



**SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS**

**Asylum Seekers and Refugees with
Intellectual Disabilities in Europe**

The need for increased awareness and inclusion of migrants
with intellectual disabilities during the recent migrant crisis

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ABSTRACT

Asylum seekers and refugees with intellectual disabilities (ID) have been largely ignored by the mainstream conversation during the recent migrant crisis in Europe. While all migrants in the region undoubtedly face difficulties accessing resources and becoming included in society, those with ID – especially children – are likely subject to additional obstacles that deepen their isolation.

There are two main difficulties that migrants with ID will face in Europe. Firstly, different stigmas imposed on this population create barriers to social connectedness, including stigma as an asylum seeker and a refugee, stigma as an individual with ID in Europe, and stigma as an individual with ID in migrant communities. Secondly, migrants with ID may not be identified during the asylum procedure, which prevents the arrangement of targeted support to this individual and referrals to inclusive programs.

While there are examples of initiatives that specifically focus on asylum seekers and refugees with ID, these initiatives are scarce and this population will continue to be isolated without effective awareness-raising campaigns and inclusive practices.

The following recommendations are provided to improve the situation for migrants with ID in Europe: develop a training program about how to identify, interact with, and support migrants with ID; provide all relevant documents in easy-to-read format; administer an identification card to migrants with ID and other disabilities; encourage organizations that already assist migrants to include those with ID in their programs; and conduct further research (in particular, primary research with outreach to migrants with ID in Europe today to better understand their situation).

INTRODUCTION

According to David Evangelista, Regional President & Managing Director of Special Olympics Europe Eurasia,¹ people with ID are “one of the most misunderstood populations in the world today.”² Lack of awareness and negative stigma surrounding ID has led to this population being unjustly labeled as a “burden,”³ seen with “an uneasy combination of pity, discomfort, and fear from the public.”⁴

Isolation of people with ID is only worsened during times of displacement. Displaced persons with disabilities (not limited to ID) reportedly “face added risks of abandonment, neglect, and lack of equal access to food and healthcare.”⁵ Almost 500,000 displaced people around the world have ID.⁶

The current migrant crisis, beginning in 2015,⁷ is no exception. Over the last three years, an estimated 1.5 million people have crossed the Mediterranean – mostly from the Middle East and North Africa – to seek refuge in Europe.⁸ Unfortunately, there continues to be insufficient cooperation among EU member states to effectively respond to this mass influx of asylum seekers and refugees.⁹ Particularly impacted by the “lack of EU solidarity”

¹ Special Olympics, "Regional President & Managing Director, Europe Eurasia," Special Olympics.

² David Evangelista, "On The Margins Of The Margins: Refugees With Intellectual Disabilities." Huffington Post, August 3, 2017.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Nicole Ditchman, Shirli Werner, Kristin Kosyluk, Nev Jones, Brianna Elg, and Patrick Corrigan, "Stigma and Intellectual Disability: Potential Application of Mental Illness Research," *Rehabilitation Psychology* 58, no. 2 (May 2013): 206-16.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, "People with Disabilities at Added Risk in War, Displacement," Human Rights Watch, December 3, 2015.

⁶ Evangelista, "Refugees With Intellectual Disabilities."

⁷ European Parliament, "EU migrant crisis: facts and figures," European Parliament: News, June 30, 2017.

⁸ International Organization for Migration, "Migration Flows – Europe," Migration, 2018.

⁹ Daniela Vincenti, "UNHCR chief: EU won't solve migration crisis without restoring solidarity," Euractiv, January 23, 2018; Chris Anyfantis, "EU migration crisis again accentuates lack of unity and solidarity among member states," The European Sting, June 27, 2018.

are popular countries of entry at the southern border of Europe.¹⁰ With increased border controls¹¹ alongside an unwillingness or inability of other governments to relocate migrants to their own countries,¹² many asylum seekers and refugees are stuck in “frontline states.”¹³ They have little choice but to remain in overcrowded accommodation facilities with depleted resources, which is especially the case in Greece and Italy.¹⁴ Yet, even across the region, “various EU countries scramble to find basic, decent housing for asylum seekers [and] the bigger issues of how to help them rebuild their lives, find their place in their new home countries and participate productively in society loom.”¹⁵

Nonetheless, migrants with ID are likely facing additional barriers that further obstruct access to resources and exacerbate their isolation in European society. As stated by Evangelista, this population “[exists] on the margins of the global displacement crisis.”¹⁶ While there are initiatives that specifically target migrants with ID in Europe, these

¹⁰ Alan MacKenzie, "Is Europe doing enough to protect human rights?" DW, February 15, 2018.

¹¹ UN High Commissioner for Refugees, "Border fences and internal border controls in Europe (March 2017)," Relief Web, April 3, 2017; Jon Stone, "EU plans to triple spending on border control in response to refugee crisis," The Independent, June 13, 2018.

¹² David Martin, "Migrant relocations from Italy and Greece drawing to a close," DW, January 29, 2018; Alexandra Zavis and Ann Simmons, "Europe's migrant crisis threatens to overwhelm Italy, even as flows to Greece dry up," Los Angeles Times, July 4, 2017; Lizzie Dearden, "EU plan to relocate 160,000 refugees from Italy and Greece by September failing despite record deaths at sea," The Independent, May 16, 2017; The Local Italy, "'We need to listen to Italy': UN refugee chief," June 14, 2018.

¹³ Steve Scherer, "EU countries failing to back frontline states in migrant crisis – Italy," Reuters, January 22, 2016; Giulia Paravicini and David Herszenhorn, "Southern rim rebels against EU migration proposal," Politico, May 5, 2018.

¹⁴ Joanna Kakissis, "'Europe Does Not See Us As Human': Stranded Refugees Struggle In Greece," NPR, March 9, 2018; Mattha Busby, "'I love Rome, but Rome doesn't love us': the city's new migrant crisis," The Guardian, February 19, 2018; Anthony Faiola, "'We're never getting out of here': How refugees became stranded in Greece," The Washington Post, October 14, 2016; Human Rights Watch, "Greece: 13,000 Still Trapped on Islands," Human Rights Watch, March 6, 2018; Doris Pundy, "Refugees in Italy face long wait for a new future," DW, August 28, 2017; Amnesty International, *Hotspot Italy: How EU's Flagship Approach Leads to Violations of Refugee and Migrant Rights*. N.p.: Amnesty International, 2016; Kevin McElvaney, "Rare look at life inside Lesbos' Moria refugee camp," AlJazeera, January 19, 2018; Judith Vonberg, "Death threats, despair and deportations: Three years on the front lines of Europe's migration crisis," CNN, June 20, 2018.

¹⁵ Judith Sunderland, "For Europe, Integrating Refugees Is the Next Big Challenge." Human Rights Watch, January 1, 2013.

¹⁶ Evangelista, "Refugees with Intellectual Disabilities."

initiatives are scarce and this population will continue to be excluded from the mainstream conversation without effective awareness-raising campaigns and inclusive practices.

Subsequently, the goal of this report is to inform the international community about a too-often ignored and forgotten population,¹⁷ and to encourage future action to foster social connectedness for migrants with ID in Europe. A particular focus will be placed on migrant youth with ID in countries “that sit on the bloc’s external borders”: Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain.¹⁸

RESEARCH METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

Research for this report was conducted over the course of four months in 2018 (May – August). The first two months consisted of a literature review about ID and the migrant crisis in Europe, and the last two months involved research about the European asylum procedure and activities in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain to support migrants with ID. Over the duration of this research, a total of five interviews were completed: three of the interviews were comprised of people who have experience assisting migrants with ID in the United States, and the other two interviews were with representatives from Special Olympics Europe Eurasia who have are involved in projects that include migrants with ID.

Limitations for this report existed in the research methods, location, and timing. Firstly, research was only conducted in English and limited Spanish. There is likely more information about migrants with ID in Europe, particularly local organizations that support migrants with ID, available in other languages. Secondly, research was carried out in the

¹⁷ Brigitte Rohwerder, Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities and Conflict - Advocacy of the forgotten," unpublished paper, University of York, September 2011.

¹⁸ Paravicini et al., "Southern rim rebels".

United States, thus removing the ability to personally visit and speak to important actors in Europe for this report such as migrants with ID, local organizations, authorities, and volunteers. Finally, the research only lasted for four months. The migrant crisis and the situation of people with ID is very complex, and further research should be carried out – especially personal outreach to migrants with ID in Europe to hear their stories and perspectives – to fully grasp the entirety of this topic.

DEFINITION OF ID AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ID

In order to understand the experience of migrants with ID in Europe, it is important to understand what ID is and how people with ID are viewed in today's society. A person with ID will exhibit "certain limitations in cognitive functioning and other skills, including communication and self-care." Common types of ID are Fragile X Syndrome, Down Syndrome, and Autism Spectrum Disorders. These can cause an individual to develop at a slower rate than his or her peers and interact with others differently.¹⁹ However, ID does not inhibit a person's ability to have interests and goals, make their own decisions, and positively impact communities. Those with ID simply need support that empowers them to do so, rather than unjust institutional measures – such as segregated education and "[deprivation] of legal capacity" – that take away their agency.²⁰

Social isolation of people with ID likely manifests from a widespread negative stigma surrounding this condition: a report from University College London (UCL) in 2015 revealed that "[in] many countries [people with ID] are still widely viewed as incapable, unable to live

¹⁹ Special Olympics, "Intellectual Disabilities," Special Olympics.

²⁰ Inclusion Europe, *Inclusion Europe's contribution to the mid-term review of the European Disability Strategy*, n.p., 2015.

independently or contribute to society.” Correspondingly, Evangelista explained in an article from 2017 that those with ID can be “seen as burdens on their communities, as a population that poses only challenges and no opportunities.”²¹

Nonetheless, people with ID around the world are proving this negative stigma to be wrong. They are attending university,²² obtaining jobs such as office assistants and becoming business owners,²³ and successfully pursuing their interests as athletes,²⁴ artists,²⁵ and musicians.²⁶ In all of these cases, individuals with ID are empowered with the right tools and support mechanisms by family, friends, and organizations to achieve their goals and make an impact in society. As a result, they are showing others that people with ID are capable and powerful, and deserve to be treated with the same equality and respect as any other human being.

Withal, not everyone imposes a negative stigma on those with ID and according to a study from UCL – which involved “responses from 667 experts and representatives of organizations active in the intellectual disability field from 88 countries” – there are visible “progressive attitudes and amplex towards inclusion” for people with ID around the world (Appendix 1). The study further illustrates the catalyst behind positive viewpoints about ID to be “marked changes and actions aimed at improving integration, and the work

²¹ Evangelista, “Refugees with Intellectual Disabilities.”

²² Think College, “Think College Stories,” Think College.

²³ National Down Syndrome Society. “#DSWORKS Success Stories.” National Down Syndrome Society; Aima Akkerman, Herman Meininger, Sabina Kef, and Cees Janssen, “Job Satisfaction of People With Intellectual Disabilities in Integrated and Sheltered Employment: An Exploration of the Literature,” *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities* 13, no. 3 (September 2016): 205-16; Linda Andrews, “Hiring People with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Society for Human Resource Management*, July 1, 2005; Margaret Turley, “My First Year in EY,” Trinity College Dublin, 2018.

²⁴ Special Olympics, “Sports & Games,” Special Olympics.

²⁵ Studio A, “Artists,” Studio A.

²⁶ United By Music North America, “About United By Music North America (UBMNA),” United By Music North America; United By Music, “Organization,” United By Music.

of NGOs and parents to raise awareness and advocate for inclusion.”²⁷ A poll from Shriver Media and Special Olympics International parallels this finding, explaining that although Americans who know an individual with ID “are three times more comfortable and compassionate towards people with intellectual disabilities,” those who do not know an individual with ID “still cling to old judgements, stereotypes and confusion.”²⁸ Thus, effective awareness-raising campaigns and inclusive programs that combat negative stigma are essential to improve the situation of people with ID around the world – especially for migrants with ID.

STIGMA AND BARRIERS FACED BY MIGRANTS WITH ID

Unfortunately, there is a large absence of research on those with ID from the current migrant crisis in Europe. This section will therefore explore the layers of stigma and barriers to social connectedness that this population likely faces to gain a better sense of what it is like to be a migrant with ID in Europe. It is important to note that stigmas and barriers discussed in this section are not exclusive to Europe, nor are they universal within Europe, but their existence is alarming and must be addressed to understand the potential worst-case scenario for migrants with ID in the region:

Stigma as an asylum seeker and a refugee

In response to the recent migrant crisis, Europe has experienced a rise of xenophobia.²⁹ This can be demonstrated by the recent success of far-right and populist

²⁷ Katrina Scior, Maria Kett, Richard Hastings, Shirli Werner, Aseel Hamid, Catherine Belton, Adebisi Laniyan, and Maya Patel, *Intellectual Disabilities: Raising Awareness and Combating Stigma*, n.p.: University College London, 2015.

²⁸ Special Olympics, and Shriver Media, *The Shriver Report Snapshot: Insight into Intellectual Disabilities in the 21st Century*, n.p., 2015.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, "European Union Events of 2017," Human Rights Watch, 2017.

parties with strong anti-immigration agendas – such as in Austria,³⁰ the Czech Republic,³¹ Germany,³² Hungary,³³ Italy,³⁴ Poland,³⁵ and Slovakia³⁶ – along with studies that show divided public opinion on the issue. For instance, in 2016 the Pew Research Center found that 59% of Europeans are “concerned refugees will increase domestic terrorism” (Appendix 2 and 3). The study also revealed that unfavourable viewpoints about migrants are tied to unfavourable viewpoints about Muslims, as “[most] refugees in Europe come from nations that are predominantly Muslim,”³⁷ including Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.³⁸ A similar study by Chatham House in 2017 explained that 55 percent of European respondents agree “[all] further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped” (Appendix 4).³⁹

Subsequently, asylum seekers and refugees in Europe, “especially irregular and Muslim migrants,” are being labeled as criminals and terrorists.⁴⁰ Stigma created by

³⁰ Hilary Clarke, Stephanie Halasz, and Judith Vonberg, "Coalition government with far-right party takes power in Austria," CNN, December 18, 2017.

³¹ BBC, "Czech election: Billionaire Babis wins by large margins," BBC News, October 22, 2017; Robert Tait, "Andrej Babis sworn in as Czech PM with pledge to crack down on migration," The Guardian, December 6, 2017.

³² Jefferson Chase, "AfD populists milk anti-refugee anger in German region with few asylum seekers," DW, August 16, 2017; Cas Mudde, "What the stunning success of AfD means for Germany and Europe," The Guardian, September 24, 2017.

³³ Mary Louise Kelly, "Why European Countries Are Concerned About The Results Of Hungary's Election," NPR, April 10, 2018.

³⁴ Stephanie Kirchaessner, "Italy: populist government sworn in as political deadlock ends," The Guardian, June 1, 2018;

Vito Laterza, "The populism and dystopia of Italy's new government," AlJazeera, May 22, 2018; Conn Hallinan, "Italy's Election Is All About Immigrants, and It's Getting Ugly," Foreign Policy in Focus, February 22, 2018.

³⁵ Paul Fluckiger, "Poland's government stokes fears about refugees," DW, June 14, 2017; Monika Napela, "Poland's in crisis again. Here's what you should know about the far right's latest power-grab," Washington Post, November 28, 2017; Remi Adekoya, "Why Poland's Law and Justice Party Remains So Popular," Foreign Affairs, November 3, 2017.

³⁶ Grigorij Meseznikov, "Migration, elections and extremism: the case of Slovak politics," Heinrich Boll Stiftung: The Green Political Foundation, May 26, 2016; Benjamin Cunningham, "5 takeaways from Slovakia's election," Politico, March 6, 2016.

³⁷ Jacob Poushter, "European opinions of the refugee crisis in 5 charts," Pew Research Center, September 16, 2016.

³⁸ Kakassis, "Stranded Refugees Struggle In Greece."

³⁹ Matthew Goodwin, and Thomas Raines, "What Do Europeans Think About Muslim Immigration?" Chatham House, February 7, 2017.

⁴⁰ Refugees Reporting. "Racism and discrimination are part of everyday life for migrants in Europe." Refugees Reporting. Last modified 2017.

xenophobia and Islamophobia⁴¹ can undoubtedly isolate migrants in society, even potentially compromising their safety. For instance, in Germany in 2017, there were “100 attacks...on mosques,” “908 attacks...targeting German Muslims,” and “1,906 criminal attacks on refugees.”⁴² Racism in the media only exacerbates this issue; one news station in Slovakia broadcasted the following extreme viewpoint last year: “Obviously we do not have enough terrorists, rapists, or other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries.”⁴³ Asylum seekers and refugees may face additional discrimination in employment,⁴⁴ housing,⁴⁵ and education.⁴⁶

Stigma as an individual with ID in Europe

As discussed earlier, people with ID can be unjustly “labeled as ‘incompetent’ or ‘incapable’.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, beliefs about ID vary across the world and Europe in particular is reported to have “mixed views and attitudes” towards ID, involving “official sanctioned acceptance and inclusion versus the reality of ingrained prejudice.”⁴⁸

⁴¹ Enes Bayrakli, and Farid Hafez, eds, *European Islamophobia Report*, Istanbul, Turkey: SETA, 2018.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Jorg Peschner, Jorg, *Labour market performance of refugees in the EU*, n.p.: European Commission, 2017; Ojeaku Nwabuzo, Lisa Schaefer, and ENAR staff, *Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe*, n.p.: European Network Against Racism, 2016; Jean-Christophe Dumont, Thomas Liebig, Jorg Peschner, Filip Tanay, and Theodora Xenogiani, *How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe?* n.p.: European Union, 2016.

⁴⁵ EWSI Editorial Team, "Immigrant Housing in Europe: Overview," European Web Site on Integration, May 9, 2016.

⁴⁶ UNICEF, "Refugee and migrant crisis in Europe," UNICEF, January 3, 2018; Zia Weise, "Refugee children get little education in Europe," Politico, September 26, 2016; Oliver, "Integration of refugee into education systems in Europe," Humanium, June 5, 2017; Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, *Fighting school segregation in Europe through inclusive education: a position paper*, n.p.: Council of Europe, 2017.

⁴⁷ Inclusion Europe, "Legal capacity," Choices: a platform on supported decision-making.

⁴⁸ Scior et al., *Intellectual Disabilities: Raising Awareness and Combating Stigma*.

Barriers that migrants with ID (in particular, young migrants with ID) may face in Europe are present in the following areas:

- Education: EU Member States are required to allow access to education for asylum seeking children “under the similar conditions as their own nationals for so long as an expulsion measure against them or their parents is not actually enforced.”⁴⁹ However, depending on location, migrant youth with ID may be separated from their counterparts without ID.⁵⁰ In 2012, Europe had an average of 2.25 percent of children being separated from their peers without disabilities,⁵¹ while “[approximately] 1-3% of the global population has an intellectual disability.”⁵² The separation rate in education systems differs across Europe, as in Italy this number is less than 1 percent but in Switzerland it is above 5 percent.⁵³ The practice of separating students with disabilities from their peers can prevent the development of necessary skills, potentially hindering future social inclusion in the areas of living, employment, and education.⁵⁴ The alternative is an inclusive education system, which puts students with and without disabilities in the same classroom and creates a space that promotes diversity as youth learn to understand those who are different from them.⁵⁵ In this system, migrant youth with ID will become more

⁴⁹ Parliament and Council Directive on reception of applicants for international protection.

⁵⁰ Inclusion Europe, *European Disability Strategy*.

⁵¹ Inclusion Europe, *Submission to the UN Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on Key Issues for a General Comment on Article 24*, n.p.: Inclusion Europe, 2015.

⁵² Special Olympics, "What is Intellectual Disability?" Special Olympics.

⁵³ Inclusion Europe, *Key Issues for a General Comment on Article 24*.

⁵⁴ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, *Evidence of the Link Between Inclusive Education and Social Inclusion: A Review of the Literature*. Edited by Simoni Symeonidou, Odense, Denmark, 2018.

⁵⁵ United Nations, "Inclusive education vital for all, including persons with disabilities – UN rights experts," UN News, September 2016.

included in society with the opportunity to interact with their peers both with and without disabilities.

- Healthcare: Healthcare professionals in Europe are reported to receive very little training about how to provide care for people with ID. They may be unable or unwilling to treat this population. When compared to other Europeans, those with ID have “higher rates of obesity and mental health disorders, and lower rates of cardiovascular fitness, vaccination levels, and preventive health screenings.”⁵⁶ This could present difficulties for migrants with ID when they arrive to Europe: after fleeing violent situations in their home countries and making a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean to get to Europe, migrants may be affected by trauma, abuse, or physical injuries.⁵⁷ If a person providing medical service to the migrants is unfamiliar or uncomfortable treating patients with ID, there are serious concerns for the well-being of this population.
- Access to information: People with ID can understand information better when it is in easy-to-read format.⁵⁸ This allows people with ID to understand information they may not have been able to previously comprehend⁵⁹. Easy-to-read documents contain “clear and simple” language, and may include pictures or illustrations.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ L. Salvador-Carulla, R. Martinez-Leal, C. Heyler, J. Alvarez-Galvez, M.Y. Veenstra, J. Garcia-Ibanez, S. Carpenter, et al. 2015, "Training on intellectual disability in health sciences: the European perspective", *International Journal of Developmental Disabilities*, 61: 20-31.

⁵⁷ Andoula Pavli, and Helena Maltezou, "Health problems of newly arrived migrants and refugees in Europe," *Journal of Travel Medicine* 25, no. 4 (July 1, 2017); Regional Office for Europe, "Migrant populations, including children, at higher risk of mental health disorders," World Health Organization, April 7, 2017.

⁵⁸ Inclusion Europe, "Make your information accessible!" Easy to read.

⁵⁹ Inclusion Europe, *Information for all: European standards for making information easy to read and understand*, n.p.: Inclusion Europe, 2014.

⁶⁰ Rozanne Barrow, Maura Bogler, Frances Casey, Sarah Cronin, Teresa Gadd, Karen Henderson, Aine Ni Aileagain, Stephanie O'Conner, Deirdre O'Donoghue, Adeline Quinn, and Grainne Tinney. *Make it Easy: A guide to preparing Easy to Read information*. N.p.: Accessible Information Working Group, 2011.

However, very few documents are provided in easy-to-read format.⁶¹ During the asylum procedure, migrants are often given leaflets or handouts that explain their rights and how to access certain resources; migrants may also fill out or sign documents for their asylum applications.⁶² Withal, if these are not easy-to-read, there is a large possibility that a migrant may not fully understand their options or the asylum procedure as a whole, and consequently will make uninformed decisions. During research for this report, no evidence was found of easy-to-read information being provided to asylum seekers in Europe, and a study from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found “little evidence of accessible information, for example, in easy-read format for persons with intellectual disabilities, in any of the seven Member States.” Member States for this study included Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, and Sweden.⁶³

Stigma as an individual with ID in migrant communities

Although not much information could be found on this topic (especially in Syria⁶⁴), a negative stigma towards ID and disability in general was reported in all countries of origin that were examined (Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, Nigeria, and Iran). Most often in these countries, ID is explained through cultural beliefs or is seen as a punishment by God.⁶⁵ Those with ID and other disabilities can be excluded from their

⁶¹ Inclusion Europe, *European Disability Strategy*.

⁶² "Country Reports." Asylum Information Database.

⁶³ European Union: European Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU, Thematic focus: Disability*, n.p.: European Union: European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016.

⁶⁴ Stephen Thompson, *Disability in Syria*, n.p., 2017; Women's Refugee Commission, *Disability Inclusion in the Syrian Refugee Response in Lebanon - Field Visit Summary: May/June 2014*, September 2014.

⁶⁵ Jean Francois Trani, Parul Bakhushi, Ayan Ahmed Noor, and Ashraf Mashboor, *Disability in Afghanistan: Taking a Capabilities Approach to look at Research Challenges and Policy Implications*; Brigitte Rohwerder,

community,⁶⁶ abused by adults and their peers,⁶⁷ and deprived of essential resources such as education and healthcare.⁶⁸ Within families, the inability to contribute financially can be a large reason for neglect.⁶⁹ The entire family may also be isolated, especially if the view that siblings of those with ID are unfit for marriage exists in their community.⁷⁰

Subsequently, families may not want to tell others that a member (in particular, a young person) of the family has ID, and in some cases, they will keep them isolated inside of their homes to prevent others from learning about that family member's condition. This was discussed in an interview with two employees from Community Refugee & Immigration Services (CRIS) who have experience supporting refugees from the Middle East and North Africa when they arrive to Columbus, Ohio. Cat Gossman, former caseworker and current lead of the Health and Wellness Program at CRIS, explained the following: "... [there are situations where] families just hide away the family member who might have some

Disability in South Sudan, n.p., 2018; Brigitte Rohwerder, *Disability in Somalia*, n.p., 2018; Mela Ghebremedhin, "NAIDDE striving against Eritrean cultural beliefs on mental disability," Madote, 2015; Precious Nonye Sango, 2017, "Country profile: intellectual and developmental disability in Nigeria", *Tizard Learning Disability Review*, 22 (2): 87-93; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Iraq*, n.p., 2016; Frank Njenga, 2009, "Perspectives of intellectual disability in Africa: epidemiology and policy services for children and adults", *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 22 (5): 457-61; Sayyed Ali Samadi, 2008, "Comparative Policy Brief: Status of Intellectual Disabilities in the Islamic Republic of Iran", *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities*, 5 (2): 129-132; Roy McConkey, and Sayyed Ali Samadi, 2013, "The impact of mutual support on Iranian parents of children with an autism spectrum disorder: a longitudinal study", *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 35 (9): 775-784.

⁶⁶ Trani et al., *Disability in Afghanistan*; Rohwerder, *Disability in South Sudan*; Rohwerder, *Disability in Somalia*; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq et al., *Disabilities in Iraq*; Martin Kobler and UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, *People with Different Abilities*; Sango, "Nigeria"; O. Atilola, O. Omigbodun, T. Bella-Awusah, I. Lagunju, and P. Igbeneghu, 2014, "Neurological and intellectual disabilities among adolescents within a custodial institution in South-West Nigeria", *Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing*, 21 (1): 31-38; McConkey et al., "Iranian parents".

⁶⁷ Rohwerder, *Disability in South Sudan*; Trani et al., *Disability in Afghanistan*; Rohwerder, *Disability in Somalia*; Sida, *Disability Rights in Somalia*, n.p., 2014; Atilola et al., "South-West Nigeria".

⁶⁸ Rohwerder, *Disability in South Sudan*; Rohwerder, *Disability in Somalia*; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq et al., *Disabilities in Iraq*; Sango, "Nigeria"; Njenga, "Africa"; Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: People with Disabilities, Older People Face Danger," Human Rights Watch, May 31, 2017; Kobler et al., *People with Different Abilities*.

⁶⁹ Jean-Francois Trani, and Parul Bakhshi, 2013, "Vulnerability and mental health in Afghanistan: looking beyond war exposure", *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 50 (1): 108-39.

⁷⁰ Ibid., United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq et al., *Disabilities in Iraq*; Samadi, "Iran".

disability, if they're physical or intellectual. A lot of times, families are like, 'Oh, that person, they just stay home all the time.' They don't want to send them to school, or they don't want to take them out places." Jhuma Acharya, a caseworker for CRIS and former refugee from Bhutan, further illustrated that those with ID can be labeled as "crazy," and migrants will not want to say a family member has ID "because they feel they will be stigmatized." Both Gossman and Acharya emphasized the importance of letting migrant families know that ID and other disabilities do not need to be hidden or looked at negatively.⁷¹ If hidden away and excluded from society, the migrant with ID will not be provided with adequate support for his or her condition during the asylum procedure; they would also be deprived of the opportunity to be referred to inclusive programs (identification of migrants will be elaborated on later in this report).

On the other hand, migrant families may come together to support a member with ID in their new homes. For instance, in South Sudan, there are reports of "community-based rehabilitation efforts [that] have helped shift attitudes towards people with disabilities,"⁷² and in Somalia disabilities are "sometimes [seen as] a blessing or a teaching, and sometimes a form of protection for the community."⁷³ Correspondingly, Carlos – a clinical caseworker in the United States who requested to remain anonymous, and has experience assisting migrants with ID from the Middle East and North Africa – discussed in an interview that he has witnessed communities rally together to support children that have complex needs, including ID: "We've seen families who come here because they know they have relatives who are going to help." Carlos also emphasized the importance of creating a space where

⁷¹ Cat Gossman, and Jhuma Acharya, interview by the author, Community Refugee & Immigration Services, Columbus, OH/USA, May 24, 2018.

⁷² Rohwerder, *Disability in South Sudan*.

⁷³ Rohwerder, *Disability in Somalia*.

migrants know they are welcome and now have a committed, caring team to support and empower the individual with complex needs. One of the statements that Carlos consistently will tell families is “there are no stupid questions.”⁷⁴ However, this understanding and encouraging environment cannot be provided to migrants with ID if authorities, caseworkers, and other actors are unaware or possess negative attitudes about ID.

SOLUTIONS THAT COMBAT STIGMA AND BARRIERS TO SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS FACED BY MIGRANTS WITH ID

Despite the likelihood that migrants with ID face isolation in Europe today, there are a few great examples of solutions that have the promise of combating stigma and barriers faced by migrants with ID. There are also more general solutions that support all migrants (with a focus on migrant youth), but may include those with ID as well. Although these solutions are not in abundance, their existence does demonstrate much needed attention for this marginalized population.

Solutions that support migrants with ID

One organization that has provided an incredible opportunity to foster social connectedness for migrants with ID in Europe is Special Olympics. This organization empowers individuals with ID around the world through sporting events, health screenings, and advocacy campaigns.⁷⁵ In June of 2017, athletes from Special Olympics Cyprus “invited refugee youth from the Konifou Reception Center for asylum seekers to come and play a floorball match in Larnaca.”⁷⁶ A similar effort was carried out by Special Olympics

⁷⁴ Carlos (Anonymous), interview by the author, June 19, 2018.

⁷⁵ Special Olympics, "Our Work," Special Olympics.

⁷⁶ Evangelista, “Refugees with Intellectual Disabilities.”

Malta shortly after.⁷⁷ These matches followed Special Olympics' Unified Sports model, which "brings people with and without intellectual disabilities together on the same team to compete."⁷⁸ By connecting asylum seekers and refugees with local youth who have ID, Special Olympics created a unique space with exciting potential to increase awareness of ID in migrant communities, combat xenophobia and Islamophobia in European communities, and empower migrants with and without ID.

During research for this report, there were only two other organizations found in the focus countries of Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain that specifically include migrants with ID in their programs. One of these is the Hevia Accem-Arbeyal center in Spain, which "reserves places for asylum seekers" and is mentioned in a report as "[specializing] in disability and mental health."⁷⁹ Although this description does not explicitly mention ID, further research on Hevia Accem-Arbeyal's website shows that the center does assist "*personas con discapacidad intelectual*" (persons with ID).⁸⁰ Another organization located in Spain, called *El Grupo Envera*, extended their services to refugees with ID in 2015 at the group's center in Madrid.⁸¹ *El Grupo Envera* provides various activities to people with disabilities including support with education, employment services, and sports games in collaboration with Special Olympics⁸². Both Hevia Accem-Arbeyal and *El Grupo Envera*, like Special Olympics, are contributing to social connectedness for migrants with ID by including them in their programs: not only are migrants with ID being empowered by access to

⁷⁷ Special Olympics, "Special Olympics Malta Reaches Out to Refugees," Special Olympics, 2017.

⁷⁸ Special Olympics, "Unified Sports Tools and Resources," Sports Essentials.

⁷⁹ Magdalena Queipo de Llano, and Jennifer Zuppiroli, *Country Report: Spain*, edited by ECRE, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018.

⁸⁰ Centro Residencial Hevia Accem-Arbeyal, "Perfiles que atendemos," Centro Residencial Hevia Accem-Arbeyal.

⁸¹ El Confidencial, "Envera ofrece atención en Madrid a los menores sirios refugiados con discapacidad," El Confidencial, September 23, 2015.

⁸² El Grupo Envera, "Quiénes somos," El Grupo Envera.

resources specifically tailored for people with ID, but a space is also created where local members of the organizations can interact with and learn more about migrants, presumably reducing xenophobic and Islamophobic sentiments in the community.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that research for this project was only conducted in English and limited Spanish. There is the possibility that there are other organizations in the focus countries that specifically support migrants with ID but do not have information online in English; withal, it is likely there are still not enough organizations that support this population, as people with ID “are mostly still an invisible minority” in the world today.⁸³

General solutions that may include migrants with ID

There are general solutions that support migrant youth which could have the potential to include those with ID as well. Notably, in facilities where asylum seekers and refugees live, organizations will set up child friendly spaces (CFS) for youth to have “a safe space to play and the support they need to deal with grief and loss.” CFS may include sports, arts and crafts, informal education, and music.⁸⁴ If migrant youth with ID are present in CFS, they can interact with other children and engage in activities that interest them. This provides the opportunity for migrant youth without ID to learn more about the condition as well, thereby reducing isolation for those with ID and combating the negative stigma of ID

⁸³ Scior et al., *Intellectual Disabilities: Raising Awareness and Combating Stigma*.

⁸⁴ World Vision Canada, "What's a Child Friendly Space?" World Vision, June 29, 2016.

that may be present in migrant communities. CFS can be found across Europe, including within Southern European countries like Greece⁸⁵ and Italy.⁸⁶

There are also solutions that build community between local and migrant populations, and – like CFS – may involve children with ID. For instance, Hope for Children in Cyprus “[organizes] events, such as summer camps/activities, as a means of enhancing integration between migrant (asylum seekers and refugee children) and Cypriot children;”⁸⁷ the Danish Refugee Council in Greece gave migrant youth in Koutsochero disposable cameras to document their experiences as asylum seekers and refugees while exploring the art of photography, and their photos were later included in an exhibition at the French Institute of Larissa to combat “hate speech, xenophobia, racism, and discrimination in the city;”⁸⁸ and migrant youth and adults come together with Italian locals “inside the Civic Museum of Bassano del Grappa between Venice and the Alps” to take dance lessons together in an attempt to foster connectedness between these two populations.⁸⁹ As I will further elaborate in the Recommendations section of this report, it would be highly beneficial for organizations and initiatives that already target migrant youth to involve those with ID as well with adapted support mechanisms. Not only do these activities empower migrant youth with ID, but they also have the potential to change negative stigma in

⁸⁵ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. *Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies*. N.p.: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2017; Save the Children, "How are We Helping Refugees?" Save the Children's Resource Centre, November 16, 2015; Lighthouse Relief, "Active Operations," Lighthouse Relief; SOS Children's Villages International, "General Information on Greece," SOS Children's Villages International; Danish Refugee Council, "Refugee Children Find Safe Space in Greek Sites," What We Do, November 22, 2017.

⁸⁶ Karen Mets, Amelie Tapella, and Marco Nardin, *Keeping Children at the Centre*, n.p.: Save the Children, 2017; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Child Friendly Spaces*.

⁸⁷ Institut International des Droits de L'enfant, "Hope for Children, Cyprus," Institut International des Droits de L'enfant, October 2, 2014.

⁸⁸ Danish Refugee Council, "Refugee Children."

⁸⁹ Livesay, Christopher, "In Italy, Dance As An Antidote To Migrant Integration Tensions," NPR, December 21, 2017.

migrant and European communities about ID: if people without ID interact more with those with ID, they may begin to see that the negative stigma surrounding the condition is unjust and they will change their own perceptions on ID.

WHEN MIGRANTS WITH ID CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS DURING THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE

A migrant with ID cannot be referred to local inclusive programs or provided with specialized support if they are not properly identified. This can occur at any point where organizations and authorities interact with migrants. Three particular instances where ID can be identified are 1) after arrival when migrants are registered and processed by authorities, 2) during the interview for asylum applications, and 3) while medical personnel are providing care or conducting health examinations.

Firstly, when irregular migrants arrive to Cyprus,⁹⁰ Greece,⁹¹ Italy,⁹² Malta,⁹³ or Spain⁹⁴ without proper documentation, they are registered and processed by authorities to record their presence in the country. This initial interaction with authorities is important because information provided at this point by migrants could be used to determine if they qualify for international protection or not. Authorities may recognize ID when they are communicating with the migrants about their personal information and intentions. After this first step, migrants can enter the asylum procedure.

⁹⁰ Corina Drousiotou, and Manos Mathioudakis, *Country Report: Cyprus*, edited by ECRE, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018.

⁹¹ Alexandros Konstantinou, Athanasia Georgopoulou, Aikaterini Drakopoulou, Vasilis Fragkos, and Kleio Nikolopoulou, *Country Report: Greece*, edited by ECRE, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018.

⁹² Caterina Bove of the Association for Legal Studies on Immigration, *Country Report: Italy*, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018.

⁹³ Aditus foundation, and Jesuit Refugee Service Malta, *Country Report: Malta*, edited by ECRE, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2018.

⁹⁴ Queipo de Llano et al., *Country Report: Spain*.

A second way ID can be identified is during the interview conducted by authorities for asylum applications. Countries in the EU are required “to give the applicant a fair and effective opportunity to present the grounds for their application,” and – according to European Asylum Support Office (EASO) – “the personal interview plays a key role” in this process.⁹⁵ Corresponding to registration and processing, information that the asylum seeker provides interviewers is imperative to the outcome of their application. In order for the application to be successful, asylum seekers must be able “to prove the existence of a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to their country of origin, based on any of the grounds prescribed by law.”⁹⁶

However, ID may impact the way a migrant presents information and authorities must take this into account: for instance, “[people] with intellectual disabilities have a greater tendency to acquiesce, nay-say and select the last-mentioned option (recency).” They also may “have the desire to please others perceived to be in an authority role,” thereby providing answers “in a certain way because they think that this is the ‘desired’ response.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, people with ID “often have great difficulty dealing with complex topics” and will better respond to questions that are “phrased as simply as possible using concrete concepts.”⁹⁸ Asylum seekers with ID subsequently may provide authorities with seemingly non-credible or inadequate claims when they are being questioned, which could lead to the denial of asylum applications. If an individual working for authorities is trying to discover more about a migrant’s situation, they must be aware of how ID can influence the

⁹⁵ European Asylum Support Office, *EASO Practical Guide: Personal interview*, n.p.: European Asylum Support Office, 2014.

⁹⁶ Rocio Sandalio, *Life After Trauma: The Mental-Health Needs of Asylum Seekers in Europe*, n.p.: Migration Policy Institute, 2018.

⁹⁷ Maureen D'Eath, Bob McCormack, Nick Blitz, Bernie Fay, Aine Kelly, Anne McCarthy, Gina Magliocco, Kathleen Morris, Janet Swineburne, Edel Tierney, and Maria Walls, *Guidelines for Researchers when Interviewing People with an Intellectual Disability*, n.p., 2005.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

way a migrant responds to questions and presents information. Yet, in order to do so authorities must know about ID and how to classify the condition.

This same concept applies to medical personnel that administer care and examinations to migrants: they must be aware of ID and how this can influence an individual's interaction with them, especially when asking questions about the migrant's health or any assistance the migrant may need. Likewise, this one-on-one encounter with healthcare professionals and volunteers is the third way that ID can be identified. This can occur when migrants first arrive to the country and are met with immediate medical attention after they land at the shores,⁹⁹ in centers or camps through mobile clinics and health screenings,¹⁰⁰ or during examinations requested by authorities in the asylum procedure if they believe the migrant has a medical condition that needs to be addressed.¹⁰¹

CHANNELS OF SUPPORT TO IDENTIFY MIGRANTS WITH ID

It is concerning that migrants with ID do not seem to have good chances of being identified during the asylum procedure. This is mainly due to the lack of awareness about people with ID and the absence of a comprehensive or universally applied mechanism that is solely focused on migrants with ID. For example, although national authorities do receive training and have practices in place to identify "vulnerable" applicants, disability in general is grouped together with other forms of "vulnerability" such as abuse, mental disorders, and age. An instrument to specifically identify ID was not mentioned in the Asylum Information

⁹⁹ Queipo de Llano et al., *Country Report: Spain*; Aditus foundation et al., *Country Report: Malta*; Common Approach for Refugees and other migrants' health, "Health care provision & management," Healthcare model.

¹⁰⁰ Help Refugees, "Mobile 'medibus' clinic for Greece in Doctors of the World + Help Refugees partnership," Help Refugees; Doctors Without Borders, "Greece - Looking after refugees in transit," Doctors Without Borders, February 17, 2016.

¹⁰¹ "Country Reports," Asylum Information Database.

Database country reports for Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, and Spain.¹⁰² There were also no available statistics about the prevalence of ID in Europe's migrant population encountered during research for this report.

Nevertheless, there are two channels of support provided by EASO that have the potential to inform actors in the asylum procedure about how to identify and sufficiently assist migrants with ID. The existence of these are very important, as they provide a potential structure to build on in the future for a widespread mechanism consistently applied in all countries to identify ID.

One of these channels of support from EASO is the Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs (IPSN). Launched in 2016,¹⁰³ this tool is meant for actors to use "at any stage of the asylum procedure and at any stage of the reception process."¹⁰⁴ As its name implies, IPSN provides information on how to identify and support applicants with special needs, including ID. IPSN advises in several steps of the asylum procedure to "use adapted language, repetitions, or ... to take more time" when interacting with migrants with ID. It also explains that "[persons] with intellectual disabilities may need support in order to exercise their legal capacity," suggesting the provision of a representative to assist migrants with ID in making decisions during the asylum procedure. The tool further states that people with ID may need "additional support...to prepare for a personal interview," and that those conducting interviews should "make sure not to use abstract language" and instead "[use] simple short questions."¹⁰⁵ Although no information could be found on the impact of IPSN,

¹⁰² Minos Mouzourakis, Kris Pollet, and Ruben Fierens, *The concept of vulnerability in European asylum procedures*, n.p.: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2017.

¹⁰³ EASO, "EASO launches tool for identification of persons with special needs (IPSN Tool)," EASO, January 27, 2016.

¹⁰⁴ EASO, "Why was this tool developed?" IPSN.

¹⁰⁵ EASO, "EASO Tool for Identification of Persons with Special Needs," IPSN.

nor how many people have used the tool to identify ID, it is available for the public to access via the internet and thus can be easily used by all actors during the asylum procedure.

An additional channel of support from EASO is the Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module, which “[provides] participants with an advanced understanding of vulnerabilities, and mental and physical impairments, as well as advice on how to address difficult situations, and ensure that the interviewer’s own needs are met.”¹⁰⁶ Not much information could be found about the content of this module, but it does cover “mental and physical impairments,” which could include ID. Moreover, this module discusses “[factors] that hamper disclosure during an interview and how to facilitate disclosure,” and “[the] follow-up required to safeguard an applicant with special needs and to prepare the case for the next steps in the process.”¹⁰⁷ Statistics about the module demonstrate that it has likely had at least some positive impact for migrants during their interviews: overall from 2012 to 2017, 1,540 persons have been trained in the module, and in 2017, there were 563 participants from “20 Member States, Switzerland, and other stakeholders” (Appendix 6 and 7). 92 percent of those who participated in the module in 2017 “are responsible for interviewing applicants for international protection,” and “88% of the participants are drafting decisions on international protection while 59% analyze facts and documentation following an asylum interview.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ EASO. “Regional Train-the-Trainers’ session on Evidence Assessment and Interviewing Vulnerable Persons modules.” EASO Training.

¹⁰⁷ EASO, “Interviewing Vulnerable Persons: launch of an upgraded EASO training module, 25-26 April 2018,” EASO.

¹⁰⁸ EASO, *EASO Annual Training Report 2017*.

HEIGHTENED AWARENESS OF MIGRANTS WITH ID

Along with the presence of at least two channels of support to identify migrants with ID, there has been a noticeable increase in awareness about the situation of migrants with ID in Europe today. A few organizations have explicitly pointed out the exclusion of migrants with ID during the asylum procedure and a need to develop solutions that support them. While ID seems to be more of a side note or a brief add on in these documents (rather than the main focus), the mention of ID is still a very important step towards increased awareness for this population. One example is from a report by Human Rights Watch in 2017, where the organization recommends that, “[the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)] and the Greek government should issue clear guidance to field staff on identifying and registering people with disabilities, including disabilities that are not readily identifiable, such as intellectual disabilities.”¹⁰⁹ Another example is in an entry from the European Journal of Migration and Law in 2017, which explores the legal framework applicable to migrants with disabilities and illustrates potential issues for migrants with ID when communicating to authorities why they fled their home country: “Indeed, the threshold required to assess the well-founded fear of being persecuted is particularly challenging for persons with mental or intellectual disabilities. As a result, Courts should take into account the specific cognitive conditions of asylum seekers with disabilities in order to assess the fear of persecution. The obligation to provide reasonable accommodation could be applied in this framework to highlight the vulnerability of refugees

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Greece: Refugees with Disabilities Overlooked, Underserved," Human Rights Watch, January 18, 2017.

with disabilities and facilitate the assessment of the case's credibility."¹¹⁰ A final example is from the European Disability Forum, which states on its website that "[refugees] with intellectual disabilities may have difficulties in preparing interviews and collecting the necessary information to demonstrate the credibility of their claims."¹¹¹

Correspondingly, across the world there appears to be increased awareness of this population: a review of UNHCR's RefWorld database found that "intellectual disabilities" and "intellectual disability" has been used in over three times more documents in 2017 than in 2008 (Appendix 5). Notable among these documents and highly relevant for this report is a guide from UNHCR which includes a module about assessing if someone has ID and steps that can be taken to support those with ID in humanitarian emergencies.¹¹² Other documents found in UNHCR's RefWorld database illustrate practices in different parts of the world where local organizations have involved migrants with ID in their programs,¹¹³ alongside documents which discuss the barriers that migrants with ID may face and potential solutions to generate inclusivity.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Carmine Conte, "What about Refugees with Disabilities? The Interplay between EU Asylum Law and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities," *European Journal of Migration and Law* 18, no. 3 (January 17, 2017): 327-49.

¹¹¹ European Disability Forum, "Migration & Refugees with Disabilities," Fundamental Rights.

¹¹² UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide (mhGAP-HIG): Clinical Management of Mental, Neurological and Substance Use Conditions in Humanitarian Emergencies*, n.p.: UNHCR, 2015.

¹¹³ Women's Refugee Commission, *Positive Practices in Disability Inclusion - "It starts with building trust": From outreach to the community center*, n.p.: Women's Refugee Commission, 2014; Refugee Studies Centre, *Forced Migration Review No. 48 - Faith and responses to displacement*, n.p.: Refugees Study Centre, 2014; UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Syrian Refugees with Disabilities Living in Camps in Northern Iraq*, n.p.: UNHCR, 2014; Women's Refugee Commission, *Mean Streets: Identifying and Responding to Urban Refugees' Risks of Gender-Based Violence*, n.p.: Women's Refugee Commission, 2016.

¹¹⁴ European Union: European Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Inequalities and multiple discrimination in access to and quality of healthcare*, n.p.: European Union: European Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2013; International Detention Coalition (IDC), *UNHCR and IDC (2016), Vulnerability Screening Tool - Identifying and addressing vulnerability: a tool for asylum and migration systems*, n.p.: UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 2016; European Union: European Asylum Support Office (EASO), *EASO guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators*, n.p.: European Union: European Asylum Support Office (EASO), 2016; Human Rights Watch, *Leave No One Behind*, n.p.: Human Rights Watch, 2016; Women's Refugee Commission, *Mean Streets*; UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Guidance Note on the*

RECOMMENDATIONS

As can be demonstrated by the information above, there are practices and examples of awareness that create a potential structure to build on for a more inclusive asylum procedure. Yet, these are scarce and migrants with ID will continue to be excluded from the mainstream conversation in Europe without effective awareness-raising campaigns and inclusive activities. The recommendations below will hopefully provide guidance or inspiration for future action that will lead to positive change for migrants with ID in the future.

Training program about providing support to people with ID

Although the IPSN tool and the Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module are undoubtedly useful instruments, they are not solely devoted to ID. Thus, authorities and organizations – particularly those that advocate for and empower people with ID such as Special Olympics and Inclusion International, along with organizations like UNHCR and EASO that work with migrants and governments during humanitarian emergencies– should come together to create a comprehensive training program about identifying, interacting with, and supporting migrants with ID. If possible, migrants with ID from the Middle East and North Africa who are currently in Europe should be included in the creation of this program as well. The following actors that interact with migrants during the asylum procedure and reception process should be encouraged to participate in this program: caseworkers,

Psychologically Vulnerable Applicant in the Protection Visa Assessment Process, n.p.: UNHCR, 2017; UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *Report of the IBC on the Bioethical Response to the Situation of Refugees*, n.p.: UNESCO, 2017; Giulia David, Kate Aykroyd, Phillip Hand, Irene van Horssen, Ricardo Pla Cordero, Valerie Scherrer, and Kirsty Smith, *Humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities*, n.p.: HelpAge International, 2018.

interpreters, healthcare professionals, police, border authorities, and volunteers (especially those who work in CFS).

Easy-to-read information

Every governmental authority, organization, and other relevant actors should have easy-to-read formats of any operational and informational documents given to migrants.¹¹⁵ Not only will this assist migrants with ID to better understand the situation they are in, their rights as asylum seekers, and options moving forward, it will also provide an alternative option for those who may not be native or fluent in any of the languages in which these documents are provided.¹¹⁶

Identification card

When migrants are identified as having a certain disability by authorities or organizations (both when migrants arrive and during the asylum process), they should be given a card that explains what this disability is, how it may impact the individual, and succinct tips for how other actors can best support people with the particular disability. This would necessitate a coordinated effort among actors to have uniform template for this identification card and a promoted, widespread goal to identify migrants with ID. The identification card recommendation is inspired by the EU Disability Card,¹¹⁷ along with a practice in Spain where the Emergency Immediate Response Teams conduct health assessments of migrants right after they arrive from sea and administer “a health card for

¹¹⁵ Inclusion Europe, "Make your information accessible!"

¹¹⁶ Inclusion Europe, *Information for all*.

¹¹⁷ European Commission, "EU Disability Card," Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion.

each of the newly arrived persons, which contains their personal data.”¹¹⁸ Due to a general lack of understanding about ID, and all disabilities in general, a card for migrants that reveals the disability they may have will be a significant help to future actors that will interact with migrants in the asylum procedure. This could be expanded to mental health needs as well.

Inclusive programs

Local organizations that already assist people with ID should include migrants in their programs. This would foster social connectedness for asylum seekers and refugees with ID, in addition to increasing interactions between local and migrant communities, thereby contributing to the eradication of xenophobia and Islamophobia.

Moreover, all organizations in general should specify in descriptions of their programs (online, in print, and in person) if they include people with ID. There are many different types of disabilities, and defining which disabilities the organization works with is imperative for potential members to understand if they would be able to participate or not. Organizations like Special Olympics and Inclusion Europe – which specifically focus on empowering people with ID – could lead the front in encouraging or even working with others to implement inclusive programs.

Research

Ultimately, to better understand the situation of migrants with ID in Europe, comprehensive primary research must be carried out in the near future. Organizations such

¹¹⁸ Queipo de Llano et al., *Country Report: Spain*.

as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International should undertake projects specifically targeted towards ID in order to inform others about the realities of this extremely marginalized population. Information learned from this research will undoubtedly be useful for different actors to implement programs that focus on supporting and empowering migrants with ID.

IMPACT

The goal of this report is to raise awareness about migrants with ID in Europe. More specifically, it is meant to encourage authorities, organizations, and volunteers to learn more about ID and to make their practices more inclusive for this population.

Nonetheless, relevant actors must work together to create a widespread solution that can impact migrants with ID across Europe, not just in individual examples in certain areas like those discussed earlier. As explained by Evangelista in an interview for this report, large organizations with widespread mandates and obligations – like UNHCR – may not have the time or resources to specifically focus on ID. However, these organizations can collaborate with other organizations that have the particular mandate to support those with ID – like Special Olympics or Inclusion Europe – to develop effective programs that eradicate negative stigma and eliminate barriers that migrants with ID face in Europe¹¹⁹. Further, by including migrants with ID in programs and providing welcoming spaces that promote understanding, the wider community will have opportunities to interact with others who are different from them. These initiatives would likely promote diversity and the celebration

¹¹⁹ David Evangelista. Interview by the author. July 11, 2018.

of differences, fostering social connectedness not just for individuals with ID, but for others who are left out of the mainstream conversation as well.

The Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness can also play an important role for the empowerment of people with ID around the world by encouraging articles, reports, and other written materials on their website to be published in both regular and easy-to-read versions. This action might inform others about how they too can make their resources more accessible for those with ID. Likewise, the Samuel Centre could converse with partners about the potential of reaching out to and including people with ID in their programs.

CONCLUSION

Asylum seekers and refugees with ID are largely excluded from the mainstream conversation in Europe today. They are likely unjustly isolated more so than their counterparts without ID due to the negative stigma imposed on them. Although there are certain actors that have implemented inclusive programs and raised awareness about this population, there is still not a solid structure of support for migrants with ID in the region.

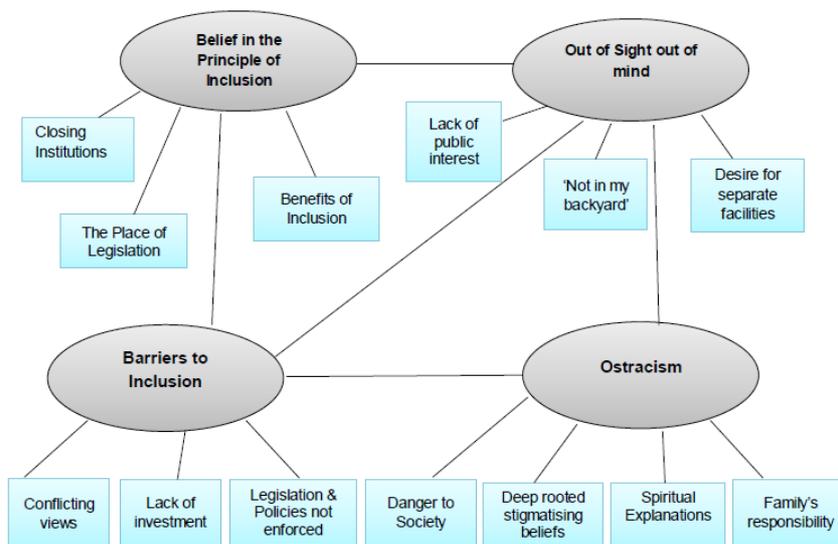
Nonetheless, the existence of these initiatives that focus on ID are promising. This means that there are organizations and individuals in Europe who recognize the need to support migrants with ID and are willing to take action. However, others will not do the same unless they are first informed about the situation of migrants with ID.

Raising awareness about this population is crucial for future change. Actors that already focus on people with ID must collaborate with actors that focus on migrants in order to develop activities, identification mechanisms, and other forms of support that empower asylum seekers and refugees with ID in Europe. These practices would rightfully give those with ID agency during the asylum procedure and in European communities, fostering social

connectedness for a population that has been excluded for far too long. Every human being deserves to feel like they belong, and by working together, organizations and authorities can create an inclusive and welcoming environment for migrants with ID in their new homes.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – “Thematic Map of Attitudes commonly encountered”



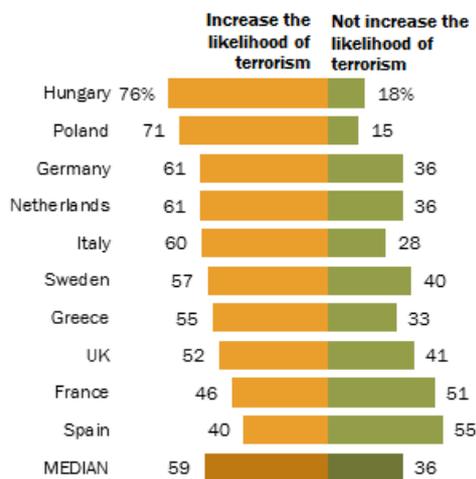
Source:

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/ciddr/documents/Global_ID_Stigma_Report_Final_July_15.pdf

Appendix 2– “Many Europeans concerned refugees will increase domestic terrorism”

Many Europeans concerned refugees will increase domestic terrorism

Refugees will ___ in our country



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey.

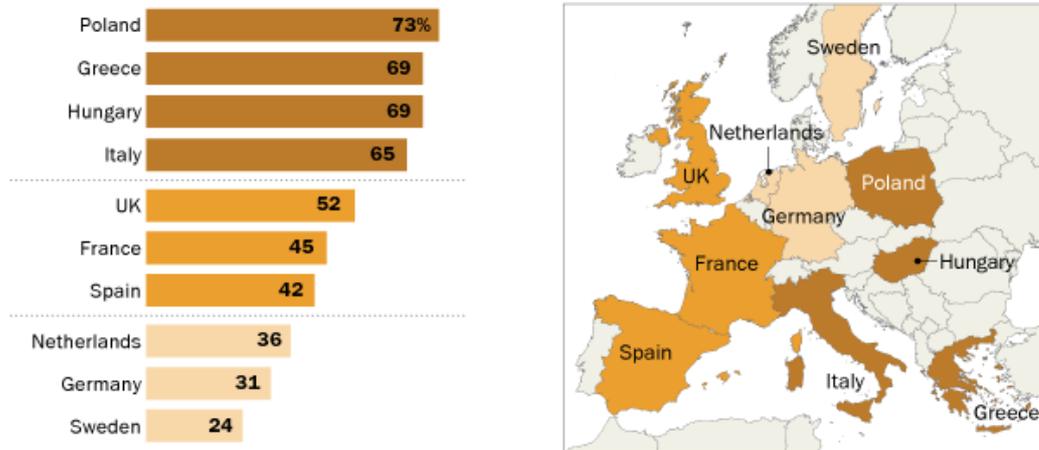
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts/>

Appendix 3 – “Many Europeans see refugees from Syria and Iraq as a major threat”

Many Europeans see refugees from Syria and Iraq as a major threat

% saying large number of refugees leaving Iraq and Syria is a major threat to their country



Source: Spring 2016 Global Attitudes Survey.

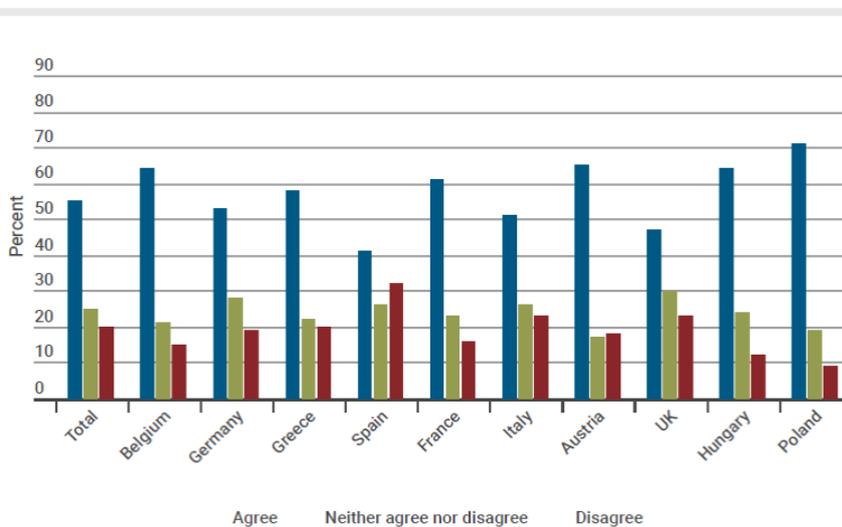
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Source: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts/>

Appendix 4 – “All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped”

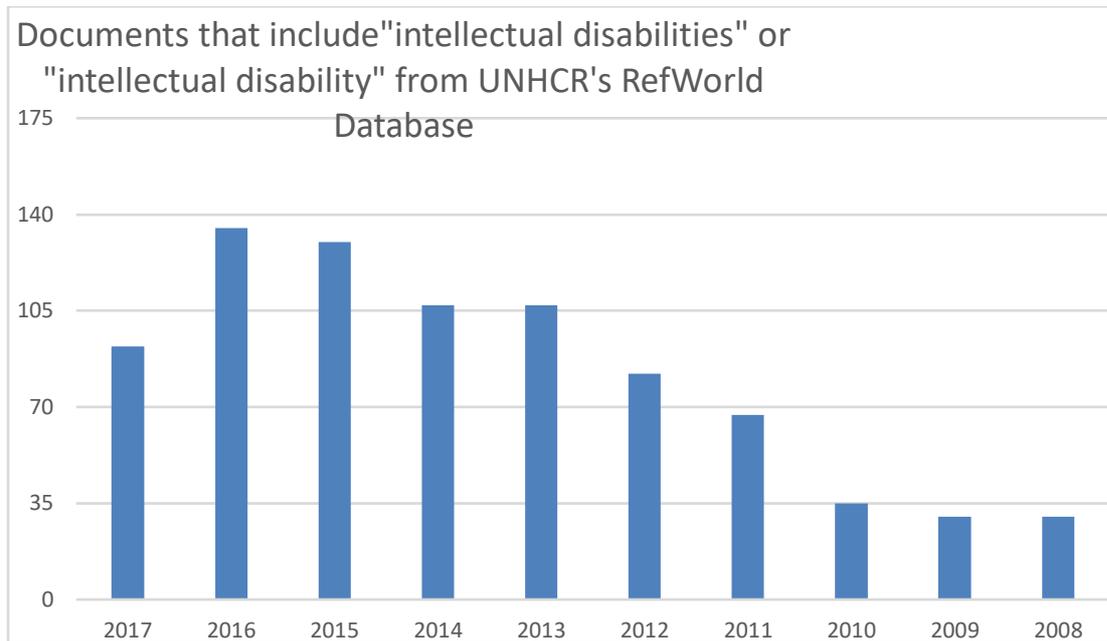
'All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped'

Source: Chatham House, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration>

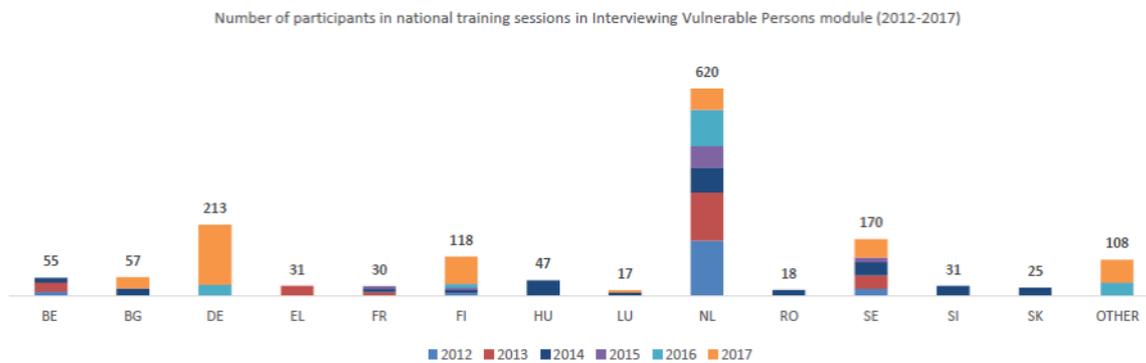


Source: <https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration#>

Appendix 5 – “Intellectual disabilities’ or ‘intellectual disability’ in Documents from UNHCR’s RefWorld Database”

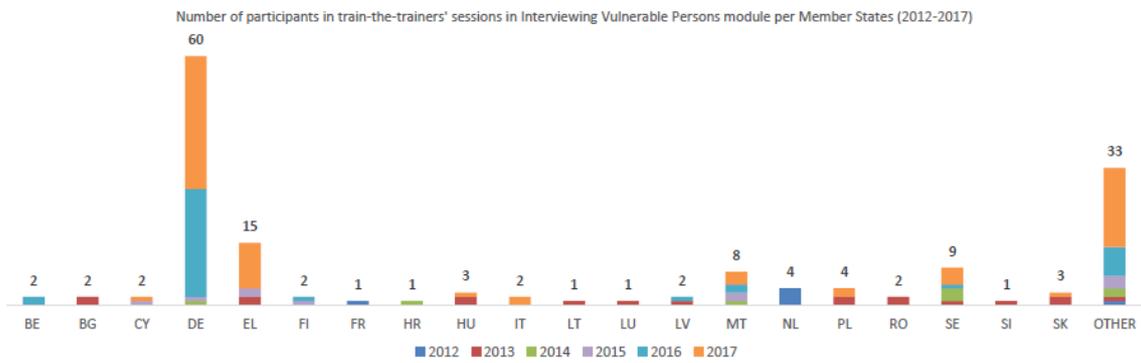


Appendix 6 – “Number of participants in national trainings sessions in Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module (2012-2017)”



Source: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-annual-training-report-2017.pdf>

Appendix 7 – “Number of persons in train-the-trainers’ sessions in Interviewing Vulnerable Persons module per Member States (2012-2017)”



Source: <https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/easo-annual-training-report-2017.pdf>

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