



CITIZENS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS REFUGES AND MIGRANTS
IN MIGRATION-AFFECTED MUNICIPALITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
DEVELOPING SOCIAL COHESION

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INTRODUCTION

In the Republic of Serbia, the Law on Asylum has been applied since April 1, 2008. In that year, 77 asylum seekers were registered in Serbia. The number of asylum seekers has increased since 2009, and the first rapid increase in the number of persons expressing their intention to seek asylum in Serbia was recorded in 2011, when 3,134 asylum seekers were registered (six times more than in the previous year). In June 2011, following a local crisis in Banja Koviljača, where the only asylum centre was located, another asylum centre was opened in Bogovađa. The next major increase of asylum seekers occurred in the second half of 2013, when in the last four months of the year around two and a half thousand asylum seekers were registered. At the end of November, after another local crisis, then in the region of Bogovađa, three new asylum centres were opened. Over the next year, 16,500 asylum seekers were registered (three times more than in the previous year), while the year 2015 was marked by the influx of refugees and migrants of a proportion not seen in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The largest number of refugees and migrants came through the East Mediterranean and Western Balkans routes, and 577,995 asylum seekers were registered in Serbia. Compared to the previous years, the situation drastically changed after a kind of humanitarian corridor was established on the route, and thus the largest number of refugees and migrants stayed for only about two days. Paradoxically, the existing asylum centres remained completely or almost completely empty, while the new reception and reception-transit centres were established near the main entrance and exit points of the humanitarian corridor in the territory of Serbia. In addition, hundreds of refugees and migrants stayed in the streets of Belgrade, mostly in the area of the parks near the main bus and train stations. With the final closure of the humanitarian corridor (i.e. the so-called closure of the Balkans route) in early March 2016, the inflow of refugees and migrants into Serbia was again completely brought back to its regular level. A significantly smaller number of new refugees and migrants were arriving in Serbia (more through Bulgaria than through Macedonia). However, leaving Serbia and making a further irregular journey to Central and Northern Europe became increasingly difficult, due to the ever-increasing border controls, difficulties in accessing asylum and increasingly restrictive asylum procedures, especially in Hungary. This resulted in a large number of refugees and migrants remaining in Serbia much longer than ever before. Their number particularly grew in the second half of 2016 and continued to grow until the end of January 2017, reaching almost eight thousand, of whom only 6,500 were accommodated in the centres. Since March 2017, this number has begun to decrease gradually, and later more rapidly, as an obviously growing number of people leave Serbia through the smuggling channels. New reception and transit centres were opened, especially in the last quarter of 2016 and in August 2017, when there were 18 centres (of which five asylum centres), where at the end of the second week of August about 4,400 refugees and migrants were accommodated.

With a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers and the opening of new asylum centres (before 2015), and especially from mid-2015, when the mass refugee inflow began along the West

Balkans route, an increasing number of local communities (municipalities and towns) were directly exposed to migration flows taking place across the territory of the Republic of Serbia and/or challenges related to the migrants staying in the area of those local communities. Apart from the practical challenges of managing these migration phenomena, these local communities were also faced with the challenges arising from the interactions of the domicile population with migrants, leading to some significant changes in the local social dynamics. This was sometimes reflected in the protests of citizens (which, in some cases, influenced the decisions of the authorities). As early as the first half of 2011, there was a strong protest of citizens in a small town in western Serbia (Banja Koviljača), after the town had been, for days and weeks, overwhelmed by large numbers of asylum seekers who could not be accommodated in what was then the only asylum centre in Serbia. The protests ended when the Bogovađa centre was opened, and asylum seekers from the streets of Banja Koviljača were moved to the new asylum centre. On the other hand, protests were also held in places that had never had any direct contacts with asylum seekers, being encouraged (and justified) by negative prejudices and by expectations of negative consequences for the local community. An illustrative example could be the persistent protests of citizens of one part of the Mladenovac municipality, who for months blocked the efforts of government institutions to start a reconstruction of the abandoned military barracks that was supposed to be renovated and turned into an asylum centre. The protests were then supported by the official decision of the Municipal Assembly of Mladenovac and later publicly approved by the Mayor of Belgrade. While at the time of the 'fast humanitarian' transit, during the second half of 2015 and the first two months of 2016, Serbia lacked visible incidents and resistance to the presence of large numbers of refugees and migrants in the Belgrade area and several municipalities in the border areas (the borders with Macedonia and Bulgaria, and Hungary and Croatia), protests and a clear expression of dissatisfaction by the local population again occasionally occurred after the closing of the Western Balkans corridor. The longer stay of refugees and migrants in some local communities obviously created a basis for an increase in tensions and strengthening of the negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants. The latest, most striking example was the situation that led to the closure of the transit centre in Šid in late May 2017. The incident that, reportedly, was only the crudest example in a series of similar cases, in which a migrant was the culprit for illegal intrusion into a family house, caused the protests of citizens, supported by the municipal authorities, and soon afterwards an agreement was reached (between the municipal authorities and the relevant government institutions) about closing the transit centre by the railway station in Šid.

THE EXISTING PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS

The first emergence of a large number of asylum seekers in the territory of Serbia, accompanied by numerous interactions with the local population and the representation of this issue in public debates and the media, soon led to an interest in the public opinion surveys regarding attitudes towards asylum seekers, that is, refugees and migrants. The first surveys were conducted in September and October 2012, followed by several more or less similar surveys. However, it should be borne in mind that the

surveys, whose key findings will be partially presented in the following paragraphs, were carried out on different samples, using somewhat different methodological approaches and tools, which implies important limitations when it comes to a comparison of the obtained results.

According to a survey conducted by Ninamedia Research in 2012 for the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (CRM) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the social distance towards asylum seekers was much higher than the distance to internally displaced persons and refugees from the territory of the former Yugoslavia. Only about 60% of the respondents accepted the possibility of living with them in the same country, while 30% of the respondents accepted the possibility of being a spouse of an asylum seeker. In general, the social distance towards asylum seekers was about 30 to 40 percentage points higher than that manifested towards refugees or internally displaced persons.

In the same period, a survey was conducted on a representative sample of citizens of three relevant municipalities (Mladenovac, Lajkovac and Loznica), and two-fifths of the respondents from that sample confirmed that they had had the opportunity to meet asylum seekers. More than a third of the respondents said they were bothered or would have been bothered by the presence of asylum seekers in their town, and slightly more than 40% said that the presence (or possible presence) of asylum seekers worried and scared them in a certain way. Two sets of reasons were the most frequent among those given to explain such (negative) attitudes: the first set of reasons was based on various opinions regarding differences in cultural patterns and habits, and the second set of reasons related to the respondents' perception of security and the view that asylum seekers were prone to some behaviours that threatened the security of the local population. In addition, 45% of the respondents argued that nothing could be done to integrate asylum seekers into the local community.

A recent study by the Ninamedia Research agency, conducted in May 2016, showed that over 86% of Serbian citizens believed asylum seekers and migrants would not remain in Serbia. Some 34% confirmed that they would be concerned if asylum seekers stayed in Serbia, and the main reason for such an attitude, more often than a perception of reduced security or cultural differences, was expressed by the view that Serbia was a poor country, unable to help those people. On the other hand, only 3% of the respondents reported that they had known of cases of asylum seekers helping the local population or the local communities. In addition, the social distance towards asylum seekers and migrants proved to be higher than that recorded in the surveys of 2012 and 2015: for example, only 55% of the respondents accepted the possibility of asylum seekers living in the same town, and only 26% accepted the possibility of an asylum seeker being their spouse.

In September 2014, CeSID and UNHCR conducted a survey on a sample of Serbian citizens and an additional sample of citizens of four settlements which had asylum centres then (Sjenica, Banja Koviljača, Obrenovac and Bogovađa). This survey, among other things, showed that 26% of Serbian citizens had a negative, and only 12% had a positive attitude towards asylum seekers coming to Serbia. The survey also focused on whether asylum seekers could contribute to the improvement of different areas of life in

Serbia. In general, it turned out that the respondents who believed that asylum seekers would not contribute at all were the most numerous ones, while the share of those who thought that asylum seekers would certainly contribute to the improvement of life in Serbia ranged, depending on the defined areas of life, from 18 to 29 per cent. In addition, 45% of the respondents expressed the belief that asylum seekers, due to different cultures and customs, would never be able to fit into our society. Moreover, in this survey, 30% of Serbian citizens expressed a clear opposition to the possibility of opening a reception centre in the vicinity of their household, while another 24% argued that such a situation would be reluctantly accepted. The belief that this would have a negative impact on personal security was again confirmed as the most common reason for negative attitudes. Finally, this survey also showed that only a small number of citizens (8%) were familiar with situations in which asylum seekers assisted the citizens of Serbia and the local communities that hosted them.

In the period between May 2016 and May 2017, ProPozitiv Agency, in cooperation with the Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation, conducted three rounds of research into attitudes related to refugees and migrants in Serbia, covering eight towns and municipalities directly affected by migration along the Western Balkans route. A comparison of results from the three rounds shows that there is a relatively stable number of Serbian citizens who expressed a positive attitude towards refugees (around 45%) throughout the above-mentioned period, while a larger change occurred in terms of the number of those who expressed a negative and an ambivalent attitude. That change happened in the period from May to December 2016. During that period, there was a large increase in negative attitudes (while the number of citizens with positive attitudes did not change significantly): in May and June 2016, 19% of the respondents expressed a negative attitude, while about six months later a negative attitude was expressed by 34% of the respondents. (In the same period, the share of citizens who expressed an ambivalent or neutral attitude decreased from 36% to 18.5%.) This change was essentially confirmed by the third round of research, conducted in May 2017 (when the results did not indicate any major general changes compared to December 2016). It should, however, be noted that such changes did not occur in all the towns surveyed. Just like some other researches, this research also showed that there were significant regional differences regarding certain aspects of attitudes towards asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, as well as regarding other issues related to these social groups.

In May 2016, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung conducted a survey on a sample of the general population of Serbian citizens, showing that 80% of citizens approved of the transit of refugees and migrants across the territory of Serbia, 60% approved of their temporary stay, but only a quarter would accept their permanent settlement in Serbia. The same results showed that about 10% of citizens would support a complete ban on transit and raising fences on state borders. However, attitudes toward various aspects of integration proved to be somewhat contradictory, probably due to the complex effects of various factors. Among other things, the survey showed that the least opposition to a possible integration of refugees and migrants came from the respondents living in middle-sized towns, and that the greatest opposition was expressed by the respondents aged 40 to 49. In addition, the negative attitude towards

integration was significantly lower among those who had personally experienced exile. On the other hand, the attitude towards integration depended to a certain degree on the perceived characteristics of those refugees and migrants that should be integrated. In that sense, the existence of some expected attitudes was confirmed. In the first place, the integration of women and children from war-affected areas was an option accepted by the largest number of the respondents. However, in general, more than 40% of the respondents believed that migrants and asylum seekers should not be granted the citizenship of Serbia. Only slightly more than half of the respondents said that they would not see any problems in the construction of new mosques in Serbia. Furthermore, the economic aspects of possible integration of refugees and migrants have been obviously also perceived as significant, and this was particularly evident through the more positive attitudes towards the integration of those who had their own capital and those who possessed certain qualifications. Regarding the measures that could support the employment and economic independence of integrated refugees and migrants, almost 70% of Serbian citizens shared the belief that the state should first make sure that the local population had priority in employment, and the idea of allocating fallow agricultural land and of providing loans to migrants in order to stimulate agricultural production as a way of supporting integration was accepted by only 35% of citizens. Interestingly, there were also significant regional differences, and this proposal was mostly supported by the respondents from small towns and rural areas, as well as the respondents from the region of southern and eastern Serbia. However, about 70% of the respondents expressed the belief that a permanent settlement of refugees and migrants would negatively affect unemployment in Serbia. A lack of employment opportunities was also perceived as the biggest problem facing the process of local integration of refugees and migrants: more than 84% of the respondents believed that this would be a major problem. Consequently, having assessed the overall economic effects of a permanent residence of refugees and migrants, only 16% of Serbian citizens estimated that these effects would be more or less positive, while 45% saw the possible effects as definitely unfavourable (one quarter of all the respondents even as very unfavourable).

During 2016, in March and September, UNDP and TNS Medium Gallup conducted two rounds of survey research, which included a sample of 800 citizens in 20 municipalities in Serbia (to a greater or lesser degree exposed to the consequences of the migrant situation on the Western Balkans route). The results showed that neutral attitudes towards refugees and migrants were relatively the most numerous ones (about 42-45%), but also that negative attitudes were approximately twice as frequent as positive ones. Interestingly, less than 40% of the respondents expressed the opinion that there was a difference between the current refugees and the refugees from the territory of the former Yugoslavia (from the period of the 1990s), and the most commonly mentioned differences were those in the sphere of language, culture and religion. The previous findings on social distance were confirmed and thus, for example, (in the first round) 49% of the respondents said that they were not ready to accept migrants living in their municipality, and 58% were unwilling to accept them in their neighbourhood. In addition, there was a clear opposition to the establishment of centres for accommodation of refugees and migrants: 63% opposed the establishment of such centres on the territory of their municipality, and 70%

did not want such centres close to their homes. Based on the cluster analysis of a set of statements about refugees and migrants, the authors of this research concluded that there were three clusters of attitudes towards refugees and migrants, and that the majority of the surveyed citizens belonged to the cluster of those who expressed their concern about security (due to possible violence, crime and terrorism), among whom the negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants prevailed (37% in the first and 30% in the second round). Regarding the existing situation in the territory of their municipality or town, about two-thirds of the respondents expressed the opinion that the local governments had been successfully dealing with the challenges of the migrant crisis, while opinions on how the situation with refugees and migrants had disrupted the normal functioning of their municipality/town were largely divided only in the municipalities most exposed to the consequences of the current migration: according to the results of the first round of research, 43% of citizens estimated that the situation with migrants and refugees had not brought any significant changes, while 37% claimed that there were problems in the provision of some regular public services.

METHODOLOGY

THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK

To respond to the requirements defined within the framework of the EU-funded *Open Communities – Successful Communities* project, implemented by a consortium of UN agencies: UNDP, WHO, IOM and UNOPS, that is, to provide quality inputs for the envisaged Communication Strategy and effectively support the Government's efforts in overcoming biases towards refugees and migrants hosted in Serbia, in-depth qualitative research has been undertaken, with a view to achieving a greater understanding of citizens' attitudes towards refugees and migrants, in order to provide a deeper insight into the content and formation of citizens' attitudes and opinions.

THE OBJECTIVES

The main research goal was to identify the key factors influencing the formation of citizens' attitudes towards migrants and refugees, and to understand how those factors could be managed to instigate a re-examination and transformation of negative biases.

More specifically, this qualitative research was aimed at:

- A. identifying the factors that influence the processes of attitudes formation;
- B. discovering the mechanisms of influence (i.e. how each of these factors exerts its influence);
- C. showing how these factors could be managed to bring about a possible change of negative prejudices and a formation (or strengthening) of those attitudes that will nurture social cohesion and positive interactions between migrants/refugees and domicile populations.

Some factors and mechanisms were specifically scrutinized:

- ↳ the influence that the dominant traits of the social character in Serbia may have on the (formation of) attitudes towards refugees and migrants;
- ↳ individual psychological factors that may cause positive or negative attitudes towards migrants and refugees;
- ↳ the role of the media, information and personal experiences (interactions) that one may have had with refugees and migrants;
- ↳ the perceived impact (positive and negative) that the refugee/migrant inflow may have had on various aspects of the (local) community life;

- ↳ the perception of the impact that integration of refugees and migrants could have on various aspects of the (local) community life.

Several areas of community life were considered, in particular the following:

- ❶ the local economy and labour market;
- ❷ security;
- ❸ public health;
- ❹ the efficiency of the local administration (i.e. self-government);
- ❺ communal services.

The moderator of focus group discussions (FGDs) especially sought to initiate discussions on negative biases about refugees and migrants, and furthermore, to investigate areas which could provide the best opportunities for positive social interactions between local citizens and refugees/migrants, improving their mutual understanding and the overall social cohesion in the community.

On the other hand, in-depth interviews strived to gather the stakeholders' opinions and assessments in regard to some specific policy issues that influence both development and social cohesion in a community faced by inflowing or transit migration. The capacity gaps related to the provision of public services, the costs and benefits of the recent migration challenges, and the development opportunities associated with international migration were particularly considered.

THE METHODS OF RESEARCH

The methodology of this research included two methods of qualitative research: focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). The research fieldwork consisted of five (5) focus group discussions and twenty (20) in-depth interviews.

- ↳ Focus group discussions, which lasted between 90 and 120 minutes, were facilitated by a trained moderator (sociologist), and the number of participants in each discussion group was between 8 and 13.
- ↳ In-depth interviews were facilitated by trained interviewers, based on a semi-structured questionnaire, while each lasted 20-30 minutes.

These techniques enabled the collection of extensive information in a relatively short period and facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' behaviour, attitudes and motives.

However, the results of discussion in focus groups and in-depth interviews cannot be fully generalized to the population in its entirety because the sample was too small.

Nevertheless, the opinions expressed in the course of the discussions can be considered typical for the segments of population represented in accordance with the previously set criteria.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Each focus group discussion included citizens from two, three or four municipalities and/or towns from a certain region. Due to the operational and budget constraints, the proposed regions were atypical and rather dispersed in some cases:

- ↳ the south-east region: FGD conducted in Bujanovac and included citizens of Vranje, Bujanovac and Preševo;
- ↳ the eastern region: FGD conducted in Pirot and included citizens of Pirot, Dimitrovgrad, Bela Palanka and Bosilegrad;
- ↳ the south-west region: FGD conducted in Tutin and included citizens of Sjenica and Tutin;
- ↳ the central region: FGD conducted in Belgrade and included citizens of Lajkovac, Loznica, Belgrade and Šid;
- ↳ the northern region: FGD conducted in Subotica and included citizens of Sombor, Subotica, Kanjiža and Kikinda.

The selection of the participants was conducted in such a way as to involve citizens of different gender, age, ethnicity, educational background and political preferences, their number and ratio being determined based on the data from the last census and the last election outcomes. Towns and municipalities of different sizes were represented by (an approximately proportional) different number of participants.

During the focus group discussions, digital video and audio recording were provided. This made it possible to conduct an analysis of verbal information provided by FGD participants (i.e. audio recordings) in conjunction with an analysis of relevant non-verbal reactions (recorded on video), which provided valuable additional information and made the analysis of the discussions much more relevant.

Focus group discussions were conducted between 26th July and 7th August 2017.

They included 60 participants from 17 municipalities and towns. The final structure of the participants for every FGD implemented can be found in Annex 1.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

In-depth interviews (IDIs) specifically targeted some of the opinion makers from two specific categories: (a) representatives of local self-governments (LSGs); and (b) representatives of the local economy. Among representatives of local self-governments, those who (could) effectively influence decision-making related to migration issues were targeted for the IDIs, while among the local entrepreneurs and business persons, those targeted were the ones who have the power to influence the local positions on economic development, including discussions on the relationship between international migration and development, and about the role that migrants could have on the local labour market and within the business environment.

Twenty representatives of LSGs and of the local economy and entrepreneurship were covered by in-depth interviews, and each interview was audio recorded. In each of the five regions (referred to above), four in-depth interviews were conducted.

In-depth interviews were conducted in the period from 26th July to 15th August 2017.

The information on the interviewed representatives of LSGs and local businesses can be found in Annex 2.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

WHAT WE ARE LIKE

The issue of 'What we are like' is a matter of self-perception of the joint collective-psychological features of one own's people, ourselves, neighbours, friends, people who live in Serbia, in its different regions. The root of the concept of the social character could be found in the theory of 'the basic personality structure', developed by Abram Kardiner and Ralph Linton in the middle of the last century. By the social character, Erich Fromm meant precisely what is common in the character of members of the same culture – as opposed to the individual characteristics, which make people different from one another although they belong to the same culture. One can say that the social character, as Fromm saw it, stands for the behaviour of people within a certain social system which is in line with the accepted cultural values and requirements. As for domestic authors, Jovan Cvijić, based on extensive fieldwork, during which he visited almost the entire Balkans, promoted the theoretical notion of national character, by which he implied the sum total of all the psychic dispositions and peculiarities of a nation. Several modern authors define the social character as a system of typical, stable, dispositional characteristics that mark (typify) many individual human beings and groups within a society.¹

This research, regardless of the spatial-geographical separation of the regions where it took place, confirms the existence of a common link in the perception of some joint features. In each of the focus groups there was a unanimous conclusion that citizens of Serbia, both men and women, see themselves, their fellow citizens and compatriots, as cordial, social, hospitable, honest and sincere people who are always ready to help others in need. Among the self-perceived shortcomings, excessive kindness stands out, almost verging on naivety; it is followed by hot temper, which can turn into aggressiveness, then stubbornness and extreme passivity, as well as inclination towards melancholy (only in the Subotica FG).

Tutin: "The main problem is that we are too good, verging on naivety, we'd give everything to everyone."

Subotica: "We are too static, it is difficult to make us move, everything is the same to us, I guess living in the plains does that to you."

Nevertheless, it has been underlined that the old proven values – represented by the syntagm 'to be a good man' – are retreating today before the values of materialism, with people pursuing only their own

¹ See: Golubović, Zagorka; Kuzmanović, Bora; Vasović, Mirjana; *The Social Character and Social Changes in the Light of National Conflicts*, Belgrade: the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, Filip Višnjić, 1995.

interests. Most people think that the roots of such a tendency lie in the general trend brought about by the modern age of developed capitalism, and that the culprits for the moral degradation in the region are the general poverty, unemployment, wars, criminalization, all the misfortunes that we have had to endure over the last 25 years. However, distinctions are made in the sense that the elderly and those from villages and small towns are still the guardians of the old values, and that the younger and urban generations are affected by a permanent change in moral values.

Pirot: "A respectable and prominent man used to be a good man; honour mattered, and today only a person with money is considered successful and respected, regardless of the origins of the money".

Subotica: "Villages and small towns are nowadays more in the spirit of our old traditional values; cities, especially the big ones, are pretty much under the influence of moral corruption, a degradation of human relations."

Bujanovac: "Children were growing up with parents who were forced to change, to suffer, to be jobless, not to have enough resources even for food, with parents who were smuggling gasoline, who were ready to swindle their neighbours in order to make a profit for their family, so modern families are different, caring less for others, more for themselves."

In principle, the majority of the respondents point out that people in Serbia, unlike other nations, are more sensitive and more compassionate to the suffering of other nations, precisely because they remember the exoduses, sufferings and refugees from the history of their own people. Although this collective memory has no small impact on the current openness and readiness to help others, which is why the prevailing attitude is that the weak should be helped and protected, this dominant value is often 'dampened' by a difficult personal economic situation, but also by the growing trend of caring only for personal and family interests.

Furthermore, everyone agrees that one of the general characteristics of people in Serbia is the absence of activism, or absolute unwillingness to take initiative, to associate in order to solve a common problem. In this regard, what prevails here is waiting for an initiative to be launched by some higher instance, by the local self-government, a political party or, most preferably, the state. The state, with the help of the media, can motivate the broadest spectrum of actions. The emphasis on passivity was especially singled out among the citizens, men and women, at the focus group in Subotica.

Subotica: "We people from Vojvodina are famous for being too slow, calm, we are difficult to get started on doing something, it has always been like that."

In general, all the participants in focus groups emphasize their readiness to tolerate someone different, e.g. people whose appearance and behaviour are not to their liking, but cautioning that tolerance is limited by the protection of the personal, cultural and national identity. This limit of tolerance is, therefore, highly relative, because some other customs and culture, even a different way of dressing, **may but do not necessarily have to** be interpreted as an act of aggression towards the indigenous culture and identity, as a behaviour against which one must defend resorting to aggressiveness. In this sense, the message of the state, which has a great influence on citizens' activism and views, is very important. One could say that the reaction of the state defines the outcome of the relations between citizens and those that citizens perceive as different. So, the preventive role of the state and the media is extremely important, in the sense that they have the responsibility not to wait for a 'fire' to break out before any measures are taken. In Subotica, a greater degree of development of tolerance is emphasized, which reportedly exists due to a history of coexistence of different nations and religions. However, this should be taken with reservations. Based on the comments of the participants in the focus group in Subotica, one gets the impression that readiness for tolerance is only conditional, it applies only when different nations and nationalities are 'sufficiently' similar in cultural terms, and in the recent past, when refugees from Bosnia came with a different cultural pattern, tolerating them and their behaviour was clearly a problem.

Subotica: "The 1990s are still something we Hungarians talk about, when Vojvodina was hit by an influx of refugees from Bosnia. The fact that Serbs from Bosnia used to come to live in our street left nobody indifferent. They were, and they still are absolutely different people, we had a hard time accepting them, and they were also not inclined to fit in with our environment. There was no tolerance whatsoever, on either side. Compared to the refugees of today, it seems that Serbs from Bosnia are very close to us, and it was difficult with them, meaning that it would be impossible to make an alignment with these refugees."

Along with these perceptions of tolerance, there is an impression that most citizens think that in contact with foreigners, they should be moderately cautious and restrained. Nobody explicitly argues that contact with foreigners is corrupting us, and the majority of people are publicly inclined to the socially more desirable attitude that contact with strangers can help us learn useful things; however, this principle of openness towards foreigners and members of other religions should be taken with reservations, because as soon as the question of ethnic distance appears, the presence of xenophobia in our social character comes to the fore. While younger focus group members are divided over the question of whether they would mind their child or close relative marrying a refugee from the Middle East, older participants in focus groups explicitly affirm that they would be bothered by something like that. Their reasons for not accepting those closest to them marrying refugees from the Middle East are based on the belief that there are too many cultural and religious differences between us who live in

Serbia and those who come from the Middle East, so that all these differences would make the survival of such a marriage impossible.

Belgrade: "Frankly, with my life experience, I would not recommend to my child doing something like that. I would try to separate them out of love for my child, if I could succeed at all, because love is blind. I think there is a high degree of probability that problems will appear, sooner or later."

Participants in the focus groups from Tutin and Sjenica, partly from Bujanovac and Preševo, too, due to their religious affinity with refugees from the Middle East, manifested a significantly smaller distance towards them, and among young people from these places there was a complete absence of distance towards refugees from the Middle East.

Only a smaller number of older focus group participants would not approve of their children hanging out with refugee children from the Middle East, or of Middle Eastern refugees being their bosses at work one day. Concerning the possibility of refugees from the Middle East being their neighbours, there was no significant resistance to that whatsoever.

WHAT REFUGEES ARE LIKE – PERCEPTION, ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES

People's first associations are an important instrument for determining their conscious and unconscious attitudes. When it comes to the first associations connected with the idea of refugees from the Middle East, the largest number of focus group participants use expressions such as: suffering, the horror of war, pain, misery, the abandonment of everything that one has achieved so far, escape to a better life... A smaller number of participants, most often among the elderly, rarely include among their first associations such negative ones as: fear, attacks, terrorism, radical Islam, rape, looting, dirt, lack of culture, uncivilized behaviour, destruction of property and destruction of crops...

Focus group participants unanimously say that, at first, the term refugees from the Middle East meant to them Syrians, mostly young family people with children who were fleeing the war in Syria, but over time, it turned out that among the refugees the prevalent ones were those who, according to the focus group participants, were economic migrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq, mostly young males. The prevailing view is that the behaviour of those two sorts of refugees is unmistakably different: the behaviour of Syrians is perceived as exceptionally cultured, emancipated and educated, whereas Afghans, Pakistanis and Iraqis are described as wild, aggressive, uncivilized, prone to theft, unhygienic and violent behaviour.

Šid: "I would take Syrians into my house, and we should be afraid of the Afghans, they are like animals."

It is believed that migrants from, first and foremost, Afghanistan, and then from Pakistan and Iraq, were the lowest, worst part of their societies of origin, where they could not fit in, and now they are trying to reach the West, as a kind of a shortcut to a better life. Everyone agrees that the goal of refugees and migrants is to reach Western Europe, above all Germany, which is perceived as a socio-economic paradise, where one can get a decent amount of money even without working, and when you work, you can earn really good money. Therefore, the widespread conviction is that refugees and migrants from the Middle East are transiting through Serbia, that Serbia is not, and could not be, by any means, an option that would make them happy or maybe even get them interested in staying permanently. Therefore, interaction with refugees takes place in this context, namely, with someone who is 'just passing through', relying on the expectation that the transit wave would 'finally' come to an end.

The general impression among the focus groups participants is that refugees and migrants are well organized, that they know what they want and what they should expect, but also that they have enough money at their disposal, often with cell phones which are much more expensive compared to those of the domestic population.

There is (or there was) a strikingly positive attitude towards refugees from Syria, based primarily on a significantly higher degree of compassion, a humane attitude towards people who have gone through the suffering and misery of a civil war, but also because of their behaviour, which is mostly perceived as highly civilized. On the other hand, there is a negative attitude towards 'migrants' – an emphatic animosity – although the participants 'do not deny their right' to be here and seek their own way out, meaning their departure for Western Europe, e.g. Germany.

Subotica: "I am really sorry for Syrian refugees; on the other hand, I am annoyed by economic migrants, that's something else, although, I admit, it is their right to look for their happiness, everybody is entitled to that."

Gradually, the negative perception of migrants is being shifted onto the refugee population from Syria as well. In any case, there is a tendency of a growing negative stereotyping of refugees and migrants. It is not accepted that among refugees and migrants there are only bad individuals, but some wrongful act (theft, vandalism, etc.) committed by an individual migrant or refugee is automatically attributed to the whole population, so that, in general, refugees and migrants are increasingly seen as bad: prone to violence, terrorism, radical Islam and so on.

Piroć: "That's our flaw, the fact that we tend to generalize everything, but what is to be done, that is the way we are. When one of them does something bad, then we say that all of them are like that. We are not right, but that's how things are. Our thieves take advantage of this now, because all people think that the culprits are refugees and migrants."

As a reason for a positive attitude towards refugees and migrants from the Middle East, the most commonly mentioned one is compassion towards people who are believed to have been forced to leave their homeland. In this sense, the historical memory of the suffering of the peoples of the Balkans, especially the still fresh memories of the chaos that ensued after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, become a rational and emotional factor in inspiring humanity and consideration towards refugees and migrants.

The focus group participants from Tutin and Sjenica, and partly those from Bujanovac and Preševo as well, express an even stronger positive attitude towards refugees and migrants from the Middle East, due to their religious and cultural closeness. Besides, most participants from Tutin and Sjenica say that their own families include people who have gone through the same experience in an attempt to reach Germany or other Western European countries, so that also inspires an additional understanding of the situation that refugees and migrants from the Middle East are going through.

Tutin: "Tutin lives off its families in Germany. We all know what it means to decide to leave for Germany. I understand those people entirely, apart from the fact that we are brothers in Allah."

Therefore, in Tutin and Sjenica, and partly in Bujanovac and Preševo, readiness for a positive action is significantly higher than in the other places where research was conducted, and it does not stop with the practice of sporadic humanitarian aid, as in other regions, but is also realized through the organization of joint celebrations of Bayram, joint evenings of presenting culinary skills, exchanging elements of traditional heritage, organizing joint sports tournaments, or joint volunteer cleaning of the city and the natural environment.

On the other hand, the key reason for a negative attitude towards refugees and migrants from the Middle East is fear, especially fear of the unknown, violence, disease and terrorism. In that sense, linguistic, cultural and religious barriers represent the basis of ignorance, which then becomes a source of fear.

Vranje: "I am really afraid when I see them. I do not understand them, they look terrifying, walking in those groups, and I always just cross the street, just to be on the safe side. I am afraid some of them might take out a knife."

In addition, fear of refugees and migrants from the Middle East is also fuelled by various 'bad news' broadcast by global, regional, national and local media, as well as by personal experiences and, more often, by hearing of cases of violence, robbery, theft, property alienation, vegetable and orchard theft, and also by the sale of humanitarian aid and the issue of garbage disposal. When it comes to readiness to act in accordance with the negative attitude towards refugees, the participants in the focus groups from Šid, Lajkovac, Sombor and Pirot mentioned examples of petitions and minor protests, along with

requests for the relocation of reception centres from their municipalities, and in Dimitrovgrad, reportedly, refugees and migrants are forbidden from going to the swimming pool where the local population go.

The table below provides an overview of the sources of positive and negative attitudes towards refugees at the emotional, rational and conative level.

Table 1.

	<i>The source of positive attitudes</i>	<i>The source of negative attitudes</i>
Emotions	<i>-compassion</i>	<i>-fear (of the unknown, disease, violence, terrorism)</i>
Rational arguments	<i>-similar historical experiences</i>	<i>-misunderstanding -violence, robbery, trespassing, thefts, crops destruction -reselling of humanitarian aid -garbage disposal</i>
Readiness to act	<i>-humanitarian aid collection (food, clothing, toys) -sport tournaments -joint cleaning activities</i>	<i>-petitions for refugees to leave -protests -ban on visiting public swimming-pools</i>

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND THE IMPACT OF INFORMATION ON THE PERCEPTION OF REFUGEES

Most of the participants in the focus groups emphasize that they hear mostly negative news concerning the migrant/refugee population. It is considered that 'the good news' has no chance at all against tendentious and sensationalist news about various 'malices' which are attributed to refugees and migrants. So, when it comes to the impact on forming an attitude towards refugees and migrants from the Middle East, 'positive news' of humanitarian activities, or joint activities of the domestic and the refugee/migrant population, are drastically less influential compared to 'negative news', such as the news items connecting refugees and migrants directly or indirectly with violence, theft or terrorism.

Dimitrovgrad: "It is all for nothing that there was a tournament with a team made of refugees and migrants taking part, that's not news and nobody will pay any attention. The news that influences attitudes is if some terrorist went through Preševo to Horgoš pretending to be a refugee and afterwards did what he did."

The participants conclude that the public has not been well and sufficiently informed on refugees and migrants from the Middle East and, in that sense, there is a need to learn more about their real needs, problems, goals and, in general, their way of life and culture.

TV and the Internet are mostly used, but it is also considered that domestic TV news and portals broadcast identical news items as the global media, so there is no difference in terms of information at the international, regional, national or local media level. If it is reported that refugees or migrants raped a girl in Hamburg, it is a hot news item, everybody passes it on, and that becomes a piece of information that encourages generalizations, stigmatizing all refugees and migrants as a group of people we should be scared of; hence, they are presented as a threat.

Nevertheless, there are opinions that our national media outlets are less negative in treating refugees and migrants' issues than the international and regional media. In the opinion of some focus group participants, that leads to a better treatment of refugees and migrants in Serbia, compared to the situation in the region (Macedonia, Croatia, Hungary) and other parts of Europe.

Sjenica: "Sandžak improves the general overview of Serbia, and Serbia has gained positive points in the world because of us. Serbia should admit that to Sjenica and Tutin, be grateful to us, give us something good in return. If we were not here, the situation would be the same as in Obrenovac, protests, harassment, it would be as it was in Hungary, kicking the refugees."

PERSONAL CONTACTS AND EXPERIENCE WITH REFUGEES

While focus group participants from the major cities generally have a lower level of interaction with refugees and migrants from the Middle East, manifested only in the form of occasional encounters in the street, focus group participants from some of the smaller places say that they have daily communication with them, that many of them have even learned the Serbian (or Bosniak) language.

Belgrade: "I saw them only near the bus station, in large numbers, they were lying on the grass, they looked dangerous."

Sjenica: "Their children are already excellent at speaking our language. Incredible."

While in Subotica, Belgrade and Pirot there are mostly negative examples of interaction – such as encounters with fear-generating groups, fruit and vegetable thefts and the like – the participants in the focus groups in Tutin and Bujanovac often give examples of making friends with refugees and migrants, point out examples of their joint daily socialization, joint prayers and performing other religious rites.

Tutin: "They go out with us, we have coffee together, we spend time with them. I have stayed in touch with many of them, we maintain correspondence over the Internet."

Subotica: "They are too loud, they move in groups down the street, too noisy. Maybe that's the way they are, maybe it is some mechanism to make them feel safer, but to us, peaceful, calm people from Vojvodina, that seems too aggressive, you just wait for them to take out a knife."

Sjenica: "You cannot find older people in coffee shops that much, but they socialize with refugees and migrants in mosques, they understand each other in terms of faith."

CRISIS IMPACT ON THE LOCAL SITUATION

All the participants in focus group discussions, as well as representatives of local self-governments, regardless of regional differences in development, emphasize that people in their communities generally live a modest life, that everything is expensive and that their earnings are insufficient to meet all the household needs. In addition, local businessmen underline that it is extremely difficult to maintain the current level of employment when purchasing power is at a low level and there is a tendency for further decline.

The head of the finance department at a Belgrade-based foreign trade company: "Amid low turnover levels, we are faced with extended payments, and we are forced to reduce costs by dismissing workers. Business prospects become uncertain."

Amid a high level of unemployment and low incomes, in Tutin and Sjenica a great importance is attached to, as previously stated, the 'life-saving' remittances from relatives in Western European countries.

In general, while business people in all communities deny any influence of the refugee crisis on running a business, there are some differences in the assessment of the impact of the refugee crisis on life in these areas among representatives of local governments and citizens (participants in the focus groups), depending on the particular characteristics of the respective local environment. As a rule, the larger the city, the impact is estimated to be smaller; that is, the smaller the place exposed to the refugee/migrant influx, the higher the estimated impact of these events on life in the local community. Thus, for example, while representatives of local governments and focus groups participants from Belgrade, Subotica, Pirot and Vranje believe that there is almost no influence of refugees and migrants on life in their communities, the focus group participants from the other cities, as well as the representatives of local self-governments from Bujanovac, Tutin and Sjenica, believe that the impact of the arrival of refugees and migrants on their communities is definitely significant.

Most of them believe that there is a lull in the influx of refugees and migrants from the Middle East now, but one should not be deceived by this, and it does not mean that the crisis is over. The general view is that one cannot predict the further course of the crisis, and that it does not depend on the local, but on the global geopolitical environment. Nevertheless, they all agree that the number of refugees and migrants has decreased lately, and that organization concerning the reception of refugees and migrants has improved, so that it can be said that the state, the Commissariat and local self-governments, as well as citizens themselves, have now become accustomed to the situation in the field.

Therefore, when it comes to citizens' reactions to the reception centres, they all underline that, in the beginning, there was a reaction along the lines of *why here of all places*, but most of them now believe that the initial fear has been relaxed and citizens have become accustomed to the presence of refugees and migrants. However, if the question of expanding the capacities of the reception centres is raised, then the majority of them say that other cities and municipalities should take their share of responsibility.

Preševu: "Nobody knows what will happen. We are now accustomed to the situation, it was worse before, and now we have organized ourselves."

Šid: "In the beginning, there was a huge fear, now we are used to it, although other cities should be given the opportunity to show their hospitability, we've been hospitable enough."

Regarding the question of whether the municipal/city administration has successfully responded to the challenges of the influx of migrants and refugees, most respondents spontaneously said that the jurisdiction concerning the influx of refugees and migrants had been entrusted to the Commissariat for Refugees, and that their local self-governments worked in accordance with the requirements of the Commissariat. In this regard, they specially singled out the organization of utility services and the transfer of part of the capacities of the local health centres. None of the focus group participants indicated that there were any shortfalls or restrictions, but the issues of waste collection and disposal were highlighted, along with the excuses for the local utility companies, which, in the opinion of the participants in the focus groups, did not have, and still do not have, a sufficient number of utility vehicles and workers to cope with the increase of the amount of waste on the streets, in the areas where refugees and migrants stay. Therefore, everyone agrees that the communal capacity, human resources and equipment should be increased, so that the hygiene within the wider area of accommodation of refugees and migrants should always be at a satisfactory level.

Šid: "One cannot describe just how dirty the city of Šid is. It is a disaster. Those people, by the way, they do not want to wash themselves, there are reports of

lice, they are a source of diseases. The local self-government does not have enough capacity to clean what they can defoul."

Belgrade: "The utility services were overwhelmed and could not manage to clean all that. I think that they lack trucks, detergent powder, brooms. The hygiene around the compound of the School of Economics is disastrous, the parks have been destroyed. Although they have a reception centre at their disposal, they choose to sleep in public parks."

Obviously, hygiene appears to be an issue of great importance, both when it comes to the perception of refugees and migrants, and the local population's stance towards them, but also within the context of the public places occupied by refugees and migrants. Although some of the interviewed representatives of local self-governments claim that there is no lack of local utility capacities, whereas the others say that they have not enough information on the issue (because they have no jurisdiction whatsoever and also no knowledge of the work and capacities of the local utility services), the findings of the focus group discussions are absolutely irrefutable, in the sense that citizens clearly perceive and say that problems in this area are obvious and that it requires the necessary capacities enhancement in order to carry out just the everyday, continuous utility tasks in parts of the town with a high concentration of refugees and migrants from the Middle East. Also, local officials often tend to maintain that the problem lies more in the way that (some) refugees and migrants behave than in the lack of capacities of the local utility and other services.

A local self-government official in Palilula (Belgrade): "We have capacities, we have even renovated the existing reception centre, but the problem is that these people, or who knows who, some of them, within just three hours demolish the entire premises and remove forcibly all the fixtures. Personally, I admire these cleaning women there, what they do is a mission impossible".

While the perception of citizens serves as a strong basis for the conclusion about the need to boost the utility capacities, no precise information could be obtained from the interviewed representatives of local self-governments, who regularly justify themselves by citing their lack of authority, and therefore inability to provide proper information, including the data on the number of skilled engineers already employed or those who could be engaged to work within the water supply system, the sewage system, the local road network or the power grid and the electrical wiring.

On a different note, focus groups participants from Pirot, Šid, Lajkovac and Sombor say that there were people in their local communities who were writing petitions and protesting because of the refugees and migrants living in the vicinity of their households, complaining of illegal entry into residential buildings, theft of crops and disturbance of public order and peace. There was a problem in Pirot of septic tanks flooding from the premises where refugees and migrants are accommodated, which caused protests of the local population, but after the intervention of utility services, the problem was solved.

It has already been emphasized that the impact of the refugee/migrant crisis is considered to be smaller or non-existent in the major cities. Thus, the focus group participants from Belgrade, Subotica, Pirot and Vranje believe that there is no impact of refugees and migrants on the local economies and labour markets, nor on public health or other relevant spheres of social life. The only (important!) exception is the issue of security. Namely, although participants from these major cities could not refer to any concrete experiences, they often talk about being afraid of going through the parts of the city where there are many refugees and migrants, especially at night. Personal experiences that could justify this are rare, and some of the FGDs participants have mentioned only the experiences of some of their friends (not their own).

Beograd: "A friend of mine with children was surrounded by refugees and migrants, so she had to call her husband to avoid an unpleasant situation."

They also point out clashes among migrants and refugees, even with fatal outcomes, further emphasizing the negative impact on safety because of the presence of refugees and migrants.

On the other hand, participants from other (smaller) cities consider that the impact of refugees and migrants on their environment is significant, and that there are both negative and positive aspects of that impact. While for most of the small-town participants it was difficult to assess whether the impact was predominantly positive or negative, the participants from Tutin and Sjenica unambiguously opt for the view that the influx of refugees and migrants has made a positive impact, that it has stirred up various aspects of the community life for the better.

When it comes to the impact of the crisis on the local economy, the participants from these places underline the positive effects, because a significant number of their fellow citizens have jobs connected with the reception of refugees and migrants. It is interesting to note that this fact is also admitted by focus group participants who talk of their own negative attitudes, or if they come from places where negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants predominate to a great degree. Aside from this, most of the participants from these places underline that 'one can feel' the growing flow of money in their local communities. It is the general impression that refugees and migrants have significant amounts of money of their own, and it is also noted that each of them receives financial aid in the amount, as it is believed, of 10,000 RSD a month, while that money is spent in domestic stores. Many participants from these places (especially Dimitrovgrad, Subotica, Vranje and Šid) also emphasize that some of their fellow citizens have made a profit and still earn a lot of money through smuggling, or illegal transportation and transfer of refugees and migrants. Participants from these places emphasize that it is symptomatic that the number of registered taxi companies in their places has sharply increased after the outbreak of the refugee crisis.

Dimitrovgrad: "The same people who got wealthy in the 1990s smuggling cigarettes and fuel now get richer smuggling people."

They also mention the cases of some people who started to charge migrants excessively for recharging their mobile phones, and some local stores charge much higher prices for refugees and migrants, for example, selling *pljeskavica* (Serbian burger) for 15 Euros, and things like that. On the other hand, there are examples of a different kind. In the village of Bogovađa, near Lajkovac, where there is a reception centre, the first coffee shop and Internet centre were opened precisely to meet the needs of refugees and migrants. In other places, new premises and facilities have been built, and the existing ones have been renovated, hiring local workers and companies to perform this work, which can be, according to the majority of the participants, considered as a benefit from the influx of refugees.

A local self-government official in Sjenica: "Building construction is at full steam here with us, same as in Tutin, only better, because for now we have three facilities completely renovated and ready to receive refugees."

In most cases, the health care of refugees and migrants is organized in the reception centre itself, so that only sporadic emergency cases are transferred to local health centres, for an examination by specialists, mostly paediatricians. Therefore, when it comes to the impact of the refugee/migrant crisis on public health, negative comments concerning this issue were rather rare. In Subotica, on the contrary, there is a positive example, namely, that a small health centre has been built to meet the needs of refugees and migrants, which was singled out as a positive example by both citizens and representatives of the local self-government in Subotica. On the other hand, among the negative aspects of relevance for public health, as well as for the perception of refugees and migrants, participants from the focus groups in Preševo, Dimitrovgrad and Šid said that rumours spread among their fellow citizens that there were cases of body lice and scabies in the reception centres. Furthermore, only in Šid was there reference to a case when the local population complained that refugees and migrants take priority in the local health centre. To illustrate this, one participant in the focus group from Šid said that he was dismayed by the fact that he had to wait with his pregnant wife for the priority examinations of refugees and migrants to be completed.

Šid: "I was on the verge of breaking the doctor's nose. He tried to explain that there was a directive that refugees come first, and I had to wait with my pregnant wife."

The impact of the crisis on the local educational system, the work of the local administration, the demographic trends, the social and cultural spheres of life, in most cases, has not been especially noted. Only in Pirot has it been said that representatives of the local self-government are aware of the fact that in September, at the beginning of the school year, children of refugees and migrants should be enrolled

as well.

A representative of the local self-government in Pirot: *"We were told at the last board meeting that the children of refugees and migrants would go to school with our children. The news came from the Commissariat, that there had been an agreement made at the level of the Government, and now we will see how the parents will react."*

A positive impact within the cultural and social sphere of public life has been underlined only in Sjenica and Tutin, especially in the context of joint celebrations of Bayram and other organized gatherings in the squares and sport fields, which resulted in, as it is considered, a cultural enrichment, also enabling the local population to practice the English language.

Apart from Tutin and Sjenica, the impact of refugees and migrants on security is considered to be negative in smaller places, too. At first, people were afraid more but the fear, although at a lower level, has remained. According to focus group participants, refugees and migrants are loud, always in groups, inclined to clashes with each other, and there are many examples of trespassing, harvest theft and things like that.

INTEGRATION IMPETUS

Most of the participants in focus group discussions, especially young people, agree that refugees and migrants with temporary accommodation in our country should get help while transiting towards Western Europe. According to businessmen from Tutin and representatives of local self-government, most of the entrepreneurs in that area are involved in humanitarian activities. They are willing to self-organize and, in a way, helping refugees and migrants is seen as a matter of prestige.

A local self-government representative in Tutin: *"Here businessmen are competing at who will help refugees more. One took 200 refugees to lunch, a wedding one, he paid for everything, and he wanted to remain anonymous."*

However, in other places, along with the declarative willingness to take part in humanitarian activities, there is an invariable opinion among focus group participants and representatives of local self-government and businessmen that both citizens and the country's economy are going through a difficult time, and that opportunities are modest, so the aid that can be offered is only minimal and sporadic.

A representative of local self-government in Pirot: *"I think once people from the Michelin company (ex-Tigar) organized some kind of humanitarian aid for refugees, in the beginning."*

According to the participants of focus groups, there are a lot of differences concerning citizens' views of the newcomers from the Middle East, between the way they were perceived at the beginning of the crisis and now. As has already been mentioned, at first it was considered that 90% of the newcomers

were refugees from Syria and they, as all agreed, needed a lot of help, in terms of food and clothing, and they aroused, in most of our citizens, a humane need to help them. There are examples of personal initiatives, cited by the participants of the focus groups themselves, that citizens were motivated to help in some way. A young man from Belgrade said that he was making sandwiches with his friends for refugees, and a young man from Sjenica took off his shoes to give them to a refugee.

Belgrade: "It was at the beginning of the refugee crisis. Me and my friends decided to make sandwiches for refugees and hand it out to them. It was really emotional, you could see in their eyes how grateful they were."

Sjenica: "I was sitting with my friends when a refugee came to us and asked if we had some old shoes because his own were ruined from walking. I noticed that we were approximately the same shoe size, so I took off my new sneakers and gave them to him, and I went over to my car wearing socks only."

However, as time passed, among the newcomers there was a growing number of 'migrants', so it is believed that currently as much as more than 90 per cent of that population are those who the participants of the focus groups recognize as migrants. Everybody notices that migrants have a lot of money, that 'they have good clothing', that they have loads of different canned food that they cannot eat themselves, there is too much of it and they sell it to the local population. Compassion towards them is at a significantly lower level, and consequently, the need to help them is diminishing. There are comments that it is contradictory to think about helping those who have more than the local population. There are often comments that migrants have mobile phones that cost several times more than those of the domestic population.

Subotica: "Each of them has a cell phone which is worth as much as my car."

Most of the focus group participants believe that the Commissariat for Refugees is the body that should properly take care of refugees and migrants in the field. The Commissariat is considered to be some sort of a specialized body formed by the government to organize the reception of refugees and migrants, in coordination with local self-governments and other institutions. Local self-governments are not really expected to resolve the issues concerning the refugee/migrant crisis, but any initiative on their part is considered welcome. Focus group participants in Tutin and Sjenica especially underline their praises in that sense for the initiatives undertaken by their municipalities. It is interesting, however, that, based on the interviews with local self-government officials, one gets the impression that local self-governments perceive themselves as no more than organs which act only at the Commissariat's request. Any other views are rare.

A local self-government representative in Pirot: *"We are angry at the Commissariat, we have formed a working group for monitoring migration in the territory of Pirot, and the Commissariat is obliged to inform us, however the Commissariat avoids us, rarely shares information with us."*

Asked whether the Government should provide accommodation for refugees and migrants from the Middle East to stay in Serbia if they want to, the reply of almost all the focus group participants was determined by their firm belief that almost none of refugees would like to stay in Serbia. All FGDs participants believe that the exclusive goal of migrants and refugees is to reach Germany, furthermore, that their staying in Serbia would seem to be the biggest punishment for them. They agree that maybe some migrants and refugees might decide to stay in Serbia if they were faced with the threat of expulsion, but their goal would certainly continue to be Germany, and they would try to attain that goal sooner or later, in every way possible. All the participants agree that it is counterproductive to 'force' people, under any excuse, to stay in Serbia if they do not want to stay here.

However, there are some rare examples, as mentioned previously, of refugees deciding to stay in Serbia. One participant from Šid said that two Syrian families had decided to stay in Serbia, and that they had been received excellently by the local population.

Šid: "Two families from Syria decided to stay in Šid, and everybody welcomed them, because those people are really nice. They gave our names to their children, I think Marko and Miloš and they learned our language."

Šid: "One Syrian offered to work in an automobile repair shop, and the boss agreed, but a few days later an inspection came, and in the end, nothing came out of it."

Focus group participants agree that, if some of the refugees and migrants decide to stay in Serbia, the Government or local self-governments should accept funds from the EU for some kind of their permanent settlement. In general, the logic of that is as follows: EU assistance for each person remaining in Serbia should be significantly higher than the cost of just financing a person's residence, including the cost of housing and employment, so that both Serbia and the local community or citizens should get something out of it. This is pointed out by the entrepreneurs interviewed, but similar arguments are offered by local self-government representatives and participants in the focus groups as well.

Bela Palanka: "Let them build us a kindergarten or repair local roads."

Bosilegrad: "Let the EU then give the money for the traffic infrastructure and the sewage system."

Kikinda: "Good, let them build us sport facilities, swimming-pools, and we will receive a dozen of them."

Loznica: "A new school, a playground for children, for the people to say, yes we did take them in, but if we also got something in return."

Therefore, all the participants in focus groups and representatives of local self-governments, as well as business people, believe that, in any case, first the funds should be provided for the long-term housing and employment of refugees and migrants who would like to stay in Serbia, but there should also be indisputable benefits for the local community.

When it comes to interest in subsidies for the employment of refugees and migrants, there are different opinions among the business people interviewed. Namely, while a part of them believe that this is not a good idea, because other employees would have a hard time accepting colleagues from the Middle East, offering the explanation that there are subsidies for the employment of Roma that are not used for the same reasons, other entrepreneurs are interested in subsidies, but they believe that, in order to eliminate the negative reactions to favouring refugees over the domicile population, a wider system of subsidies should be introduced at the expense of the EU, which, for example, would provide assistance for refugees and new employees from the local population as well.

An economist from Vranje, not interested in subsidies for the employment of refugees and migrants: "I would not accept it if they gave me subsidies to cover all the expenses, because other employees would not accept it, people are afraid of disease, terrorism, their radicalism... I would say 'no, thank you!'"

A Belgrade Chamber of Commerce official: "They believe that their employment and integration are not a matter of our own will but a concession to the EU. If it were up to us, or up to me, we would remain a transit country. It is a stupid thing to receive terrorists to stay here with you, to live, to work, and you can see what they are doing in Brussels, France, they can neither integrate nor behave in a civilized manner, why do we need this, no matter what we can get in return from the EU. We are hospitable, do you remember university students from non-aligned countries, who knows how many of them stayed here, but these are fanatics."

A businessman from Vranje, interested in subsidies for the employment of refugees and migrants: "If there are subsidies for their employment, great, no problem; then they should get apartments built, funded by the EU money, and they should cover half of their salary. Yumko will also hire as many people as needed by the textile industry, 400 if necessary."

An entrepreneur from Belgrade, interested in subsidies: "Here in Belgrade we had students from non-aligned countries, so in the case of a company

developing business in the Middle East, we would be glad to employ, based on subsidies, some economists or sales specialists with the knowledge of the Arab language and the English language. I think that there would not be any problem for our colleagues to take them in. On the other hand, maybe we can take someone to work in the warehouse also, a manual worker."

An entrepreneur from Tutin, interested in subsidies: "In our market /store/ we are always looking for manual workers in the warehouse. Maybe someone to work at a cash-desk if they learn our language better. If there are additional subsidies, we are interested in it, the only problem would be the jealousy of the domestic employees, so we should get subsidies for them as well."

Most of them think that, despite the funds from the EU, integration would be difficult because of many obstacles: language, culture, religion, understanding of upbringing, gender differences and others. Some of the participants in the focus groups and representatives of local self-governments suggest a dispersion of those interested in staying in Serbia, which would be, it is believed, a better way to achieve integration, as refugees and migrants would then have to refer more to the local population, and would not make their own micro-ghettos in which they would communicate only with one another. Most of the participants in focus groups, otherwise, understand permanent integration as assimilation, that is, an absolute loss of identity brought by refugees and migrants.

Subotica: "It is important for them not to be in groups, because in that case they would stick to their own identity. If you separate them in that way, so that they have no mutual contacts, contacts with one another, their children will speak our language and they will behave as we do, thus making them fully integrated."

Dimitrovgrad: "Let every town in Serbia take two families, and we would not even feel their presence, in one generation they will become us".

CAMPAIGN SUGGESTION

Focus group participants, without exception, confirm that they do not know enough about refugees and migrants, and show a clear (and socially desirable!) openness to learning and finding out more, and also to the idea of a campaign that would encourage Serbian citizens to accept refugees from the Middle East.

Everyone agrees that it would be good to have media contents featuring their culture, religion, customs related to the upbringing of children, norms related to gender relations, etc.

The campaign should focus on our inclination towards generalization, so as to emphasize that refugees and migrants from the Middle East, like all people, are different from one another, that there are some who are good and some who are bad, that we cannot make stereotypes about all refugees from the Middle East based on the actions of a few of them who are bad.

In this sense, everyone agrees that, in order for us to become a truly modern society, it is necessary to take equal care of all people, regardless of their nationality and religion.

A campaign aiming to encourage Serbia's citizens and facilitate their becoming more open to accepting refugees from the Middle East should provide as many examples as possible illustrating the lives of refugees and migrants.

Belgrade: "The media can help a lot. They should tell us more about their culture and religion in order to emphasize their contribution to the community."

Subotica: "The national television should broadcast a programme about them or some stories... They are all the same to me, I do not know anything about them. They should tell us about their lives before the war, how they left in the first place, what actually happened to them."

Belgrade: "I would like to have more information on their cuisine, interests, we do not know anything about their upbringing and how they bring up their children, we want to see a comparison between how they lived before and the way they live now, what their gender relations are, their attitudes towards older people, their education, food."

KEY FINDINGS

WE AND THE REFUGEES: PERCEPTIONS, ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES

Sociability, cordiality and hospitality are perceived as the still dominant features of the social character of Serbian citizens, and the values embodied in the syntagm 'to be a good man' (honesty and sincerity) are widely accepted. However, there is also the opinion that such traditional values are less represented among the younger generations and in urban areas. In the same sense, it is widely believed that, compared to other nations and states, we are more sensitive to the suffering of others and more willing to help those who have suffered, and this is often associated with historical memories and/or quite recent (collective) experiences or memories of refugees and sufferings.

It is important to note that such values and characteristics do not remain unequivocally desirable, let alone useful. On the contrary, 'excessive goodness' is often perceived as a problem and a weakness: it is believed that being good to others always and everywhere is detrimental to us, and that this is 'our' (collective) problem.

Tolerance is another feature that people in Serbia are believed to have, but its real manifestations, viewed through the findings of this research, are rather incoherent and also quite different in various regions. Vojvodina, in this sense, may be a special case: although perceived as a multicultural environment in which the value of tolerance is traditionally nurtured, the process of acceptance of different cultural patterns and the integration of others is considered to be difficult, even impossible.

It is interesting to note that integration is often understood as assimilation, that is, a process that implies more or less a complete rejection of the 'original' cultural identity and the adoption of the culture and customs of the host country. It can also be concluded that tolerance is largely conditioned by the attitude that the authorities manifest towards those who are different. Hence, it is largely the responsibility of the authorities to prevent intolerance and negative reactions against refugees and migrants.

Social distance towards refugees and migrants is more often expressed by the middle-aged and elderly focus group participants, but is generally seen only to a greater extent when probing into the possibility of close relationships with refugees and migrants. This distance is then often justified by incompatible cultural differences that will, sooner or later, lead to inevitable and unsolvable problems. It is striking, however, that the smallest distance is expressed in the regions of Tutin and Sjenica, especially among young people, and this is certainly (also) related to their belonging to the same religion.

However, most of the participants in this survey express (at least in a declarative manner) interest in getting to know the refugees and migrants' cultures, but also in getting to know the circumstances that led them to flee and migrate, and the lack of such information is recognized as a problem and one of the reasons for misunderstandings and negative feelings and attitudes towards refugees and migrants. It is often recognized that there is an (unjustified) tendency towards generalizations, stereotypes and prejudices, but such a way of thinking is rationalised as just being the way things are, and one of the collective characteristics of people in Serbia.

The dominant belief is that the refugees and migrants in Serbia are only 'passing through' – that Serbia is not and cannot be their ultimate destination. In this sense, there is the opinion that any attempt to 'force' people to stay in Serbia would only create problems, and that their eventual staying in Serbia, caused by any kind of unfavourable circumstances, would nevertheless be only temporary, and that their real destination would still be Germany (or some other more developed European country). Refugees and migrants, therefore, are seen as someone whose stay here is certainly temporary, and in the near future it will be brought to a close. Nevertheless, there are quite different opinions about the current stage of the 'refugee crisis' and what can reasonably be expected in the future, in terms of the duration and intensity of the refugee/migrant flow that passes through the territory of Serbia.

The events of 2015 have certainly led to forming strong stereotypes about two groups of refugees: 'Syrians' are perceived as cultured and emancipated, while 'Afghans' are seen as uncivilized, prone to theft, unhygienic and violent behaviour. The former group is usually associated with the idea of 'real refugees' – people who have been forced to leave their country due to war and violence, which is strongly opposed to the idea of migrants, who are perceived as only searching for a better life (but along with this neutral definition, there is a series of negative associations connected to the feelings of repulsion and fear).

Although such a 'polarized' perception of refugees and migrants is still quite present, there is a clear tendency of increasingly more negative stereotyping of refugees and migrants, and an even wider generalization of negative events and behaviours associated with a certain number of refugees and migrants. This tendency is related to the belief that most of those now staying in Serbia actually belong to the category of migrants. And it is a widespread belief that migrants do not deserve compassion or the humanitarian aid which refugees receive. In addition to the already mentioned stereotyped negative characteristics, migrants are being assigned another one: they have money, they sell humanitarian aid and they have very expensive mobile phones.

In Tutin and Sjenica, negative perceptions and beliefs about refugees and migrants are remarkably the rarest. The reason for this is not only a common affiliation to the Islamic religion. Namely, even when they see newcomers from the Middle East just as people who have decided to set off for Western Europe looking for a job and a better life (that is, economic migrants), such a perception also involves closeness and understanding based on the fact that many of the citizens of Tutin and Sjenica were once in such a

situation, or that they have family members somewhere in Western Europe, who usually help and support those who have remained in Tutin or Sjenica.

MEDIA, REAL SOCIAL INTERACTIONS, LOCAL STORIES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Positive news items on the humanitarian actions and joint activities of the domicile and refugee/migrant populations have a drastically minor impact (on the formation of beliefs about and attitudes towards refugees and migrants), compared to various negative news items, such as those in which refugees and migrants are associated with violence, theft or even terrorism. The participants in the focus groups unanimously share this opinion, even when they are fully aware of the existence of positive media information about refugees and migrants.

The media most referred to are television and the Internet. There are no major differences in the type of news and the mode of presenting information at the international, regional, national or local media level, but there are also opinions that the national media in Serbia, in comparison to the international and regional ones, are less negative towards refugees and migrants, which is, again, linked to the belief that we have a better attitude towards refugees and migrants here compared to other countries in the region (Macedonia, Croatia, Hungary) and Europe in general.

The level of interaction with refugees and migrants is not the same in all places: in bigger cities, for most of the citizens (and participants of the focus groups), these interactions are relatively rare and superficial, and are mainly reduced to a few encounters in the street, accompanied by no real exchange whatsoever. On the contrary, in smaller places, interactions are more frequent, even on a daily basis, and they include at least some of the forms of usual social communication.

The dominant character of these interactions is not the same in all places, but these differences do not correlate to the size of the settlement in question but, most likely, to certain cultural differences. Namely, during the focus groups discussions in Tutin and Bujanovac, examples of positive interactions (including establishing friendships and various joint activities) were described more often, while examples of negative interactions were more often highlighted in all the other regions, perhaps most often in the form of encounters with groups of refugees and migrants whose behaviour aroused discomfort and anxiety (even for no apparent reason).

CURRENT IMPACTS ON LOCAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND REFLECTION ON POSSIBLE INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

In general, according to the estimates of representatives of local self-governments, but also of the citizens themselves, the arrival and the stay of refugees and migrants have produced a significant impact on the living conditions only in smaller towns. On the contrary, all the representatives of the economy

interviewed in all the regions argued that the refugee crisis had no significant impact on the local economies or the business of their companies.

As a rule, local self-governments are not perceived as an important actor, and the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration (usually referred to as the Commissariat) is usually perceived as the body that is competent and realistically deals with various issues related to refugees and migrants in this or that local area. Even according to most of the statements received from the representatives of local self-governments, the authorities of those local self-governments undertake certain activities only at the request of the Commissariat. The issues that are most often referred to as being of particular importance for local communities are those related to the field of utility services (more precisely, collecting and disposing of waste) and public health and health services. In this regard, the opinions and complaints about the lack of capacity of local utility companies are heard most often, namely, that they were not able to remove the increased volume of waste and garbage in the areas where refugees and migrants are staying. Providing health services, on the contrary, is usually not perceived as problematic, and complaints about a possible overburdening of health centres and longer waiting times in health centres are quite rare.

Issues of security and public order are other areas that citizens often talk about concerning the impact of refugees and migrants on life in local communities, usually in a negative context. In the first place, it seems that the very appearance of a number of refugees and migrants in certain parts of a settlement creates a sense of reduced security (feelings of fear and concern) in a significant number of local residents. In addition, the inappropriate behaviour in public places, illegal entry into residential buildings and theft of crops or vegetables and fruit additionally complicate the relations between the local population and refugees and migrants, and such occurrences were the reason (or a cause) for petitions and protest gatherings in Šid, Pirot, Lajkovac and Sombor.

Apart from Tutin and Sjenica, where the influx of refugees and migrants produced predominantly positive effects on all aspects of social life, various positive effects are also recorded in all the other places affected by a significant inflow of refugees and migrants. This is primarily manifested through the employment of local residents who have got jobs related to the reception of refugees and migrants, but also through significantly higher financial revenues in certain segments of the local economy (such as the retail trade, taxi services, food catering). In addition, certain ruined or abandoned buildings have been renovated and adapted for the purpose of accommodating refugees and migrants, and some new facilities have been built for this purpose. Work of this kind was not related only to accommodation facilities. For example, in Subotica, a small health centre was built. In any case, such investments and jobs usually involved a significant engagement of domestic workers and firms.

However, the only significant positive influence on the cultural and social life of local communities was noted in Tutin and Sjenica, especially in terms of joint celebrations and observance of the most important religious holidays and the organization of joint gatherings and sports events, but also through

a large number of individual interactions and inclusion of refugees and migrants into various daily social activities.

Also, only in the case of Tutin and Sjenica can it be said that there is clear support for the integration of refugees and migrants, based on the perception of cultural and religious closeness with Middle Eastern refugees and migrants. In other words, and this is important to note, that support is based on the perception of refugees and migrants as close and similar (at least in certain important aspects), not different. On the other hand, even in multi-ethnic environments with a long tradition of tolerance and coexistence of different ethnic communities and religious groups and confessions, the idea of integration of refugees and migrants from the Middle East is perceived as hard to achieve at best.

Although the option of the integration of refugees is generally perceived as unrealistic (because of the strong belief that Serbia is not, and will not become the destination of their choice), most of the participants accept the idea of international financial assistance for the integration of refugees, but say quite clearly and resolutely that such assistance would only be welcomed if local communities and citizens would benefit from it – at least equally, as much as refugees and migrants.

The business logic is especially common among entrepreneurs and business people. However, they express quite conflicting attitudes concerning possible subsidies for the employment of refugees. While some of them believe that such an idea is not a good one, because the employees from local communities would not be likely to accept colleagues from the Middle East, others would be interested in subsidies, but they think that, for the purpose of eliminating the negative reactions of the local population, there should be a system of subsidies that would include incentives for both refugees and unemployed local citizens.

Finally, while considering the idea of a campaign that promotes and supports the integration of refugees and migrants, it turned out that there was a unanimous opinion that the public in Serbia does not know enough about refugees and migrants from the Middle East, and that the existing tendency towards unjustified generalizations and stereotyping should be opposed by means of media information that would involve a much larger amount of information on the culture and life of the countries from which refugees and migrants originated, as well as the life stories of refugees and migrants themselves, who would talk about what had happened to them, how they had lived and how they were living now, what their hopes and plans were.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Communication with the public in Serbia in order to maintain and strengthen the support of refugees and migrants should be devised, in accordance with the relevant elements of the social character. All communication activities must, first and foremost, underline and promote those features that many citizens of Serbia consider as an essential part of the collective identity (what citizens of Serbia think about themselves): that people in Serbia are cordial and hospitable, honest and frank, ready to help others in distress, and compassionate to the suffering of other nations (which relates to 'our' recent experiences, but also to the historical recollection of exoduses, starvation and refugees).

II. It is also necessary to use and promote earlier positive experiences in the acceptance of people from countries culturally similar to those that today's refugees and migrants come from (for example, students from non-aligned countries). This can be accomplished by providing appropriate statistics and more general information about the above-mentioned phenomena and events, but certainly also through the life stories of those who have integrated into the local society. Good examples are a source of identification. Communication messages related to such cases can promote various positive interactions and permanent links of the local population with the newcomers, speaking about the positive life experiences of those who have remained in Serbia, but also affirming the tolerant and non-xenophobic parts of Serbian society.

III. Public support for the reception and/or integration of refugees and migrants should also be developed through the presentation of current examples and life stories of those asylum seekers who have remained in Serbia, including those who have been granted international protection. Such communications should emphasize our similarities, despite any religious and cultural differences that may exist, but also point out the ordinary human side of the life that refugees and asylum seekers are leading in Serbia, especially emphasizing what people in Serbia can easily identify with (what largely resembles their life's difficulties, interests or goals).

IV. The boosting of positive attitudes towards refugees and migrants should also be achieved by tapping into the most prominent elements of the positive image that certain groups of refugees have among the local population, that is, by pointing out those characteristics and behaviours that clearly contradict the usual negative elements of the image of refugees and migrants. In other words, for example, by pointing out the fact that most migrants and refugees never act aggressively, that they show respect to those who help them, as well as the difficult life experiences that they have gone through and the way they face the challenges of everyday life as refugees.

V. The communication strategy should also be based on expanding and strengthening the positive news related to refugees and migrants, including media content properly designed and presented, which should also include information on the joint activities of the local population and refugees and migrants

(information on sport and cultural events, joint celebrations, as well as joint environmental cleaning actions, for example).

VI. A humanitarian treatment of refugees and migrants should be favoured, and this relationship with refugees and migrants should be linked to the reaffirmation of the values embodied in the 'good man' syntagm, the values that are still perceived as an important part of the dominant social character in Serbia.

VII. Creating a communication strategy that can produce real changes in citizens' attitudes towards refugees and migrants should take into account that people in Serbia are generally interested in finding out more about refugees and migrants, the culture and societies they come from, that they recognize how certain negative information about refugees is unjustifiably generalized, and that they are clearly stating that concrete examples and life stories would be the best way to change the image of refugees and migrants, making it more realistic and more truthful.

VIII. The acceptance and accommodation of refugees and migrants in some local environments definitely produces certain economic effects, especially in smaller and/or less developed environments, and the effects of that type are recognized in the perceptions of citizens, especially when it comes to hiring people from the local community to perform jobs related to the reception and protection of refugees and migrants, as well as smaller or larger infrastructural projects involving local firms and domestic workers, but also related to the refugees and migrants' spending, for example, in local shops and catering establishments (coffee shops, snack bars and the like). Hence, the planning of communication activities aimed at strengthening the positive and eliminating the negative attitudes towards refugees and migrants should also involve this aspect of the impact that the influx of refugees and migrants might have on the life of local communities.

IX. Activities concerning the reception, accommodation and protection of refugees and migrants are generally financially supported by the EU (and some other international) funds, and such projects often involve the improvement of certain resources and capacities, which also brings benefits to the citizens of the respective local communities. Therefore, these facts should also be emphasized in communications aimed at influencing positive changes in citizens' attitudes towards refugees and migrants: support for refugees and migrants, in the context of partnerships with the European Union and other international actors, through donor-funded projects, brings important benefits to the local communities that provide such support.

APPENDIX 1: THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

FG	Respondents' place of residence	Gender		Age			Education			Employment status				Ethnicity		Total
		M	F	≤ 39	40-55	≥ 56	Elementary	High school	University	Employed	Unemployed	Pensioner	Student	Serbian	Other	
Belgrade	Belgrade	4	6	3	4	3	0	8	2	6	3	1	0	8	2	10
	Lajkovac	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Loznica	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
	Šid	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Σ BG FG	5	8	5	4	4	0	9	4	8	4	1	0	11	2	13
Subotica	Subotica	3	3	4	1	1	1	4	1	1	0	1	4	4	2	6
	Sombor	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	3	0	3
	Kanjiža	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Kikinda	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Σ SU FG	7	5	8	1	3	3	5	4	5	1	2	4	8	4	12
Tutin	Tutin	7	1	7	1	0	1	4	3	4	1	0	3	0	8	8
	Sjenica	5	0	5	0	0	1	2	2	4	0	0	1	1	4	5
	Σ TU FG	12	1	12	1	0	2	6	5	8	1	0	4	1	12	13
Bujanovac	Bujanovac	2	3	5	0	0	3	1	1	1	1	0	3	2	3	5
	Preševo	2	1	0	3	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	3
	Vranje	1	3	4	0	0	0	3	1	1	3	0	0	1	3	4
	Σ BU FG	5	7	9	3	0	3	6	3	5	4	0	3	3	9	12
Pirót	Pirót	3	2	3	1	1	0	2	3	2	3	0	0	4	1	5
	Bosilegrad	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Dimitrovgrad	2	1	1	2	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	2	1	3
	Bela Palanka	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Σ PI FG	5	5	6	3	1	0	5	5	7	3	0	0	8	2	10
Total		34	26	40	12	8	8	31	21	33	13	3	11	31	29	60

APPENDIX 2: THE STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEWED REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESSES

IDI	Interviewees	Location	Gender		Age			Education		Position / Sector	Ethnicity		Total
			M	F	≤ 39	40-55	≥ 56	High school	University		Serbian	Other	
Belgrade	Business people	Belgrade	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	Manager / trading company	1	0	1
		Belgrade	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	Director / Section for Entrepreneurship, COC	1	0	1
	LSG representatives	Belgrade	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	Local trustee for refugees (Palilula Municipality)	1	0	1
		Belgrade	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Member of the City Council	1	0	1
	Σ BG IDI		3	1	0	2	2	0	4		4	0	4
Subotica	Business people	Kanjiza	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Owner of a construction company	0	1	1
		Kikinda	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	Construction materials industry	1	0	1
	LSG representatives	Subotica	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	MP and the head of the local council for migration	1	0	1
		Subotica	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	Local trustee and a member of the council for migration	0	1	1
	Σ SU IDI		3	1	0	4	0	2	2		2	2	4
Tutin	Business people	Sjenica	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Owner of a construction company	0	1	1
		Tutin	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	Manager of a local supermarket chain	0	1	1
	LSG representatives	Sjenica	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	Local trustee for refugees	0	1	1
		Tutin	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Manager of the asylum centre	0	1	1
	Σ TU IDI		4	0	1	2	1	2	2		0	4	4
Bujanovac	Business people	Vranje	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Member of the Yumko Company Supervisory Committee	1	0	1
		Vranje	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	Entrepreneur	1	0	1
	LSG representatives	Bujanovac	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Member of the Municipality Council	0	1	1
		Bujanovac	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	President of the Municipality	0	1	1
	Σ BU IDI		4	0	0	4	0	2	2		2	2	4
Pirotd	Business people	Pirotd	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Packaging Industry	1	0	1
		Pirotd	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	Construction Company	1	0	1
	LSG representatives	Pirotd	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	Member of the City Council	1	0	1
		Pirotd	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	Member of the City Council	1	0	1
	Σ PI IDI		4	0	0	3	1	1	3		4	0	4
Total			18	2	1	15	4	7	13		12	8	20

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

I INTRODUCTION

5 min

- Presenting the moderators and the agency
- Informing the participants about the course of the interview
- Explaining the principles of the interview: free-flowing conversation, there are no right and wrong answers, anonymity is guaranteed, they are free to express their sincere views and opinions...
- Informing the participants about the reasons for recording the interview and the guaranteed anonymity
- Presenting (name, town, age, education, job...)

II WHAT WE ARE LIKE

15 min

The goal is to identify the social character elements relevant to the attitude towards refugees and migrants.

- What would you say, what are WE like, i.e. people living in Serbia (in this part of Serbia)? What are our most important common characteristics? What are our positive traits, and what are our flaws?
- What are our old proven traditional values (spontaneously, and then promptly): to be a good person, to help a person in trouble, to be a good host, to host someone (even give them more than we give ourselves)...? (TRADITION AND TRADITIONALISM)
- How sensitive and sympathetic are we today to the suffering of other nations, since we remember the exoduses, sufferings and exile in the history of our own people? (EMPATHY)
- What do you think, what attitude is dominant in our country, that the weak should be helped and protected (SOLIDARITY, HUMANITY) or that the weak should be despised because of their incapability and laziness? (AUTHORITARIANISM: the strong towards the weak, the powerful towards the powerless)
- What are we like, do ordinary people themselves launch initiatives, join in and solve a problem, or do we expect the state to solve our problems? (STATISM)
- How many people in Serbia are prepared to put up with a different person they do not like? (TOLERANCE) How do we react in such situations? (AGGRESSION)
- In your opinion, can frequent contacts with foreigners damage us or can they help us learn useful things?
- In other words, should we always be cautious and reserved towards other nations, or is openness to the world and the influence of other cultures necessary for the development of each nation?
- What do you think, should we always place more trust in members of our nation or religion than in foreigners and members of another religion? (XENOPHOBIA)
- Would you mind your child or a close relative marrying a refugee from the Middle East?

- Would you mind your child having a friend who is a refugee from the Middle East?
- Would you mind a refugee from the Middle East being your boss at work?
- Would you mind refugees from the Middle East being your neighbours?
- Do you mind refugees from the Middle East living in our country? (DISTANCE)

III WHAT REFUGEES ARE LIKE – PERCEPTION, ATTITUDES, STEREOTYPES

15 min

- What word or words first come to your mind when you think of refugees from the Middle East?
- Who are refugees? What happened to them? What are their goals? How do they live? How do they feel?
- What is your prevailing attitude towards refugees: positive or negative? Why?
- Why could someone have a positive attitude towards refugees?
 - o *What are the **emotions** for a positive attitude towards refugees? What are the **rational arguments** for a positive attitude towards refugees? What **actions** are you willing to take in line with your positive attitude towards refugees?*
- Why could someone have a negative attitude towards refugees?
 - o *What are the **emotions** for a negative attitude towards refugees? What are the **rational arguments** for a negative attitude towards refugees? What **actions** are you willing to take in line with your negative attitude towards refugees?*

	<i>Source of positive attitude</i>	<i>Source of negative attitude</i>
<i>Emotions</i>		
<i>Rational arguments</i>		
<i>Willingness to act</i>		

IV Information exchange and its impact on the perception about refugees

10 min

- How well are you informed about refugees and the refugee wave from the Middle East? What kind of news about this topic is reaching you? What kind of news is reaching you the most?
- What sources of information do you use? Which source is the most informative? Which source do you believe the most?

- What is the news (on this topic) from the world (Europe)? What is the news from the region (neighbouring countries) and from other parts of our country, and what is the local news? What is the impact of the news on your attitude towards refugees from the Middle East?

V Personal experiences with refugees and local stories

10 min

- How often do you see refugees from the Middle East? Where do you see them? On what occasions?
- Can you tell us something about your experiences regarding contacts with refugees from the Middle East?
- How would you describe these experiences with refugees from the Middle East? How do you feel in these situations?
- Can you tell us about some experience with refugees from the Middle East of your relatives, acquaintances, friends, neighbours, fellow citizens?

VI Impact of the crisis on the local circumstances

20 min

- How would you briefly describe the living conditions in your municipality/town? (spontaneously)
- What do you think about the impact of the refugee crisis on the life in your municipality/town? Has the refugee crisis, when it comes to its impact on your municipality/town been: brought to a close/stabilised/has it died down/or escalated?
- What is your attitude towards the existing and/or possible new reception centres for refugees from the Middle East in your local community?
- In your opinion, has the municipal/town administration successfully responded to the challenges related to the arrival of migrants/refugees? *Spontaneously and then promptly:* Have there been any shortages or restrictions (of water, for example)? Problems with waste collection and disposal? Have any roads deteriorated? Have citizens complained about any problems caused by the presence of migrants that the competent services should have solved but they have not?
- In your opinion, do the local government and public utility companies generally have the capacity to deal with the situation of an increased number of people in the town or municipality? *Spontaneously, then promptly:* Do local governments have a sufficient number of qualified staff? Are there other things lacking (resources, capacities)? *If the answer is affirmative:* Which ones? What profiles of professionals?
- What is the impact of the refugee crisis on (promptly for each item below: positive-negative, small-big, how, in what way?):
 1. the local economy and labour market;
 2. security;
 3. public health;
 4. education;
 5. the work and efficiency of the local self-government (administration);

- 6. the demographic trends;
- 7. information sharing and the media;
- 8. the social sphere
- 9. cultural life.

- *(If necessary, after the discussion related to the previous question)* Let us talk about the possible positive impacts in your municipality/town. In what way has the refugee crisis produced some positive effects? [*Spontaneously, then promptly:* Have some of your fellow citizens been hired to work with refugees and migrants? Have there been any cases of improvement (renovation, construction or equipping) of some infrastructural facilities? Some other events that are positive and important for your municipality/town?]

VII Incentives for integration	20 min
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- Do refugees need help? Why? What kind of help?
- How and how much do you personally want to and can help?
- What institution is in the best position to improve the position of refugees from the Middle East in our country? What can the local self-government do?
- What do you think, should the Government provide for refugees from the Middle East to stay in Serbia if they want to? Why? In what way?
- Since the beginning of 2015, slightly more than 1,250 refugees and migrants have applied for asylum in Serbia, and the state organs of the Republic of Serbia have passed positive decisions in 72 cases, thus allowing these people to stay in our country for a longer period of time. What do you think, should the Government or the local self-governments accept the funds from the EU for a kind of permanent settlement of a part of the refugees from the Middle East in Serbia?
- What is your attitude towards a permanent integration of refugees into our society? Why?
- What could be the advantages and disadvantages of this integration?
- If refugees from the Middle East are to be more involved in our society, your life and the life of your families, how could this be done to make you feel good (unthreatened etc.)...?

VIII Campaign suggestions	15 min
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- Would you like to know more about refugees from the Middle East, about their culture, history and lifestyle?
- How important is it to understand that refugees from the Middle East, like all people, differ from one another, that there are some who are good and some who are bad, that we must not make stereotypes about all the refugees from the Middle East?
- What do you think, in order to become a truly modern society, is it necessary to take care of all people equally, regardless of their nation and religion?

- What kind of campaign would encourage citizens to become more open to accepting refugees from the Middle East? What should such a campaign contain?
- If you were in a team that needed to create a campaign for the integration of refugees from the Middle East who want to stay in Serbia, what kind of campaign would you suggest?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

I INTRODUCTION

5 min

- Presenting the moderators and the agency
- Informing the participants about the course of the interview
- Explaining the principles of the interview: free-flowing conversation, there are no right and wrong answers, anonymity is guaranteed, they are free to express their sincere views and opinions...
- Informing the participants about the reasons for recording the interview and the guaranteed anonymity
- Presenting (name, town, age, education, job...)

II Impact of the crisis on the local circumstances

25 min

- How would you briefly describe the living conditions in your municipality/town? (spontaneously)
- What do you think about the impact of the refugee crisis on the life in your municipality/town? Has the refugee crisis, when it comes to its impact on your municipality/town been: brought to a close/stabilised/has it died down/or escalated?
- How is the municipality informed about the development of the situation in the field?
- What is your attitude towards the existing and/or possible new reception centres for refugees from the Middle East in your local community?
- What have the municipal authorities undertaken regarding the influx of refugees?
- How have the municipal authorities reacted when it comes to the impact of the refugee crisis on the life in your municipality/town? What has the local government done well and what has it done badly in terms of managing the situation? Why do you think so?
- Due to the arrival (and reception) of migrants and refugees in your municipality/town have there been any shortages or restrictions (of water, for example)? What kind of shortages or restrictions? Why, in your opinion, have the restrictions and shortages occurred? How could it be prevented? How has it been resolved? Have there been any problems with waste collection and disposal? Have any roads deteriorated? Have citizens complained about any problems in providing some other public services? About any problems caused by the arrival and reception of migrants and refugees? What kind of problems? What, in your opinion, is the reason for that? How could it have been prevented? How has it been solved?
- In your opinion, do the local government and local public companies generally have the capacity to deal with the situation of an increased number of people in the town or municipality? Do these services have a sufficient number of qualified staff necessary for solving problems in such situations?

- In your opinion, how many qualified engineers (with a university degree) are there in your municipality who could do the jobs related to:
 - o water supply (how many?);
 - o the sewage system (how many?);
 - o the local road network (how many?);
 - o the power grid and the electrical installations (how many?).

- What is the impact of the refugee crisis on (promptly for each item below: positive-negative, small-big, how, in what way?):
 1. the local economy and labour market;
 2. security;
 3. public health;
 4. education;
 5. the work and efficiency of the local self-government (administration);
 6. the demographic trends;
 7. information sharing and the media;
 8. the social sphere;
 9. cultural life;

- *(If necessary, after the discussion related to the previous question)* Let us talk about the possible positive impacts on the local economy and, specifically, your business. In what way has the refugee crisis produced some positive effects? *Spontaneously, then promptly:*
 - o Have some of your fellow citizens been hired to work with refugees and migrants? How many people (approximately)? In which sector, profession? How important has that been for the situation in the municipality/town?
 - o Have there been any cases of improvement (construction, renovation or equipping) of some infrastructure facilities? Which ones? What has been done? How important has it been for the situation (improvement of living conditions) in the municipality/town?
 - o Has it affected the situation in some sectors of the economy (trade, transportation, something else)? To what extent?
 - o Have there been any other positive effects on the situation in the municipality/town and/or the living standards of citizens?

- Have migrants and refugees participated in any public works? When, how many people, what exactly was done, and how did it go? How was it accepted by the local population?

- Considering all the advantages and disadvantages of the presence of migrants in your municipality/town, in your opinion, has the local government suffered losses, has it benefited from the situation, or has it remained in the same position?

III Incentives for integration

15 min

- Have the municipal authorities undertaken everything in their power to help refugees?

- What institution is in the best position to improve the position of refugees from the Middle East in your municipality?
- What else can the local government do?
- What do you think, should the Government provide for refugees from the Middle East to stay in Serbia if they want to? Why? In what way?
- Since the beginning of 2015, slightly more than 1,250 refugees and migrants have applied for asylum in Serbia, and the state organs of the Republic of Serbia have passed positive decisions in 72 cases, thus allowing these people to stay in our country for a longer period of time. What do you think, should your local government accept funds from the EU for a kind of permanent settlement of a part of the refugees from the Middle East in Serbia? Why? *Additionally (if necessary): What is your attitude towards a permanent integration of refugees in your local community? Why?*
- Would this (the inflow of EU funds in the case of accepting permanent settlement of a part of the refugees from the Middle East in your municipality) contribute to the development of the municipality and its economy? In what way? [*Promptly: through the improvement (construction, renovation or equipping) of some infrastructure facilities? New jobs? The development of some public services and/or industries? Other?*] Is it realistic to expect such a development of the situation?
- What could be the advantages and disadvantages of the integration of refugees from the Middle East?
- If refugees from the Middle East are to be more involved in your local community, the life of citizens of your municipality, how could this be done without disturbing the domestic population, making them feel threatened or making them feel bad in any way?

IV Campaign suggestions	15 min
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- Has the municipality done anything in order to inform citizens about refugees from the Middle East, their culture, history and the way of life? If not: why? If so, what, in what way? What were the reactions? Do you think such actions have proved useful, what have been the effects?
- How important is it to work on the awareness of fellow citizens that refugees from the Middle East, like all people, are different from one another, that there are some who are good and some who are bad, that it is wrong to make stereotypes about all the refugees from the Middle East?
- What kind of campaign would encourage citizens to become more open to accepting refugees from the Middle East? What should such a campaign contain?
- If you were in a team that should create a campaign for the integration of refugees from the Middle East who want to stay in Serbia, what kind of campaign would you suggest?

APPENDIX 5: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL BUSINESSES

I INTRODUCTION

5 min

- Presenting the moderators and the agency
- Informing the participants about the course of the interview
- Explaining the principles of the interview: free-flowing conversation, there are no right and wrong answers, anonymity is guaranteed, they are free to express their sincere positions and opinions...
- Informing participants about the reasons for recording the interview and the guaranteed anonymity
- Presenting (name, town, age, education, job position...)

II Impact of the crisis on the local circumstances

15 min

- How would you briefly describe the current conditions for running a business in your municipality/town? (spontaneously)
- What do you think about the impact of the refugee crisis on the living conditions and the conditions for running a business in your municipality/town? Has the refugee crisis, when it comes to its impact on your community and business, been: brought to a close/stabilised/has it died down/or escalated?
- What is generally the impact of the refugee crisis on the life in the municipality/town, the local economy and the labour market (promptly: positive-negative, small-big, how does it affect your business?)
- Has your company ever used donations or other resources (for example, volunteering) to support the functioning or concrete activities of some local institutions or organisations? Which ones? What was it about? Was it in any way related to providing support to migrants and refugees? What motivated you to use your business resources to provide the said support?
- Let us talk about the possible positive impacts on the local economy and, specifically, your business. In what way has the refugee crisis produced some positive effects? *Spontaneously, then promptly:*
 - Have some of your fellow citizens been hired to work with refugees and migrants? How many people (approximately)? In which sector, profession? How important has that been for the situation in the municipality/town?
 - Have there been any cases of improvement (construction, renovation or equipping) of some infrastructure facilities? Which ones? What has been done? How important has it been for the situation (improvement of living conditions) in the municipality/town?
 - Has it affected the situation in some sectors of the economy (trade, transportation, something else)? To what extent?
 - Have there been any other positive effects on the local economy and/or the living standards of citizens?

- What is your attitude towards the existing and/or possible new reception centres for refugees from the Middle East in your local community? How does it influence (or how can it influence) the life in the town/the local economy/your business?

III Incentives for integration

15 min

- What do you think, should the Government provide for refugees from the Middle East to stay in Serbia if they want to? Why? In what way?
- Since the beginning of 2015, slightly more than 1,250 refugees and migrants have applied for asylum in Serbia, and the state organs of the Republic of Serbia have passed positive decisions in 72 cases, thus allowing these people to stay in our country for a longer period of time. What do you think, should your local government accept funds from the EU for a kind of permanent settlement of a part of the refugees from the Middle East in Serbia? Why?
- Would this (the inflow of EU funds in the case of accepting permanent settlement of a part of the refugees from the Middle East in your municipality) contribute to the development of the municipality and its economy? Would it affect your business? In what way? Is it realistic to expect such a development of the situation?
- Would you personally be interested in supporting the integration of refugees and migrants in your municipality/town by means of donations or otherwise? Why? *If the first answer is affirmative:* In what way?
- Would you be interested in getting subsidies for recruiting refugees from the Middle East? Why? *If the first answer is affirmative:* What are the job profiles you would be interested in?
- Generally, what could be the advantages and disadvantages of the integration of refugees from the Middle East?
- If refugees from the Middle East are to be more involved in your local community, the life of citizens of your municipality, how could this be done without disturbing the domestic population (and you personally) or making them (you) feel threatened or bad in any way?

IV Campaign suggestions

10 min

- What kind of campaign would encourage citizens to become more open to accepting refugees from the Middle East? What should such a campaign contain?
- If you were in a team that should create a campaign for the integration of refugees from the Middle East who want to stay in Serbia, what kind of campaign would you suggest?
- What kind of campaign would encourage the local business people to become more open to employing refugees from the Middle East? What should such a campaign contain?
- If you were in a team for designing a campaign that should motivate business people to hire refugees from the Middle East, those who want to stay in Serbia, what kind of campaign would you suggest?