

THE REFUGEE RE-CONNECT

A conference on Refugee Leadership,
Participation and Volunteerism in Europe.



"This is a first time ever I participate in such a forum. This gives me hope and this is how we heal by listening stories of each other!"

"We need to stay united. Challenges cannot be solved unless there is unity."

"We should always support each other. Coordination is the key."

"This is a light of hope for us being part of this Conference and raising our voices".

10 September 2021
organized by



European Coalition of Migrants
and Refugees (EU-COMAR)

A Key For Inclusion

THE REFUGEE RE-CONNECT

This report outlines the main outcomes of the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT, a conference *by and for* refugees in Europe, which took place on 10 September 2021. The report features key recommendations for improving European refugee policies and practices within three thematic areas; civic engagement, access to the labour market, and refugee leadership and participation. It also provides an overview of the main challenges facing refugee-led organisations, refugee volunteers and community representatives in Europe, and offers key recommendations to address those challenges.

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The Conference was made possible only by the hard work, dedication and contributions of the Reference Group, composed of refugees and UNHCR staff members from six countries in the region (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Norway and Spain).

The Reference Group included the following members: Akram Abdullah Ali, refugee volunteer, Spain; AML, Community Group Facilitator (CGF), Georgia; Aneta Ostasz, UNHCR Greece; Camila Alvarez Vargas, refugee volunteer, Spain; Emiliya Bratanova Van Harten, UNHCR Bulgaria; Farhia Osman Ali, refugee volunteer, Cyprus; Fernanda Espuga, UNHCR Spain; George Reginald Freeman Browne, European Coalition (EU-COMER), Spain; Hossam Anjaparidze, Community Group Facilitator (CGF), Georgia; Jamile Ahmadi, Greece; Kia Shojaeirad, Community Group Facilitator (CGF), Georgia; Khadijattou Fatty, refugee volunteer, Cyprus; Lina al Bizreh, refugee volunteer, Spain; Mary Mozafary, Founder of She4She Association, Facilitator, Hungary; Mohammad Alasli, Community Psychosocial Worker, Greece; Nino Kvirkvelia, UNHCR Georgia; Oumaima Rawas, board of the 'Syrian Home Community', Greece; Oumaima Rawas, board of the 'Syrian Home Community', Greece; Olga Komiti, UNHCR Cyprus; Parvina Munavarova, UNHCR Georgia; Polyxeni Passa, UNHCR Greece; Richard Lusakumunu, Greece; Sager Al-Anezi, European Coalition (EU-COMER); Seyran Khalili, Youth Representative Norway (New Women Connectors); Silsila Mahbuob, Refugee Advisory Board, Bulgaria; Susanne Klink, UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe; Wedad Albanna, refugee volunteer, Cyprus; Zenaida Onoufriou, UNHCR Cyprus.



Spain. A group of refugee volunteers take part in a communication session
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Why a Refugee Re-Connect?

Refugees and stateless people know best what barriers and challenges they face and what is needed to advance their rights. With the lived experience of displacement, refugees and refugee-led organizations can easily identify concerns and opportunities, and come up with suitable, practical and sustainable solutions to protection challenges. They are the ones mobilizing the capacities and resilience of their communities. When refugees and stateless persons play an active role in the design and delivery of assistance and services, as well as in advocacy, solutions become more efficient and more sustainable. Their countries of asylum and civil society also become better equipped to ensure effective integration and social cohesion.

In Europe, refugees and refugee-led organizations have long acted as the first point of contact for asylum-seekers arriving in the region. They have been providing critical and lifesaving information about available services and rights and acting as informal guides and translators. They provide frontline and grassroots level support to their communities and help the most vulnerable access assistance, counselling, education and livelihoods. Many

also offer support to the host community and engage in activities to promote social cohesion, combat hate speech and xenophobia, and act as the “voice of refugees” within the public space.

In spite of a multitude of positive practices empowering refugee communities at the national and local level, however, most refugee-led organizations, volunteers and outreach workers have limited opportunities for exchange and capacity building, or to share experiences, network and ensure learning across different contexts.

The impact and effectiveness of such initiatives can therefore be strengthened through enhanced collaboration. There is also a clear lack of representative refugee voices at regional

level which can speak on behalf of a wider range of communities and take the lead in protection advocacy at regional level, including towards UNHCR and regional organizations.

This conference was therefore organized to:

1) Showcase, promote and provide visibility for the important work of refugee volunteers, refugee-led organizations, outreach workers and personnel as agents of change in Europe.

- A conference FOR and BY refugees and stateless persons
- Planned, prepared and facilitated by refugees (and stateless persons)
- Meaningful engagement not seen as a one-off exercise
- Continued need for support and capacity building
- A strong interest in regional exchange and building community – and a need for regional refugee representation

2) *Facilitate exchange, learning and networking between refugees and refugee-led organizations in different countries and contexts; and*

3) *Develop recommendations to governments, NGOs, UNHCR and other stakeholders to support the work of refugees-led initiatives and organizations.*

The conference was called the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT in light of the need to reconnect as a community after a challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately affected refugees and stateless people across the region.

How the Refugee Re-Connect was organized

The Conference was co-planned, co-organized and co-hosted by UNHCR and the European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees, one of the few region-wide networks of refugee-led groups and initiatives, and one of the chapters of the Global Refugee-led Network (GRN).

In order to ensure meaningful participation and leadership of refugees and stateless people throughout the event, a core group of refugees from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Norway and Spain agreed to act as a Reference Group to further advice on the topics and format and support the facilitation of the event.

The group started working since July 2021 and met virtually once a week to discuss and plan the event. One week prior to the event, they started meeting digitally every day. Separate groups were created under each of the three themes

selected for the conference, and the facilitators were coached on facilitation skills and the themes to be discussed. There were three rounds of discussion sessions which allowed all participants to engage in the conversations by unpacking the gaps and sharing their solutions.

Refugee leaders planned, delivered, and facilitated every step of the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT Conference, including by designing, conducting, and moderating the sessions.

The thematic areas discussed

The main goal of the conference was to understand the situation of, and support needed for, refugee-led organizations and refugee-led initiatives in Europe. Moreover, the conference provided a space for refugees and refugee-led organizations to re-connect with each other in exchanging positive practices that have been initiated during COVID-19.

The interactive discussion was mainly focused on key issues faced by Europe-based refugee and stateless communities and how COVID-19 impacted everyone in different ways. Three topics were identified as key areas for meaningful inclusion of refugees and stateless persons:

- access to the labour market
- civic engagement
- refugee leadership and meaningful participation

The first topic, employment, is seen by many refugees as one the main tool for

What does civic engagement mean for refugees and stateless persons?

If refugees and stateless persons get involved in any of the following kinds of activities - that's civic engagement!

- Organizing or participating in neighborhood meetings, clean ups, or cultural festivals
- Volunteering with a community-based organization, church, temple, or mosque
- Attending city council meetings
- Giving testimony at public hearings
- Participating in meetings or forums to discuss community issues
- Taking part in rallies, marches, or vigils
- Voting, taking part in election campaigns or other political participation

It is a simple concept aimed at working together to make things better. It can be at national level, such as organizations that focus on political participation, including voter registration, voter education activities, and get-out-the-vote campaigns, or at local level, such as neighborhood watch groups and community clean ups. Others may focus on organizing community members to identify the most critical issues affecting their community, develop solutions, and work together to carry them out.

Civic engagement means that refugees and stateless persons work together with their host communities to improve their society at large.

What does refugee leadership and meaningful participation entail in practice?

The World Humanitarian, the Global Compact on Refugees and UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity Policy all reiterate commitments to localization, the empowerment of local actors, and accountability to affected populations.

UNHCR defines participation as

"the full and equal involvement of all members of the community in decision-making processes and activities that affect their lives, in both public and private spheres."

Similarly, the Global Refugee-led Network defines such participation as

"when refugees - regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics - are prepared for and participate in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially".

In Europe, this translates into ensuring that refugees and stateless persons are involved and engaged in all decision-making forums - at local, national and regional level - and that refugee leadership is promoted in the response to protection challenges.

This includes working to support and partner with refugee-led organisations and refugee-led initiatives, as well as organisations led by stateless persons and other persons of concern.

integration into their host societies. Access to the labour market facilitates self-reliance and reduces dependency. It also supports the development of language skills and social cohesion with the host community. Employment is not only valuable for refugees and stateless persons themselves, but also for their host- ing States, employers and other stakeholders, ensuring a positive impact on the European economy.

The second and third topics selected were civic engagement, and refugee leadership and meaningful participation, so as to unpack the challenges of refugees and stateless persons living in European countries. Civic engagement was used to include political participation, two-way integration in host communities and the contribution of refugees and stateless persons to the society at large. Refugee leadership and meaningful participation was used in the conference to describe representation - ensuring “a seat at the table”, co-designing equal partnerships, leading the debate on refugee issues, and being involved in policy making and discussions.

Participants

There were 149 registrations prior to the event and 175 participants attended the webinar live (162 on the event platform and 13 on the YouTube video livestream). The participants represented a broad range of stakeholders such as refugee leaders, refugee advocates, refugee-led organizations, stateless representatives, outreach workers, and community volunteers.

A gender, diversity and age (AGD) approach was applied, ensuring equal and inclusive participation, with participants attending from 27 countries in Europe and representing more than 30 different nationalities/ countries of origin. Simultaneous translation was made available in Arabic, French, Spanish and Farsi to ensure broad and diverse participation among different refugee communities.

There was a strong representation of refugee and stateless women (67% of participants were women, 33% were men). UNHCR staff from the Regional Bureau for Europe and from UNHCR country offices were present in support capacity only.

Methodology

In order to discuss more substantially the thematic areas selected by the participants, three World Café tables were set up. World Café is a method where small group discussions take place in rounds, where each round is 25 minutes and participants move from one table to another. During the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT conference, participants were divided into three online breakout rooms and the facilitators rotated between each of the rooms. In that way, participants were given the possibility to attend all three tables on a rotational basis.

During the World Café, there were three rounds of discussion, the first round defined the theme and the gaps pertaining to civic engagement, labour market and refugee leadership and participation, while the second and third rounds sought to define policy recommendations to

address these gaps. In every session, the facilitators unpacked the theme and opened up for a discussion of what this means according to the refugees and stateless persons that participated.

Key challenges identified during the Refugee Re-Connect:

Civic Engagement

Lack of information about and access to rights - Refugees and stateless persons are often not well informed about their (labour or other) rights, exposing them to risks such as exploitation, in particular in rural areas where there are less civil society actors.

Barriers in processing available information on rights and duties - Even when information is available, refugees face several barriers in accessing and processing this information. Information is often provided in the local language only or with limited translations. Information is at times only available online, while refugees do not always have access to devices or the digital skills to find and make effective use of these channels. Moreover, administrative and legal terminology is often hard to understand, even for those who speak the local language. This leads to refugees often not being aware of crucial rights and duties, which puts them in a disadvantaged position.

Barriers in accessing legal information and legal counsel - Leading to a lack of knowledge related to procedural rights.

This was noted as especially problematic for vulnerable groups, including women and LGBTIQ+ persons, and problematic for asylum-seekers who are not aware of application and documentation procedures.

Lack of understanding of administrative structures and entry points - Communication with authorities varies greatly between countries, including the different (levels of) authorities. Refugees are not always aware of how to communicate with authorities (e-mail, in person, etc.) or how to ask for relevant information. Also, this lack of awareness can limit their understanding of possible opportunities to engage with host communities, for example through volunteering.

Lack of cultural understanding and awareness of refugee issues - Across different administrative institutions, a lack of awareness and sensitivity to refugee and statelessness issues can hinder efforts towards inclusion of refugees and stateless persons, including in the education system.

Refugee Leadership and Participation

Lack of political representation - Refugees are not always visible as political actors, for example as politicians on a local or national level, or in different organizations, which can further contribute to the 'fear of the unknown' or lead to discrimination.

Mindshift towards a participatory approach - Lack of awareness amongst policy makers often leads to very real



Greece. Women asylum-seekers help victims of sexual and domestic violence.
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gaps in the development of responses and in their implementation. Thinking of refugees and stateless persons only as *a burden* or as *a problem to be resolved* appears to remain part of the political and administrative mindset, rather than to see the opportunities and capacities these communities bring to their host societies. Applying a participatory and community-based approach could support a much-needed change in mindset at policy level.

Lack of representation and consultation in decision making processes – Too often government authorities and service providers speak and act *on behalf of* refugees without involving refugees. If refugees are not directly involved or consult-

ed in decision making, realistic narratives are not built, and solutions may not be as effective.

Lack of sustainable financial support – Refugee-led organizations and refugee-led initiatives are seldom funded in a sustainable manner, which would allow them to expand and maintain activities over time. This leads to an invisibility of the efforts put forward by refugee communities, and a gap in capacity building and the development of refugee voices and leadership.

Need for refugee leadership to address the narrowing protection space in Europe and the negative connotations attached to the word “refugee” – In spite of the

1951 Refugee Convention, many States seek to create fences and barriers rather than to allow access to territory and asylum. Refugees increasingly feel “criminalized” and used for political aims. There is therefore an emerging need for more refugee leadership and refugee voices to counter this trend, and to show refugees as part of the wider fabric of European societies. The communication tone and association with the word “refugee” or with refugee issues will change when refugees themselves become more visible.

Access to Labour Market

Being able to access the formal job market including self-employment of a host country is crucial for the participation and inclusion of refugees. Nevertheless, many people face hurdles and obstacles hindering them from accessing formal employment in receiving societies, a few of which are laid down below:

Language requirements - Limited language skills present a major obstacle to employment. Language courses are not always readily available to refugees due to waiting lists or high costs, or are not of sufficient quality, length or not targeted to the skills and needs of refugees.

Administrative barriers, such as lack of recognition of education, skills and professional degrees - Refugees face difficulties in getting their previous tertiary education and work experience followed in their home country recognized in the receiving country. University and high school diplomas, technical and vocational training or work experience are not rec-

ognized which hinders access to jobs for which those qualifications are required.

Difficulties in accessing education and professional training - Refugees face numerous difficulties in accessing formal education, especially primary and secondary education for those who are above eighteen years of age. Access to technical and vocational training and upskilling is also limited due to documentation requirements, a lack of targeted courses/support and financial issues.

Lack of positive public attitudes – Refugees often feel that a positive attitude towards their potential, skills and capacities is lacking. Diversity programs exist in some countries, but especially outside of the public sector, diversifying the workforce remains a challenge. This lack of positive attitudes is also due to the lack of role models, who have succeeded in accessing the job market, representing and giving voice to other aspiring refugees. Furthermore, due to the challenges faced to accessing formal employment and thus entering the informal labor market without protection and social benefits.

Administrative struggles - Having a social security and a tax number is a prerequisite for accessing the formal labour market. For refugees without a physical address, it is not always easy or possible to obtain such documents. Delays in obtaining or renewing ID documents also prevent access, as well as challenges in opening bank accounts.

Lack of information for potential employers - Potential employers do not always see the immediate business case for hiring refugees. This is not necessarily due to unwillingness or resistance to hiring them, but mostly due to a lack of available information on refugees' right to work, their skills, potential and longer-term benefits for the company (motivated staff with a lower fluctuation, diverse and more creative teams, access to new markets, image of the company, etc.).

Different rights corresponding to different status - Rights and entitlements that come with the different types of residence permits reflect on different regime governments create for students, migrants, members of high-skilled workforce, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. This can lead to confusion and uncertainty for job applicants and employers alike, and impedes access to economic opportunities.

Mental health and stress - Refugees often experience a lot of pressure, for example during an asylum procedure in which they have to submit evidence to substantiate their claim, but also after obtaining their legal status in order to become self-reliant. At the same time, refugees often still have traumas that have not been dealt with or suffer from various forms psychological stress. Lengthy asylum procedures also add to this and may create a level of dependency, especially if access to employment is limited.

Lack of intercultural communication - In order to create a mutual understanding between refugees and members of the

host society, soft skills are crucial. Civil servants or government officials often lack intercultural communication skills and awareness, while refugees often still distrust public authorities due to previous negative experiences. The lack of such soft skills and awareness on both sides can lead to misunderstandings and/or discrimination, including in employment.

Lack of participatory approaches to developing solutions – While a great variety of initiatives for refugees' access to employment exist, they do not necessarily take into consideration refugees' actual needs, interests and capacities. This may prevent effective programmes that build upon refugees' skills, take into consideration any challenges identified and put forward solutions to tackle them.

Key policy recommendations to enhance inclusion and participation

The following are the key policy recommendations put forward by refugees and stateless persons at the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT conference on how to enhance inclusion and participation in Europe. The recommendations are divided by theme and relevant stakeholder.

All of the below recommendations should include the involvement of refugees and stateless persons throughout their design, implementation and evaluation.

Civic Engagement

Role of local and national actors (reception authorities, municipalities, service providers etc.)

- Initiatives in reception centres to promote language learning and skills developments as early as possible after arrival. Refugees can be engaged as trainers and resource persons.
- Community matching between refugees and host communities to show that refugees can enrich the host community and bring positive changes. Better information provision to refugee and stateless communities, in languages and formats that are understood and inclusive of persons with specific needs.

Role of NGOs, civil society and international organizations

- Spaces to connect refugees with the host community, so that local communities can better understand values and competencies of refugees and visa-versa, and to eliminate negative perceptions of refugees as “burdens to the society”.
- Support language classes, cultural mediation and awareness raising, and information about opportunities to get engaged with the local community, including through volunteering opportunities.
- Encourage the media to play a positive role in raising awareness about

refugee-led initiatives and disseminating success stories of refugee-led enterprises.

Role of fellow refugees and refugee-led organisations

- Refugees to play an active role in their host communities and not hesitate to speak about and promote their rights.
- Refugee-led organisations to mobilize communities and promote civil engagement and political participation. Refugee-led organisations, such as the European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees, can also advocate for refugee rights in cooperation with the host community and civil society actors.
- Qualified/experienced refugees set up informal networks to help other refugees.

Role of donors

- Ensure adequate funding for language classes, cultural mediation and information provision at local and national level.
- Include community matching as part of wider integration and social cohesion programmes.
- Acknowledge and provide visibility for the work done by refugee-led organisations.

Refugee Leadership and Participation

Role of local and national actors (reception authorities, municipalities, service providers etc.)

- More inclusive governance at national and local level, including by consulting regularly with refugees and applying participatory and community-based approaches.
- Local authorities and service providers can provide more space and support for refugees and stateless to address their problems and solutions, including through engagement with women-led organizations and youth engagement.
- Forums and platforms to be created where refugees and stateless persons are involved in and contributing to policy and decision making and for bringing refugee and statelessness issues to the attention of relevant stakeholders.

Role of NGOs, civil society and international organizations

- Support for further regional exchanges and discussion between refugee leaders and refugee-led organisations, inclusive of women and youth, as well as capacity building opportunities at national and regional level.
- Refugee and stateless leaders to be hired not only as volunteers and interns, but also as staff, with professional training and upskilling, where needed.

- Expand awareness programmes to address discrimination and xenophobia faced by refugees and stateless persons.

Role of fellow refugees and refugee-led organisations

- Continue the exchange among refugees and refugee-led organisations started by the Conference both within and between communities.
- Establish, participate in and contribute to regional exchanges and initiatives for refugees and stateless persons.
- Build capacity within the ranks to help grow the efficiency to campaign and influence policy (on for example public speaking, effective communication and public policies).

Role of donors

- Ensure funding for grassroots initiatives to promote refugee participation and leadership, including initiatives for and by youth and women.
- More sustainable and substantive funding for refugee-led organisations and other refugee-led initiatives.
- Prioritize programmes and projects addressing xenophobia and discrimination.

Access to the Labour Market

Role of local and national actors (reception authorities, municipalities, service providers etc.)

- Enhance refugee skills recognition, including without formal TVET, and the recognition of diplomas, upskilling courses for adults of all ages and education in online learning platforms, with supportive measures, such as childcare, technical language courses and exam preparation.
- Programmes to engage with the private sector, implement coaching and mentoring schemes, and provide job readiness training.
- Information and awareness campaigns around employment, the business case of hiring refugees, scholarship opportunities, initiatives for refugees' socio-economic inclusion, legal rights and duties.

Role of NGOs, civil society, and international organization

- Forums to raise awareness on the challenges and potential of refugee employment, bringing together the public and the private sector, organizations which support refugees, refugees, and international organizations, as well as platforms to facilitate job matching of skills and talents of refugees with employers' needs, and providing information about refugees' right to work and the process for hir-

ing, thus providing legal certainty and support to the private sector.

- Market-based and accredited programs to enhance the knowledge and skillset of refugees and stateless persons, catering to different ages, skills sets, qualifications and experiences, with mentorships and coaching.
- More psychosocial and mental health support for refugees who face trauma and mental health issues (preventing them from accessing the labour market).

Role of fellow refugees and refugee-led organisations

- Refugees and refugee-led organisations to share information and knowledge about host countries, including cultural background and political context, and to facilitate participatory approaches for effective socio-economic inclusion initiatives that build upon refugees' capacities and take into consideration their needs.
- Refugees can start-up businesses and create jobs, benefiting both refugee and local communities.
- Refugees to make active effort to get outside of their own community and reach out to their hosting communities to facilitate inclusion and integration.

Role of donors

- Prioritize programmes for skills

MAIS
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France. The High Commissioner delivers volunteer passports to recognize refugees commitment during Covid19.
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recognition and upskilling, to validate skills and professional experiences and enhance the knowledge and skill-set of refugees.

- Donors can assist refugee communities, together with financial and business development service providers, to set up own businesses and be entrepreneurs.
- Consider supplementary funding for mental health and psychosocial support, where needed

Cross-cutting recommendations (all themes)

1) Maintaining and supporting a regional refugee network in Europe, under the umbrella of UNHCR and the European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees, with the aim to further enhance the sense of community initiated by the Conference, facilitate exchange and learning, and strengthen the advocacy role and leadership of refugees and stateless persons in the region.

2) Capacity building for refugee-led initiatives, with support from the European Coalition of Migrants and Refugees and UNHCR. Trainings can be supported by building more tools for refugees and stateless persons to engage in education and labour market through upskilling,

and dedicated funding provided for refugee innovation.

3) Promoting visibility for refugee voices in policy forums, including by promoting the Conference recommendations to decision makers and building allies for stronger refugee leadership and participation in Europe. This includes the promotion of refugee role models and voices to change the narrative around refugees and refugee issues.

Feedback and lessons learned from the REFUGEE RE-CONNECT

- **The importance of networking:** Many participants appreciated the opportunity to exchange with other refugees and stateless persons and expressed the need for further networking opportunities across different contexts. They would like to have more information about organizations involved with refugee lives in different countries by holding more meetings between refugee-led organisations and civil society organizations in all European countries. Also, to grow their networking skills to be able to meet with people who can assist them.
- **Refugee participation in action:** The participants expressed appreciation for the fact that the Conference was designed and led by refugees themselves, with UNHCR there only in a supporting role, and asked for more events that are from one end to another led, planned, prepared and facilitated by refugees and stateless persons.
- **Create inclusive spaces:** During the events, participants highlighted the importance of having different language options, the availability of live interpretation, the strong gender dimension, and availability of captions and sign language.
- **Continued need for exchange, support and capacity building:** Participants highlighted that meaningful engagement should not be seen as a “one-off” exercise. More such events or workshops should take place, enabling participants to take ideas into validation stages and maybe get something started for refugees to learn from and grow professionally, and mobilize participants to achieve new milestones. Moving forward, it could also be beneficial to invite speakers from research institutions and civil society organisations working with refugees and stateless persons, and to include perspectives of the host communities where refugees live.
- **Keep promoting gender equality, equity and diversity :** Participants stated that events should reflect and represent the diversity of - and within - their communities. This includes considerations of age, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, languages, ethnicities, religion and other individual qualities, such as income, legal status and educational background.

Further references

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Annex

	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	REFUGEE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP	ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET
Role of local and national actors (reception authorities, municipalities, service providers etc.)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initiatives in reception centers to promote language learning and skills developments as early as possible after arrival. Refugees to be engaged as trainers. 2. Community matching between refugees and host communities to show that refugees can enrich the host community and bring positive changes. 3. Better information provision to refugee and stateless communities, in languages and formats that are understood and inclusive of persons with specific needs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More inclusive governance at national and local level, including by consulting regularly with refugees and applying participatory and community-based approaches. 2. Local authorities and service providers can provide more space and support for refugees and stateless to address their problems and solutions, including through women and youth engagement. 3. Forums and platforms to be created where refugees and stateless persons are involved in decision making and for bringing refugee issues to the attention of relevant stakeholders. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enhance refugee skills recognition, including without formal TVET, and the recognition of diplomas, upskilling courses for adults of all ages and education in online learning platforms, with supportive measures, such as childcare, technical language courses and exam preparation. 2. Programmes to engage with the private sector, implement coaching and mentoring schemes, and provide job readiness training . 3. Information and awareness campaigns around employment, the business case of hiring refugees, scholarship opportunities, initiatives for refugees' socio-economic inclusion, legal rights and duties.
Role of NGOs, civil society and international organizations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spaces to connect refugees with locals for locals to understand values and competencies of refugees and visa-versa, and to eliminate negative perceptions of refugees as "burdens to the society". 2. Support language classes, cultural mediation and awareness raising, and information about opportunities to get engaged with the local community, including volunteering opportunities. 3. Encourage the media to play a positive role in raising awareness about refugee initiatives and disseminating success stories of refugee-led enterprises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support for further regional exchanges and discussion between refugee leaders and refugee-led organisations, inclusive of women and youth, as well as capacity building opportunities at national and regional level. 2. Refugee and stateless leaders to be hired not only as volunteers and interns, but also as staff, with professional training and upskilling. 3. Awareness programmes to address discrimination and xenophobia faced by refugees and stateless persons. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forums to raise awareness on the challenges and potential of refugee employment, bringing together the public and the private sector, organizations which support refugees, refugees and international organizations, as well as platforms to facilitate job matching of skills and talents of refugees with employers' needs, and providing information about refugees' right to work and the process for hiring, thus providing legal certainty and support to the private sector. 2. Market-based and accredited programs to enhance the knowledge and skillset of refugees and stateless persons, catering to different ages, skills sets, qualifications and experiences, with mentorships and coaching. 3. More psychosocial and mental health support for refugees who face trauma and mental health issues (preventing them from accessing the labour market).
Role of fellow refugees and refugee-led organisations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refugees to play an active role in their host communities and not hesitate to speak about and promote their rights. 2. Refugee-led organisations to mobilize communities and promote civic engagement and political participation. This active engagement of refugee-led organisations, such as the European Coalition, to advocate for refugee rights in cooperation with the host society. 3. More qualified refugees can set up informal networks to help other refugees. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the exchange among refugees and refugee-led organisations started by the Conference within and between communities. 2. Establish, participate in and contribute to regional exchanges and initiatives for refugees. 3. Build capacity within the ranks to help grow the efficiency to campaign and influence policy (on public speaking, effective communication and on public policies affecting refugees). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Refugees and refugee-led organisations to share information and knowledge about host countries, including cultural background and political context, and to facilitate participatory approaches for effective socio-economic inclusion initiatives that build upon refugees' capacities and take into consideration their needs. 2. Refugees can start-up businesses and create jobs, benefiting both refugee and local communities. 3. Refugees to make active effort to get outside of their own community and reach out to their hosting communities to facilitate inclusion and integration.
Role of donors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure adequate funding for language classes, cultural mediation and information provision at local level. 2. Include community matching as part of wider integration and social cohesion programmes. 3. Acknowledge and provide visibility for the work done by refugee-led organisations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure funding for grassroots initiatives to promote refugee participation and leadership, including initiatives for and by youth and women. 2. More sustainable funding for refugee-led organisations and other refugee-led initiatives. 3. Prioritize programmes and projects addressing xenophobia and discrimination. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritize programmes for skills recognition and upskilling, to validate skills and professional experiences and enhance the knowledge and skillset of refugees. 2. Donors can assist refugee communities, together with financial and business development service providers, to set up own businesses and be entrepreneurs. 3. Consider supplementary funding for mental health and psychosocial support, where needed.
CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintaining and supporting a regional refugee network in Europe, under the umbrella of UNHCR and the European Coalition, to further enhance the sense of community initiate by the Conference, to facilitate exchange and learning, and strengthen the advocacy role and leadership of refugees in the region. 2. Capacity building for refugee-led initiatives, with support from the European Coalition and UNHCR. Trainings can be supported by building more tools for refugees to engage in education and labour market through upskilling, advocacy campaigns can be amplified, and dedicated funding can be provided for refugee innovation. 3. Promoting visibility for refugee voices in policy forums, including by promoting the Conference recommendations to decision makers and building allies for stronger refugee leadership and participation in Europe. This includes the promotion of role models to change the narrative around refugees and refugee issues. 			

