days, they don't pay you for many weeks, so the rules make the place quite like a prison. You know what I mean? (Chemin and Nagel, 2020).

Such restrictive isolationist policies may lead asylum seekers to become dependent on the resources provided by the states, provinces and municipalities rather than being able to rely on their own initiatives to become self-sufficient in a new country. There is no evidence to suggest that restricting asylum seekers to a geographical location and imposing a heavily controlled regime on their existence is apt to improve their chances of adaptation and integration into the wider society. Schader et al. (2018: 103) have pointed out based on the German situation that such reception models do not offer an actual benefit for anyone, the main rationale of this concept must be a symbolical and political one, namely to promote a policy of deterrence.

While the politics of deterrence applies to most of the European countries, the situation is rather different in the non-European countries of the RESPOND project. Traditionally known as emigration countries, Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq have also become settlement and transit spaces for forced migrants (Pérouse, 2013). Syrian refugees have been considered as "guests" by the Turkish, Lebanese and Iraqi states. From the very beginning of the refugee plight, Syrians have been presented as if they are 'welcome' by the host states and societies on the basis of some deep-rooted values such the 'Turkish hospitality', 'Muslim fraternity', 'Arab hospitality' and 'guesthood' traditions (Chatty, 2013; El Abed, 2014; 2015; Erdoğan, 2015; and Baban et al., 2016). However, all these values address the temporary character of refugees as guests. To this extent, a more recent metaphor to qualify the role that the Turkish state and the pious Muslim-Turks should play for Syrians in Turkey has been the *Ansar spirit* (Arabic for helpers). As a metaphor, *Ansar* refers to the people of Medina, who supported the Prophet Mohammad and the accompanying Muslims (*muhajirun*, or migrants) who migrated there from Mecca, which was under the control of the pagans. The metaphor of *Ansar* originally points at a temporary situation as the Muslims later returned to Mecca after their forces recaptured the city from the pagans (Korkut, 2015).²⁵ Hence, the Turkish government has used a kind of Islamic symbolism to legitimize its acts on the resolution of the Syrian refugee crisis. The government leaders have consistently compared Turkey's role in assisting the Syrian refugees to that of the *Ansar*, referring to the Medinans who helped Muhammad and his entourage. Framing the Syrian refugees within the discourse of *Ansar* and *Muhajirun* has elevated public and private efforts to accommodate Syrian refugees from a humanitarian responsibility to a religious and charity-based duty (Erdemir, 2016). The *Ansar spirit* was also visible in Iraq and Lebanon in the first years of the mass migration of Syrians. However, the *Ansar spirit* is now replaced with return discourse in each country to deter the new comers (Mencütek, 2018).

²⁵ Haber7 (2014). "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Bizler Ensar sizler muhacir" (The President Erdoğan: We are Ansar you are muhacir), <http://www.haber7.com/ic-politika/haber/1208342-cumhurbaskani-erdogan-bizler-ensar-sizler-muhacir> accessed on 4 October 2016.

While the neighbouring countries welcomed the Syrian refugees in the beginning of their emigration in 2011, the EU Member States were rather reluctant to do so. In some EU states that discourse changed slightly after the images of Ailan Kurdi shook the conscience of the European citizens in the summer of 2015 (Smith, 2015). To face the immense refugee inflow in 2015, the Member States have taken different kinds of approaches: Initially, some countries have revised their migration legislation, adopted administrative reorganization, and scaled up their public spending to process asylum applications faster and to welcome refugees. However, the so-called ‘welcome culture’ did not last long in the EU. Some countries are imposing numerical limits on the entry of foreign persons, to face the increasing pressures that characterize more globalized asylum flows (Angeloni and Maria Spano, 2018). As pointed out by Angeloni and Maria Spano (2018), there are various ways by which individual countries have lately determined their migration and asylum policies to deter asylum claims, such as restricting access to the country’s borders by potential asylum seekers for political and electoral reasons, or reforming the procedures under which applications are processed. Other countries can deter claims by denying asylum seekers permission to work while cases are pending (Angeloni and Maria Spano, 2018).

The WP4 Country reports show that the so-called ‘welcome culture’ has cooled down in many countries since 2015. Since the EU-Turkey Refugee Statement put into force in March 2016, the Deal seemed to be working for the Western and Central European countries. Nowadays, there have been fewer asylum seekers than in 2015. However, it has led to significant overcrowding in the reception facilities in Greece. Prevailing reception conditions, particularly in the Hotspots, reached the level of inhuman, as the basic needs and human rights of asylum seekers are threatened and violated on an everyday basis (Moria Camp in Lesbos).

The fire in the Moria Refugee camp in late September 2019, leading to the death of a woman and a child, revealed once again the misery of refugees in the Greek islands waiting for another rescue operation.²⁶ The attention of the international media has also disclosed the fact that the deadly exodus of refugees to the Greek islands, who are afraid of encountering the risk of being sent back to Syria where the Assad regime still is in the power, and the armed conflict between many different political groups still continues. The fear of being sent back to Syria has increased even more after the political, economic and societal instability increased in the neighbouring countries. The fear of being sent back, as well as the growing unrest among the local citizens in regard to the current state of Syrians, are likely to deteriorate the situation for the refugees. Syrians have become even more concerned when the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, repeatedly stated that Turkey may consider to open up the borders to let the refugees go to Europe as a reaction to statements by European leaders and the European Commission regarding their condemnation of the Turkish military operation in Northern Syria.²⁷

²⁶ For further information on the deadly fire in Moria Refugee Camp with a capacity of 3000 residents where there were 13 thousand people in October 2019 see, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/30/riots-at-greek-refugee-camp-on-lesbos-after-fatal-fire> accessed on 11 October 2019.

²⁷ For further debate on the statements of Erdoğan see, *The Independent* (11 October 2019), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/erdogan-syria-turkey-kurds-europe-refugees-invasion-sdf-latest-middle-east-a9150271.html> accessed on 20 February 2020; and *the Guardian* (10 October 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/10/turkish-president-threatens-send-refugees-europe-recep-tayyip-erdogan-syria?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Tweet accessed on 20 February 2020.

Growing domestic political, societal and economic fragility in Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon as well as the continuous ambiguity in their temporary legal status, has made the Syrian refugees in these countries become more concerned about their future prospects. Strong regional variations display that agrarian economies facilitate early access to the labour market. In this regard, urban refugees continue to face difficulties in having access to the labour market. Such destabilizing factors and the ongoing ambiguity about the future have made some of the Syrians consider to flee to the Greek islands. Away from public attention in Europe and the Middle East, the number of illegal passages from Turkey to the Greek island continues to increase, reaching the level prior to the so-called refugee crisis that erupted in the Summer of 2015.

Since the beginning of the so-called 2015 refugee crisis, a considerable part of the European public responded spontaneously with empathy towards the new-comers passing through their countries, and often engaged in practices of solidarity (such as donations of goods or money, or even inviting them to their houses to stay for a while). However, this massive wave of solidarity of the first years later receded, giving also space to xenophobic and racist discourses. Civil society organizations played an important role in the formation of solidarity networks with the refugees and asylum seekers. In 2015, early efforts by civil society organisations were largely independent from the national governments and filled important gaps in the reception system in European and non-European countries. These efforts, motivated by humanitarianism and international solidarity, made a political statement in favour of the reception of asylum seekers (Hansen, 2018).

There is a wide range of solidarity initiatives targeting newcomers who are mostly in situations of extreme vulnerability and precariousness, as they have undergone forced migration. These local humanitarian initiatives tend to fill in the gaps of reception and integration institutions resulting from the growing neo-liberal forms of governance of modern states delegating their responsibilities to the non-governmental organizations and individuals. The WP4 Country reports demonstrate that non-state initiatives of reception emerge as humanitarian forms of collective action which provide different kinds of support including accommodation, help for food, health or administrative issues. The engagement of citizens as well as immigrants themselves within such initiatives poses various questions regarding the connection between civic initiatives and politics. The findings also demonstrate that neo-liberal forms of governmentality have formed compartmentalized policy fields such as reception policies, protection policies, integration policies etc., while at the same time they encourage civil society initiatives to assume the responsibility for immigrant (and other vulnerable groups) in the absence of a wider welfare policy.

Scholten and Penninx (2016) already drew our attention to the fact that immigration and integration policies have not shifted unidirectionally upward. There is rather a growing complexity of policies in both areas being formulated at various levels of government, including the EU and national levels as well as the local and in some cases also the regional level. There is a substantial fragmentation in these policies, imposing the risk of “layering” in a way that leads to the development of policies at different government layers without structural connections. Scholten and Penninx (2016) also reveal that such “layering” leads to a decoupling of policies, resulting in potential policy contradictions and even conflicts between different levels.

The WP4 Country reports show that the so-called welcoming culture and the politics of hospitality are subject to a state of temporariness. While for instance in Turkey, Lebanon and

Iraq, the Ansar spirit was the main narrative with the operationalisation of the humanitarian discourse, in different European countries the open-arm humanitarian policies were justified through different narratives. Religion here plays a ready-source for constructing these narratives. When countries are faced with unprecedented numbers of refugees, the high-time of morale is replaced with cold-statistical calculations and restrictive policies and practices.

Right-wing Populism

In the reawakening of right-wing populism, reception policies have become part of a larger discourse of national self-assurance in many countries. In 2015, most Europeans welcomed thousands of refugees. The media covered the exodus as well as the arrival of the refugees. An exceptional number of volunteers began to assist, and local governments, state actors, European institutions and international institutions provided various forms of assistance. Despite the fears of terrorism, financial and economic problems, there was a strong consensus about accepting refugees in need. This consensus still continues, even if there is a growing stream of resistance against refugees from right-wing populist circles.

There is a growing fear in the European space alleviated by the right-wing populist parties such as PVV in the Netherlands, FN in France, Golden Dawn in Greece, and AfD in Germany. This fear is based on the jihadist attacks in different European cities such as Paris (7 January and 13 November 2015), Nice (14 July 2016), Istanbul (1 January 2017), Berlin (28 February 2017), and London (2017) as well as on the atrocities of the Al Qaida, the Islamic State (ISIS), and Boko Haram in the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere. This fear against Islam, which has material sources, is also mitigated by far-right political parties.

These populist outbreaks contribute to the securitisation and stigmatisation of migration in general, and Islam in particular. In the meantime, they deflect attention from constructive solutions and policies widely thought to promote integration, including language learning and increased labour market access, which are already suffering due to austerity measures across EU member states. Islamophobic discourse has recently become the mainstream in the west (Kaya, 2015). It seems that social groups belonging to the majority nation in each territory are more inclined to express their distress resulting from insecurity and social-economic deprivation, through the language of Islamophobia; even in those cases which are not related to the actual threat of Islam. Islamophobia has also been legalized and thus further normalized through the laws against the *hijab* (in France, 2004) and the *burqa* (in France, 2011) and the recent debates around the state of emergency in France in the wake of the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks. In the meantime, PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident) and other groups have attempted to exploit the New Year's Eve 2016 assaults in Cologne which were blamed on Muslim refugees (Ingulfsen, 2016). Islamophobia was previously more prevalent among male populations (Kaya and Kayaoğlu, 2017). However, in the last few years, the use of gender rights has also been particularly prevalent in the stigmatization of Islam. Some features and manifestations of mainstream Islamophobia relate to what has been defined as "homonationalism" (Puar, 2007) and "femonationalism" (Farris, 2012). Geert Wilder's Party, PVV, in the Netherlands and the AfD in Germany, whose then co-leader (Alice Weidel) is openly gay, have recently attracted many women as well as the members of LGBTI groups who are becoming more and more vocal in their attacks against Islam on the basis of its supposed inherent illiberalism against the position of women and gays in everyday life (Mondon and Winter, 2017).

In the WP4 Country reports, many of the interlocutors who arrived in 2015 or early 2016, reported that they experienced great support by civil society. Oftentimes engaged citizens were active in emergency camps, organized clothing or established informal language courses. These interactions left a lasting impression on many refugees who were interviewed in the EU countries. However, several statements reflect how this welcoming culture has faded away ever since then. Thereby, many refugees referred to the role of governments on the formation of various restrictive policies and statements. An Afghan refugee in Austria explained this matter with the following words:

When I came to Traiskirchen I saw the people, the great helpers, the Austrians, it was all full of people, of migrants. And they all liked to help and did a lot of things. But slowly the government gets worse every month and the people who want to help us get a bit scared. They don't want to do it anymore, at first it was good but... (Josipovic and Reeger, 2020).

Another refugee from the same country explained the worsening situation of refugees in the European countries and explicitly referred to the right-wing populist parties that have become stronger after the so-called 2015 refugee crisis:

At first it was like this, a lot of people were nice. If there is a good government all are nice... First everything was OK, but the black-blue parties [conservatives and right-wing populists], they have such a policy, they always talk about refugees, refugees, refugees ... When Alex does something, the newspapers "Heute" and "Österreich" [Austrian tabloids] write: Alex did it. But when Ahmet or Ersan or Hakan do something, they write for a week: refugees from Afghanistan or Iraq have done it. I think it's personal. If someone does something, then not the whole country is guilty (Josipovic and Reeger, 2020).

The impact of the 2015 'migration crisis' on the European public and politics has been more remarkable in the following years. The anti-immigrant parties such as the Sweden Democrats, Front National, AfD, PVV, Golden Dawn and Fidezs increased their electoral support in the meantime. The most significant impact is to be seen in the internalisation of right-wing, anti-migrant, Islamophobic and anti-Semitist rhetoric in political discourses and widespread anxiety about the future of refugees as well as of the other migrant-origin populations that have been already an important element of the European public space.

The hostile environment created by right-wing populism has affected reception policies, practices and experiences. WP4 country reports revealed that right-wing populist parties and aspirations have brought about a limitation of rights and entitlements during the reception period (e.g. housing conditions placing people in caravans, remote areas etc), an increase in discriminatory practices, and a widespread use of politics of deterrence in the EU member states. The hostile environment has created classifications among refugees as 'wanted' and 'unwanted'.

“Resilience” and neo-liberal governance

The structure of the current reception system in many countries in Europe is rooted in political and policy developments in the 1990s. Successive governments responded to the increase of people seeking asylum in the EU and perceived threats to social cohesion rooted in the migrant-phobic legacies of the Member States by attempting to restrict entry to the EU (Mayblin

and James, 2019). The restructuring of the welfare state in the EU under the flows of globalisation, engendering greater labour mobility, and neoliberal governance, privileging the market as the main mechanism for providing services, had implications for the access of migrant-origin people, asylum seekers and refugees to welfare (Darling, 2016; Yuval-Davis et al., 2019). Welfare provision was privatised in many countries, while entitlement was increasingly associated with narratives of individual responsibility, agency and fulfilling social obligations, excluding both citizens and non-citizens who were deemed as not contributing to the welfare state (Bloch et al., 2013). In public debates, citizenship and belonging were constructed as the crucial criteria for being entitled to welfare (Mayblin, 2016) While welfare entitlement was extended to certain categories of migrants such as those with settled status and EU citizens, asylum seekers, refugees and people with no legal status were designated as ‘undeserving’, anti-citizens constructed as a ‘burden’, maintaining and reinforcing the highly stratified access to social and welfare rights (Inda, 2006).

The reception regimes in many European as well as in non-European countries can only be understood against the backdrop of a strong neo-liberal turn in the sense that there is a burgeoning responsibility of NGOs while the states tend to delegate their responsibilities to other stakeholders including the refugees. In times of crisis such as war, an epidemic, or a natural disaster, the weakened ‘centre’ (i.e. a nation-state or the EU), is likely to ‘escape responsibility’ by delegating to local actors or civil society in the periphery (Panizzon and Riemsdijk, 2019: 1233). This was explicitly stated in many WP4 country reports. One could see this trend in the increasing popularity of the very term “resilience” in everyday life as well as in scholarly debates. In this regard, it is often encountered in the field that refugees generate various mechanisms of “resilience” ranging from creative and subversive behaviour (refusing to stay in the assigned accommodation centre, cooking in one’s room, letting people stay without permission) to constant use of irony and playfulness in describing one’s disadvantaged situation.

However, the term ‘resilience’ is also criticised by different scholars for its relevance to a postmodern form of governance (Chandler, 2014). Resilience approaches develop upon and transform neoliberal conceptions of complex life as a limit to liberal governance. The promotion of the term in contemporary scholarship is criticized by David Chandler (2014) from a Foucaultian perspective, according to which the current forms of neo-liberal governance seek to govern complexity of everyday life ‘from below’. Various scholars have also explored how resilience has become a defining feature of a neoliberal governmental regime that is progressively shifting from equilibrium to adaptation. Mitchell Dean (2014) argues that this shift is a product of a qualitative transformation of neoliberalism. Based on a constant pattern of crises, poor economic growth and growing injustice and inequality, neoliberalism seeks to fashion ways to make individuals, communities, migrants, refugees, systems and organizations fit for rigidities of ‘the catastrophe yet to come’ (Dean, 2014: 161). The notion of resilience thus entails an ultimate acceptance of the view that the world can neither be changed, nor mastered; hence, the only rational strategy for survival is to adapt to externally imposed changes (Mavelli, 2017; Joseph, 2013; Walker and Cooper, 2011).

Since the terminology of resilience has been criticised for promoting a neo-liberal understanding of making the individual responsible for all sorts of structural failure (Chandler, 2014), we propose to focus more on sociological notions of “reflexive individual

agency” (Giddens, 1991) or “tactics” (De Certeau, 1984).²⁸ In relation to Giddens we argue that immigrant individuals do not just react to external circumstances, but become more reflexive and creative in order to come to terms with the everyday life. On the other hand, Michel De Certeau (1984: 37) reminds us, a tactic is an art of the weak, that is employed to cope with the destabilizing effects of strategies and ideologies of institutions (state, traditions, customs) as well as the difficulties of everyday life. The more a power grows, the less it can allow itself to mobilize part of its means in the service of deception. Power is bound by its very visibility (De Certeau, 1984).

For asylum seekers and refugees, joking about the policies and practices of reception that they are subject to is a kind of survival tactic that they employ in everyday life. Migrants learn that there are many loopholes in all migration regimes. Being dependent to the legal decision of their asylum application does not necessarily limit their ability or potential to manoeuvre within or on the edges of any system. In this regard, migrants and refugees tend to make use of their “networks” to build their lives. This is the terrain of “informality” which breaks the chain of dependency. German sociologist Alf Lüdtke (1989), British sociologist James C. Scott (1985), and French sociologist Michel de Certeau (1984) have all generated different conceptions to underline such gestures and behaviours generated by individuals living under difficult conditions. Relying on jokes and generating a sense of humour, such individuals tend to pretend from time to time not to be bothered by such difficulties, which actually cause feelings of alienation, exclusion and humiliation. By pretending that they do not care about such acts and joking about these difficulties, they try to cope with such difficulties. For instance, in the south eastern parts of Turkey, Syrian refugees often encounter some stereotypical expressions and statements coming from local citizens: “Syrians are having a lot of fun”, “Syrian women are very much embellished”, “Syrian women consume too much make-up materials, as if they are not the ones who came out of the war”, “Syrians just enjoy themselves, while we, the locals, constantly feel the burden of this world”, “While our youngsters are fighting for the Syrians in Afrin, they are having fun here”. Syrians tend to overcome such statements and stereotypes by communicating with each other through jokes, gossip, humour and metaphorical speech acts. Lüdtke (1989), Scott (1985) and De Certeau (1984) perceive such acts of humour as tactical behaviours and methods used to survive and cope with the traumas of the past. Therefore, one could also interpret such types of behaviours that may disturb the host society from time to time as survival tactics and acts of agency developed by people experiencing traumatic processes to deal with such traumas.

Likewise, as the German Country Report shows very well, asylum seekers living in accommodation centres try to make jokes to overcome the hardships of everyday life, such as the low quality of food provided to them. In one case, a refugee described his reaction to the food served in his Wohnheim in Brandenburg by a characteristic joke:

They give you food there, and the dinner is always the same: breakfast is always the same bread with a slice of cheese it's always the same he doesn't change it there the lunch sometimes is ok sometimes you cannot eat it at all sometimes. The same what they put in for breakfast that is the same what they put for dinner

²⁸ The authors of this work are aware of the fact that the criticism on resilience may not apply to health studies. Resilience literature in the area of health explains the coping mechanisms of individuals and collectives. For further discussion on this see Simich and Andermann (2014).

bread with cheese. Tea coffee and petit coffees fine when you drink coffee and you don't feel hungry afterwards you know I had friends there and they always make jokes about dinner you know, they said they said that maybe they think we are rats because we only eat cheese you know, a lot of jokes are made out of this (Chemin and Nagel, 2020).

The comparison with “rats” can be seen as a way this asylum seeker found to express the feeling of dehumanization he has experienced: unworthy of equal dignified treatment. The quotation from the field also points to humour as a creative mechanism of agency.

Reception and Cultural Intimacy in Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon

Reception practices and responses in the non-European countries are also highly linked with cultural and religious intimacy that refugees tend to develop in order to feel themselves more welcome in their countries of reception. In other words, as will be explained in more detail, Syrian refugees, in particular, are more likely to generate a cultural and religious intimacy discourse that helps them overcome the challenges and hardships that they face in building their lives in these countries. For Syrians, who have been exposed to the testimonies and stories of deadly exodus of their peers to the EU countries as well as to the growing Islamophobia, right-wing populism and nativism in Europe, it becomes more widespread to generate a feeling that it is comforting to live in a country where the majority of the population are of Muslim-origin.

Refugees with Sunni-Muslim background residing in Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq expressed their content with the fact that they are feeling culturally similar to the local citizens of these countries. In his path-breaking ethnographic book, *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*, Michael Herzfeld ([1997] 2005) defines cultural intimacy as “the recognition of those aspects of a cultural identity that... provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” (Herzfeld, 2005: 3). However, he later draws our attention to the fact that the term “cultural intimacy” was often perceived in the literature as the simple idea of acquaintance with a culture (Herzfeld, 2013: 91). Arabic-speaking Sunni-Syrians have already created comfort zones in various cities of Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq, based on a cultural intimacy with local communities in regard to religious, moral, architectural, urban, and sometimes linguistic similarities originating from the common Ottoman past.

Herzfeld's notion of cultural intimacy does not only refer to ‘the sharing of known and recognizable traits’ with the ones inside, but it also refers to those traits ‘disapproved by powerful outsiders’ (Herzfeld, 2005: 94; Byrne, 2011: 148). It could be argued that this second component of cultural intimacy comes into play when Syrian refugees residing in diasporic spaces which they have currently constructed in the neighbouring countries, were asked by the country teams in Turkey, Iraq and Lebanon to express their opinion about migrating further away to the European Union countries. For instance, the Syrian refugees interviewed expressed their willingness to stay in Turkey, and unwillingness to go to Europe. Their hesitation to go to Europe seems to be deriving partly from their strong belief that they are disapproved of by the Europeans, and partly from the life-threatening nature of the journey, which has already led to the death of thousands of people *en route*. It was often put forward by the interlocutors during the research that the tragedies that their Syrian fellows had to go through during their exodus from Syria to Greece have left very negative marks on them. The traces of the heart-breaking images of Ailan Kurdi, whose dead body was laying down on the

Aegean shores of Bodrum, Turkey (Smith, 2015), were still fresh in the minds of the interlocutors when interviewed. When asked why they came to Istanbul a year ago and if they did not want to continue the journey to Europe where her husband is waiting for them for the last three years after he was smuggled to Germany, a 28-year-old mother with two children from Damascus residing in Istanbul expressed her fear of death with the following words:

We first stayed in something like a studio. It was me and my brother's wife, she also has a girl [crying]. We stayed for a period, trying so that we would be able to continue our way through smuggling, to Greece. They scared us too much about the way. Death and no death, like that we kept hearing stuff like that a lot [crying], we... Whenever we went to see a smuggler, and talked, so that we would continue. I don't feel comfortable. [Smothered cry] We got scared. We cancelled the idea. So that we would stay here, and wait until family reunification happens, that was it (Kaya, 2020).

Another woman (23-year-old Kurd from Afrin, married with one son) whom the Turkey team interviewed in İzmir, at the Aegean coast, expressed similar concerns when asked if they are planning to continue their journey to Europe:

No, we did not try to cross the sea. I was always planning to return, to go to my family [in Afrin]. We do not want to go Europe, one of my sisters-in-law is in Germany, we communicate with her, their conditions are very good, she has a baby now, they crossed through the sea. [However,] we see their pictures after they arrived in the other side [Greek islands], they looked like they were dead, their faces had turned yellow, they had three kids, they got very scared, this scaring will impact them in their entire life. It is like they were rescued from dying, it was like they saw death. Many people go and die on the way, in Greece many Syrians were killed, they did not want Syrians to come there anymore. A week after our arrival in here, they migrated to Greece, they paid a lot of money to the smuggler... You are not able to go, you are killed, you are paying for all of these things. Why do they go? They should not go, some of our relatives went away, they got sick a lot, they consumed all of their money, why do they go? (Kaya, 2020).

Herzfeld's notion of cultural intimacy includes various acts and attitudes repeated by members of a group of people, which lead to the formation of a Manichean understanding of the world divided between "us" and "them". These acts and attitudes may range from essentializing culture and past, practicing various stereotypes in everyday life, performing persuasive acts of resemblances, ordinary acts of embarrassment kept as intimate secrets of the group, and different forms of *iconicity*²⁹ such as mythical, visual, musical and gastronomic images bridging a sense of resemblance with the other members of the group at large (Herzfeld, 2016). According to Herzfeld, essentialization and reification of the past and culture is not only an ideological element instrumentalized by political institutions and states to control and manipulate the masses, but also an indispensable element of social life (Herzfeld, 2016: 33).

²⁹ The term *iconicity* derives from the word Greek word, *eikôn*, which literally means likeness conveying the imitation of the divine. However, in modern usage, the term icon carries a misleading meaning, which is often interchangeably used with "emblem". Michael Herzfeld's use of the term *iconicity* derives from its original meaning, which has something to do with resemblance. For further explanation on the term see Herzfeld (2016: 93).

Hence, ordinary individuals also tend to essentialize and reify the past for their own use to come to terms with the hardships of everyday life. Essentializing the past partly makes it possible for private individuals to create the semiotic effect of what Herzfeld calls *iconicity*, the principle of signification by resemblance, which contributes to the formation of a Manichean understanding of the world divided between “us” and “them” (Herzfeld, 2016: 33). Mythical, visual, musical, heroic, even gastronomic iconicities are all likely to contribute to the formation of this Manichean world. In this report, it will also be claimed that the Syrian refugees residing in the neighbouring countries at large are likely to construct bridges between themselves and the members of the majority society by means of visual, musical, religious, gastronomic, and even linguistic iconicities, which create a space of intimacy with the host communities. During the field research, we asked our interlocutors about their future plans as far as their geographical mobility is concerned such as willingness to go to Europe, stay in the neighbouring countries, or return. The country teams have received various answers changing in accordance with the gender, age, economic status, education, and location of the interlocutors. For instance, when asked about her choices of living in Turkey, Europe or somewhere else, a literature graduate 34-year-old mother with one daughter from Damascus said the following to express her preference to stay in Istanbul:

No, my husband from time to time says let us try to go to Germany, but for me I always wanted to come to Turkey. Even before going to Egypt when we were in Syria and packed our bags, we were thinking about going to Turkey, but then we heard that it is difficult to find a job here, and if you find one, the salary wouldn't be enough, and at the same time my brothers-in-law were in Egypt and they said the situation is good there, so we travelled to Egypt. After that, when we came to Turkey, I found it to be like my dreams. From the beginning of my marriage, I was telling my husband that I dreamed of travelling to Turkey. *I love Turkey because it is an Islamic country firstly, and a developed country. Secondly, although the language is a bit difficult, at least I am living in a place where I am not afraid for my daughter. Wherever we go, we find a comfortable environment similar to ours. So, I don't want to leave it. I hope to get citizenship and stay here. Also I hope to complete my studies here, even if the study was in Turkish, because it is better for work if you speak the language of this country.* And I hope to improve this centre until it gets a big name (Kaya, 2020).

Cultural and religious similarity is certainly an essential element, which creates comfort zones for some of the Syrians. One could find other reasons which make some other Syrians prefer to stay in Turkey rather than trying to go to Europe. When asked the same question whether he considered to continue his journey to Europe, a 54-year-old man with two spouses and 11 children from Damascus, said the following:

Actually we were thinking of going to Europe in the beginning, but then we changed our mind; living there is hard. I wouldn't have control over my kids and wife there. There, the rule is on their side. I couldn't control them anymore. I heard a lot of stories about women who arrived there and threw away their man and stayed with only their children. Just 10 percent are living there normally as a family. If a man wants to live there, he has to let the woman act like she wants (wearing a scarf or not, praying or not), but we aren't like that. We like to live the ancient Syrian life in which the man is in control of the house). Another thing is, I thought about leaving Turkey because of its restrictions, because of the Turkish

people's treatment. I thought seriously about going to Egypt, but unfortunately the Arab countries closed their doors in our faces (Kaya, 2020).

During the field research several testimonies such as these were expressed by our interlocutors. It is certainly a relief for them to stay somewhere near their homeland so that they could stay connected with it as well as with their remaining relatives whom they could visit at least from time to time during the religious Eid seasons twice a year.

Conclusion: challenges, prospects and policy recommendations

Country reports have brought to light that the material conditions of reception, such as housing and services, were often difficult, sometimes inappropriate, and at any rate subject to huge internal variation. Apart from the material conditions, legal uncertainty and access to labour and self-sufficiency have turned out to be other major challenges. Refugees and asylum seekers mostly experience a lack of agency in everyday life due to the extended waiting period and their legal limbo situation, which makes it harder for them to hold onto their dreams, expectations and plans for the future. During the reception phase, their restriction from the labour market, the absence of language skills and training opportunities, and the poverty they experience contribute to effectively restrict them from mainstream social life and severely harm early integration.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are no different from local populations in the sense that they also generate agency and tactics in seeking for a well-structured everyday life. Despite all the hurdles that they encounter, they are eager to find tasks and experiences which make them feel that they have a routine they can rely on. Language and education courses have shown to be an important part of everyday life in reception, thus adding to a routine and a sense of social normalness. Employment is another source of gaining a routine in everyday life. Refugees and asylum seekers interviewed throughout various countries recurrently referred to the need to work. One of the refugees interviewed by the research team in Berlin, Germany expressed this need with the following words: "Life does not work without a work" (Chemin and Nagel, 2020).

To conclude, reception policies, practices and responses are subject to the changing socio-economic, political, ecological and medical conditions. Since March 2020, the so-called "Refugee Crisis II" and the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed once again how the refugees are vulnerable to rapid changes of external factors in different countries as well as in the world. When the Turkish state actors announced that they had opened the borders to let the refugees head towards the EU via the land and sea borders with Greece and land borders with Bulgaria in early March 2020, this sudden move created a great tension and fear in the EU leading the EU member states to re-securitize the refugee issue. The situation at the Turkish-Greek border led to the rise of a new awareness vis-à-vis refugees in the EU. Following the "Refugee Crisis II", the foreign ministers of the EU Member States decided to meet to discuss the Idlib crisis, which originally had led the Turkish government to open its European borders in order to alert the EU to take side with Turkey in Syria against the Russian forces and the Syrian regime

forces.³⁰ The crisis was eventually resolved after the Turkish President asked the security forces to seal off the European borders following his meeting in Brussels with the top EU actors on 17 March, 2020.³¹ The last crisis that has made the refugees even more vulnerable is the COVID-19 pandemic, the detrimental results of which have already become visible in the Ritsona Refugee Camp near Athens where 20 people were tested positive.³² Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was also a decreased number of refugees in reception over the last months. As many of the RESPOND country reports on reception have shown, the cramped nature of refugee accommodation facilities along with bad hygienic standards and shortcomings in healthcare services add up to an epidemiological high-risk scenario.

Policy recommendations

1. **Work together.** Migration and refugee policy requires multi-dimensional cooperation and coordination among actors and sectors. It requires both state actors and civil society networks to work together. Where services are subcontracted, state actors remain responsible for quality assurance. It is their primary responsibility to ensure comprehensive minimum standards in order to decrease the volatility of reception experiences.
2. **Managing public opinion.** Engaging with the public and managing public opinion is of essential importance. There is a need to build a specific migrant/refugee reception policy with the main purpose of reducing tensions between what the governments do and how the societies may interpret governments' actions.
3. **Engaging the media.** The role of the media is clearly an integral part of public engagement. Relevant state actors responsible from the implementation of migrant reception policies should work on a communication strategy to appeal to the mainstream media promoting solidarity and human protection values, with biographies and refugee testimonials, and an explanation of how they relate to all of us. This would also be a chance to bring to mind the respective national trajectories of emigration and immigration.
4. **Holistic approach.** Migration and refugee policies are all interconnected. Admission is connected to integration; reception conditions are connected to long-term integration outcomes; and housing policy is connected to public opinion. This makes migration/refugee policy especially complex and it makes holistic, integrated approaches, multi-level governance, and institutional and international cooperation essential.

³⁰ See *New York Times*, March 4, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/world/europe/europe-migrants-turkey-greece.html> accessed on

March 2020; and *Deutsche Welle*, March 10, 2020, available at <https://www.dw.com/en/turkey-wants-a-new-refugee-deal-before-march-summit/a-52703968> accessed on 31 March 2020.

³¹ See *the Guardian*, March 17, 2020, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/17/erdogan-in-talks-with-european-leaders-over-refugee-cash-for-turkey> accessed on 31 March 2020.

³² See *EU Observer*, 3 April 2020, <https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147973> accessed on 4 April 2020.

5. **Facilitating knowledge formation.** States should be able to evaluate the policies that are implemented, and this requires benchmarks and indicators. All the stakeholders must be able to analyse results and communicate them back to the public. All of this requires data collection and interpretation. There should be scientific venues where a synergy can be constructed between government, civil society, and academia to exchange views and opinions on objective grounds.
6. **Reception on arrival.** Reception facilities at borders, including airports, should include all necessary assistance and the provision of basic necessities of life, including food, shelter and basic sanitary and health facilities. Even for a short stay, family unity and privacy are essential. Single men and women should be accommodated separately, and families should have the possibility to stay together in the same premises.
7. **Training of border officials.** Officials who come into contact with refugees should be aware of international and domestic laws relating to asylum-seekers and refugees. They should be adequately trained on how to handle asylum applications, including sensitive ones, such as those based on gender-based persecution or those submitted by minors.
8. **Accommodation.** In most instances, refugees are destitute. Many depend on the solidarity of friends or relatives who may host them temporarily. Even when they can afford rented or hotel accommodation, owing to language difficulties, hostility of landlords or racist prejudices, asylum-seekers often encounter difficulties when trying to find private accommodation. This proves even more difficult when asylum-seekers are not permitted to work or cannot find employment.
9. **Health services.** Refugees may suffer from health problems, including emotional and physical disorders that require prompt professional treatment. When medical examination is not undertaken upon arrival, it is usually done prior to admission to a reception centre following the admissibility stage.
10. **Education.** Following the departure from the country of origin, children asylum-seekers suffer from the forced interruption of their education. In order to restore a semblance of normality, it is essential that children benefit from primary and secondary education of a satisfactory quality.
11. **Employment.** Early employment is crucial to sustain and promote a sense of self-efficacy and to enable structural as well as social integration. Apart from the financial aspect, the right to work is an essential element of human dignity, particularly in case of lengthy stay pending the outcome of the asylum procedure. As is already the practice in many countries, refugees should, preferably, be granted permission to work when the length of the asylum procedure exceeds a certain period or where the "package" of support offered to asylum-seekers requires independent financial self-sufficiency to maintain an adequate standard of living.
12. **Unaccompanied and separated Children.** Reception standards should address in particular the special educational, medical, psychological, recreational and other special needs of children, in accordance with relevant international human rights law, UNHCR guidelines and Executive Committee Conclusions. A legal representative should be designated for the handling of the social and legal rights of separated children throughout the asylum procedure, and otherwise to ensure that the child's best interests are represented throughout the child's stay in the country.

13. **Elderly refugees.** The vulnerability inherent in advanced age makes prompt access to medical and health care an essential condition for this group. Also, lack of mobility, a sense of isolation and abandonment, as well as chronic dependency are factors, which the host authorities will need to take into account when designing adequate reception policies for this group.
14. **Women refugees.** At the initial stage of the procedure, female refugees need to be counselled on their rights, including the right to submit an individual application when family members accompany them. As is the case in many countries, female staff using female interpreters should interview women asylum-seekers. To the extent possible, efforts should be made to arrange female staff to carry out the determination of refugee status.

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Appendices

Annex I. Guiding Directives on Reception

DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL,
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013L0033>

Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection,
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/proposal_on_standards_for_the_reception_of_applicants_for_international_protection_en.pdf

EASO guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators
<https://www.easo.europa.eu/news-events/easo-guidance-reception-conditions-operational-standards-and-indicators>

Reception of female refugees and asylum seekers in the EU Case study Germany,
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Annex II. Additional Texts

CONFRONTING THE GLOBAL FORCED MIGRATION CRISIS, 2018, CSIS https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180529_Ridge_ForcedMigrationCrisi.pdf?xG6zs9dOHsV2fr2oCxYTT6oar049iLfA

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