

*PORTUGAL*



I GET  
YOU

Promoting best practices to prevent racism  
and xenophobia towards forced migrants  
through community building

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**Drafted by**  
Inês Braizinha  
with JRS Portugal

**Edited by**  
JRS Europe

**Design**  
Malcolm Bonello

**Cover photo**  
Saddam (L), a refugee from Syria, gets his first surfing lesson from Miguel in Nazare, Portugal. (Still taken from the Portuguese *I Get You* video: Denis Bosnic / JRS Europe)



## I GET YOU PORTUGAL

National chapter no.7 of the European *I Get You* report

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# Introduction

In Portugal, as well as across Europe, local citizens have opened their doors to people looking for safety sharing their meals, teaching them a new language or simply being by their side and listen to them as they adjust to living in a new country and society. Through *I Get You*, Jesuit Refugee Service Portugal (JRS Portugal) has witnessed many positive experiences and stories of local Portuguese citizens warmly welcoming forced migrants and refugees into the fabric of their communities. We believe that highlighting these stories of welcoming and acceptance as well as the good work of Community Building Initiatives (CBIs) in Portugal can serve to counter some more hostile reactions to new arrivals to Europe that are becoming more widespread.

From previous work on common projects, JRS Europe along with JRS Portugal and partners in 8 other European countries: Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Romania and Spain, collaborated to develop and implement *I Get You* to promote best practices of small-scale initiatives working to build community between people to counter racism and xenophobia. JRS Portugal was responsible for conducting the research and campaign in Portugal.

Given JRS Portugal's experience working with forced migrants and refugees in Portugal for over 25 years, we were able to build a network with and identify other organisations and initiatives in the country. From them, we have learned more about best practices they utilise for community building between forced migrants and locals and brought

their experiences to the general Portuguese public, to the media and to policymakers through *I Get You*. Learnings from the best practices of 31 CBIs mapped in Portugal and conducting further qualitative interviews with 14 of them, we have created partnerships with the large variety of initiatives that are spread across the country to more effectively work together to better serve the forced migrant population and the local community.

Along with the research of *I Get You*, JRS Portugal launched the awareness raising campaign at national level with the aim to spread positive stories of inclusion and community building that we found through the *I Get You* website and social media. Through the sharing of successful examples of integration – via our website, social media and during a national event – it has been possible to mitigate the tone of racist and xenophobic discourses.

## 1.1 CONTEXT: RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA TOWARDS FORCED MIGRANTS IN PORTUGAL

During the 20th Century, Portugal was mainly a country of emigration; however, this reality has shifted in the recent past with incoming migration flows to Portugal. Especially, between 2000 and 2010 there has been a significant increase in the resident foreign population, with the most notable increase during 2008. In 2016, Portugal welcomed 18,122 foreign born migrants came to the country.<sup>1</sup> Most of the foreign population are originally from Brazil, Cape Verde and Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

1 Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE) - PORDATA. Imigrantes permanentes: total e por nacionalidade. Last updated: 31 October 2017.

<http://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Imigrantes+permanentes+total+e+por+nacionalidade-3256>

2 Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE) - PORDATA. População estrangeira com estatuto legal de residente: total e por algumas nacionalidades. Last updated: 24 July 2017.

<http://www.pordata.pt/Portugal/Popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o+estrangeira+com+estatuto+legal+de+residente+total+e+por+algumas+nacionalidades-24>

According to the 2011 census, 37 percent of migrants living in Portugal are from Portuguese-speaking African countries.<sup>3</sup>

In general, Portuguese society is perceived as being open, tolerant and welcoming to the newcomers. There is also political consensus on matters of migration that is fair and moderate; with only one political party from the extreme right (PNR) that has never elected a member of Parliament, usually collecting about 0.3 percent of votes.<sup>4</sup> The political arguments advocated by this party, which promote racist and xenophobic attitudes, have not led, so far, to any significant electoral achievements.

Based on research data from 2014, Portugal ranked second among thirty-eight developed countries regarding their policies for immigrant integration by the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).<sup>5</sup> Not even the economic crisis from 2011 to 2014, which could have opened the door to hostility towards migrants, minorities and other vulnerable groups as it has in other countries where Troika was necessary, swayed the political and public discourse. Likewise, the so-called refugee crisis did not promote any differing messages in Portugal; in fact, the government and the public committed to welcoming relocated refugees from Italy and Greece, an issue that has been positively covered in the traditional media. Since the relocation scheme began 1,532 refugees have come to Portugal,<sup>6</sup> which is significantly more than the 704 persons they were allocated by the European Commission plan. The low success nationalistic or extreme right ideologies reflects the lack of will of the electorate to sustain them and relevant efforts made from legislative bodies, supported by successive governments and well received advocacy work from migrant organizations, on this issue.

Regarding public mechanisms for preventing racism and xenophobia, in 2015, Portugal adopted its third Strategic Plan for Migration

2015-2020. The plan foresees actions in five main areas: 1) migrant integration policies; 2) policies for the inclusion of new Portuguese citizens; 3) coordination policies on migration flows; 4) reinforcement policies of the migratory legality and the quality of the migration services; 5) policies to promote the encouragement, accompaniment and support of the return of Portuguese emigrants.

### 1.1.1 Public Bodies, Legal and Constitutional Background

In 1999, the Commission for Equality Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) was created under the law n. 134/99, being the public body responsible for monitoring law enforcement's fight against racism and racial discrimination.<sup>7</sup> This commission is under the responsibility of High Commission for Migration (ACM), which is the public institute responsible for the integration of migrants in Portugal reporting to the Minister in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister.

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic, in article 46, prohibits the existence of political parties that defend racist or fascist ideologies. In addition, article 13 reads, "No one shall be privileged, favoured, prejudiced, deprived of any right or exempted from any duty on the basis of ancestry, sex, race, language, place of origin, religion, political or ideological beliefs, education, economic situation, social circumstances or sexual orientation."

In 2007, article 240 of the Criminal Code was amended to broaden crimes of discrimination so that complaints of racial discrimination could be made by anyone against any public authority, service or individual person to the Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination. In February 2017, Council of Ministers approved a bill to combat racial discrimination, which marked the first application of the concept of multidiscrimination and discrimination by association.

<sup>3</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE). Censos 2011.

[http://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=censos2011\\_apresentacao&xpid=CENSOS](http://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpgid=censos2011_apresentacao&xpid=CENSOS)

<sup>4</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). 15th to 17th periodic report of Portugal on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. 2 October 2015.

<https://www.portugal.gov.pt/media/17086872/portugal-15th-to-17th-cerd-report-2015.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). Data for Portugal published in 2015. <http://www.mipex.eu/portugal>

<sup>6</sup> Member States' Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism (As of 10 November 2017).

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state\\_of\\_play\\_-\\_relocation\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Commission for Equality Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR) website here: <http://www.cicdr.pt/>



📷 Luisa teaches Portuguese as part of a language CBI. (Photo via / Get You)

### 1.1.2 Racism in Portugal

Despite its colonial and historically oppressive past, racism in Portugal has not currently been a major theme of public debate. The public debate that exists is mainly on an intellectual level happening mostly through traditional media sources. Here, racism in Portugal is accounted as subtle and largely directed towards the Roma community, especially when it comes to accessing housing and labour market.<sup>8</sup>

However, from 2015 to the present there has been increasing openness to debate on the structural and physical racism towards those of Afro-descent following episodes of police violence towards the community living in the Cova da Moura neighborhood outside of Lisbon. In February 2015, five young people from Cova da Moura were beaten and arbitrarily detained by the police after protesting the arrest and

beating of another young man.<sup>9</sup> While 18 police officers involved in the incident were charged and neighbourhood commissions have been created, there is still a long way to go in Portugal to heal the ongoing wounds caused by the “long standing claims of police brutality and racism.”<sup>10</sup>

Communities, especially those of a migration background, that are directly affected by racism and discrimination report that there is a lack of readily available information for lodging complaints on racist and discriminatory instances. Indeed, in 2013, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, recommended Portugal increase the effectiveness and transparency of lodging discrimination complaints including: to raise awareness about the complaints procedure, to simplify and speed up the procedure after a complaint has been lodged and to publish the outcome of every decision of a lodged complaint.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> European Network Against Racism (ENAR). Responding to Racism in Portugal. [http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/portugal\\_en.pdf](http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/portugal_en.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Diario de Noticias. Violência policial na Cova da Moura: Dois anos depois o bairro ainda espera justiça. 5 February 2017. <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/interior/violencia-policial-na-cova-da-moura-dois-anos-depois-o-bairro-ainda-espera-justica-5648918.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/interior/violencia-policial-na-cova-da-moura-dois-anos-depois-o-bairro-ainda-espera-justica-5648918.html>

<sup>11</sup> European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. ECRI Report on Portugal (forth monitoring cycle). 9 July 2013. <https://www.coe.int/t/dg/hi/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Portugal/PRT-CbC-IV-2013-020-ENG.pdf>



“Nazaré is a village on the Portuguese coast and has always been world famous for its tourism and its people, famous for their hospitality qualities. Nazaré is a safe place, with quality of life and with great people. Maybe, there’s only a need to be careful when it comes to the sea, when there are big waves.

So, the refugees have all the conditions they need to be a very happy family here. Everybody that lives here has a connection with the sea. For “Nazarenos” the sea is synonymous with respect, joy and tranquillity. In my opinion, they can have a great future here. For now, they need more time to feel integrated and to learn the language, because they’ve just arrived to the community. However, when they learn to speak Portuguese, I think they will be fine!

For me, it is very difficult to put myself in the shoes of a refugee. I have no idea what it means to have a war over my head. What I know is that if I give love, I will receive love. If I hurt, I will be hurt. I deal with children and all I want is to put a smile on their faces, whether they are refugees or not. Our future belongs to the children, so I think we should give them love and teach them what it means.”

In 2016, provisional figures suggest 119 complaints of racial discrimination were received and analysed by CICDR,<sup>12</sup> the highest number since the start of the system and a 40 percent increase from the previous year. As in 2015 there were 84 complaints and 60 complaints in 2014.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the complaints are related to discrimination and exploitation in the workforce, mainly towards Brazilians and the Roma Community. Despite the increased number of complaints in 2016, ENAR’s shadow report documented that in Portugal from 2015 to 2016:

“There has been one single judgement on discrimination in access to the labour market based on nationality (although not all court decisions of labour dispute tribunals are published). This suggests that given all the

research and information on discrimination in the workforce and exploitation of migrants, there are some considerable limitations regarding access to justice and data collection.”<sup>14</sup>

JRS had worked in Portugal for over 25 years, largely with forced migrants from Afro-descent and we have witnessed, little concrete improvement on the access to employment, the social inclusion for the migrant population – despite public and political will to open dialogue. This is especially true for the most vulnerable migrants and those that are in an irregular situation. It is also apparent that the cause of the seemingly low number of complaints is related to lack of information and trust in the judicial system.

<sup>12</sup> Diario de Noticias. Queixas por discriminação racial atingiram número máximo em 2016. 1 March 2017.

<https://www.dn.pt/portugal/interior/queixas-por-discriminacao-racial-atingiram-numero-maximo-em-2016-5696432.html>

<sup>13</sup> Observatório das Migrações. Discriminação de Base Racial e Étnica: Entre 2000 e 2015.

<http://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/207737/Queixas+Discrimina%C3%A7%C3%A3o+Racial+CICDR+entre+2000+e+2015.pdf/3fd45296-2b94-455b-b866-c8dcec14fb77>

<sup>14</sup> European Network Against Racism (ENAR). Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-2016. (page 39).

[http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport\\_2015x2016\\_long\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport_2015x2016_long_low_res.pdf)

# Methodology

For the research, JRS Portugal gathered the quantitative data that enabled the selection of a diverse number of CBIs to conduct interviews within the qualitative phase. The CBIs were objectively selected and reflected the wide range of activities and geographic spread of the quantitative data set.

## 2.1 MAPPING PHASE

For identifying and mapping CBIs, JRS Portugal counted on the participation of its team, taking into account their experience and relationship with different networks which work directly with forced migrants in Portugal. We also collaborated with Plataforma De Apoio Aos Refugiados (PAR), a nationwide platform to coordinate local actions for the reception of refugees, established in September 2015 in Portugal. In addition, information about the project was disseminated through Facebook, the JRS website and electronic newsletter in order to get spontaneous nominations from the public. JRS Portugal then contacted 110 local organizations to complete the online questionnaire. These contacts were made mainly by email and by telephone, on average each organization was contacted three times. In the end, 31 of these CBIs completed the questionnaire. Gathering basic demographic information and general characteristics about the CBI, the results of the quantitative phase were published in JRS Portugal's Mapping Report and are available on the *I Get You* website.

## 2.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND EVALUATION

The next phase of *I Get You*, aimed to have a deeper analysis on each CBI identified during the mapping phase based on the 10 criteria defined through Delphi Methodology. JRS Portugal contacted all the initiatives identified during the mapping phase, to have a wide sample to work from. In the end, after contacts via telephone and email, we conducted 14 qualitative interviews with

initiatives that responded. Using an evaluation grid based on the weight of each defined criteria, two members of JRS Portugal's team analysed the interview responses to establish the CBIs that utilised best practices in working with forced migrants and local communities.

## 2.3 LIMITATIONS

One of the biggest challenges faced during the mapping phase was getting CBIs to commit to filling out the online questionnaire from start to finish. We attempted to mitigate this challenge by continually contacting the initiatives, some of them were contacted more than ten times. It seems that the length of the questionnaire itself was the main obstacle CBIs identified as to why they did not answer it completely or avoided to answer some fields.

During the qualitative interviews phase for some cases, we were not able to conduct the three separate interviews as intended for the data triangulation. In almost all cases, interviews with a staff member were conducted. In most cases, we visited the initiatives but when this was not possible, interviews were made via skype or telephone.

# Data Findings

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## 3.1 SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS FROM MAPPING PHASE

Here is a summary of the results of the data for the 31 CBIs that were mapped in Portugal.

- The majority of the 31 initiatives identified (61 percent), have a local coverage, with 23 percent having national coverage 16 percent regional.
- 41.9 percent of initiatives have grassroots funding, while 38.7 percent have public funding with the remaining 19.4 percent relying on private funding.
- In total, all CBIs in Portugal served about 9,444 forced migrants.
- A slight majority (54.8 percent) of forced migrant beneficiaries are refugees, followed by irregular migrants (48.4 percent), asylum seekers (29 percent) and non-returnable migrants (25.8 percent).
- A significant percentage of CBI beneficiaries originally come from Portuguese-speaking African Countries (25.7 percent) and from Eritrea (25.8 percent). The remaining countries of origin are Syria (22.6 percent), Iraq (9.7 percent) and Pakistan (9.7 percent) followed by Cameroon, Ethiopia, India, Ivory Coast, Ukraine, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and Mali, which each represent less than 3 percent of the countries of origin of the beneficiaries.
- The main services provided by CBIs are skills training (38.8 percent), intercultural activities (16.1 percent), emergency support (12.9 percent), help with finding accommodation

(12.9 percent), Portuguese language courses (12.9 percent), housing provision (3.2 percent) and legal support (3.2 percent). It is important to mention that the majority of these initiatives provide more than one service simultaneously.

## 3.2 RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

The 14 CBIs identified are unique, yet they share characteristics such as being relatively newly created and are in contact with one another through previously established networks by either JRS Portugal or PAR.<sup>15</sup> What we can conclude, looking at the overall findings, is that these initiatives provide different services, attending to the needs of the population they serve and attending to their own core values and mission.

### *Interaction and Encounter*

CBIs in Portugal promoted interaction and encounter mainly by providing forced migrants the means to answer their own needs, engage them in a range of activities with local Portuguese citizens and foster bonds of friendship rather than dependence.

CBIs that empowered migrants to recognise their own needs and give them the tools they needed to solve pressing questions in their lives in order to be more autonomous saw that people's fears of getting involved in the local community were diminished. Originally, CBIs saw that forced migrants did not know their neighbours or did not regularly get involved with other parts of society. By creating initial social links between forced migrants and members of the local community, CBIs helped people to overcome these initial fears and get to know one another.

<sup>15</sup> For information on long standing migration organisations in Portugal working on integration, please consult the website of the High Commission for Migration ([www.acm.gov.pt](http://www.acm.gov.pt)) or the European website on integration (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/>).

Some CBIs reported that encounter between host community and forced migrants is eased by involving them in indifferent celebrations, such as festivities, group dinners and Christmas parties. Other examples, of the way CBIs created links between people in positive, low-threshold ways, include the creation of football teams, mentorship meetings with the CBI's location as the meeting point, and support groups among parents whose children attend school together.

### Participation

CBIs identified that increasing the participation of forced migrants and locals in their activities, hinged on the level of encounter that people had with each other – how comfortable they were around one another and the level to which they could communicate by sharing the same language. We see here that CBIs in Portugal are primarily built upon relationships and people become more involved and participate actively in them when these relationships and new friendships are given space within the CBI to grow.

Forced migrants also identified that for them, it was important to feel that they had an active role in the CBI, and if they did, this factor would increase their level of participation. The CBIs themselves also recognised the importance of perceiving forced migrants as protagonists in their own lives as a factor that would be essential and broadly lead to their participation in the wider society. CBIs mentioned that they take into consideration the interests and needs of forced migrants in the planning of the activities and are always ready to listen to concerns or claims as they arise. When forced migrants can be involved as volunteers to help others – such as in the CBI SPEAK where forced migrants help others to learn Portuguese and exchange knowledge – participation in the CBI is strengthened because of this increased level of involvement and responsibility.

In addition, an interesting factor regarding the CBIs in Portugal is that not all of them focus solely on serving forced migrants or refugees, especially those CBIs that are members of the PAR network. By incorporating forced migrants and refugees into the regularly ongoing activities and services that they provided for the general population and other vulnerable sub-groups these CBIs, such as Confraria da Nazaré when it invited refugees to become involved at their Day Centre for senior citizens, increased the scope of the CBIs reach and demonstrate an inclusive approach

to encouraging participation among diverse groups of society. Likewise, the CBI Aguinense, highlighted the importance of involving young members of the community to participate in activities to promote positive reactions among them through the intervention of other young people acting as cultural mediators.

Most CBIs point to the involvement of the school community as a key element for participation, by including students, parents' associations, mothers' commissions and alumni into some activities. These networks tend to mobilise community resources when it comes to furnishing houses or fundraising within the community to be better able to receive newly relocated families.

### Awareness Raising

Most CBIs do not focus on communications very much or have a clear strategy regarding awareness raising, preferring to not invest in such field of expertise. Most of them use, without any strategy, social media, newsletters, flyers, posters and their website as media to publish some information or content about their activities. However, in most cases, this is not frequent or aimed at any specific stakeholder. However, a few CBIs give importance to awareness raising and develop initiatives and messaging aimed at a specific public. A common good practice amongst these CBIs is that the forced migrants are put at the centre of the stories shared, giving a human side to the CBIs communications and raising awareness strategies. They are aware that behind every number or person served is a human being with a unique story and life. An example is SPEAK, Soraia who is both a volunteer and beneficiary of the CBI, describes how it works: "At SPEAK we try to work as much as we can with partners. If we can establish some partnerships in the community, if we raise awareness to the migration issues and look to migrants with different eyes, if we are their friends, we can't see them as a threat."

CBIs who do not have their own raising awareness activities admit they depend on High Commission for Migration, a government institution, to develop some of them, especially when it comes to educational initiatives in public schools, aiming to approach some issues related to migration. However, in most cases raising awareness actions are perceived as the direct lobby made into local public services, such as social security or finances department. Most of CBIs develop a face-to-face awareness work in parishes, health centres and

finances' department as a way to tackle some direct problems related with integration process of their beneficiaries.

Other CBIs promote conferences as a medium to raise awareness to some issues related to migration and organize meetings between locals and forced migrants so they can know each other and can deconstruct myths and fears. Different media used for this purpose are, for example, cultural visits to the theatre, events organised with schools and speeches at the masse.

### Education

A common aspect we found between these initiatives is the existence of positive correlations between the welcoming processes and the engagement of local school communities because society has recognised the crucial roles that schools play in the integration process for all members of a newly arrived family and community. Nearly all CBIs that engage school communities in their projects report positive feedback based on this experience. One of the criteria for being member of the PAR network is related to the guarantee of registration of children in school, which began to automatically involve schools as an integral part of the welcoming process of relocated families of refugees.

A member of Externato das Escravas do Sagrado Coração de Jesus, a religious congregation in Porto, recounted the experience of building community between newcomers and locals: "In the beginning there was a big conflict of opinion between people, they were afraid of the impact this could bring. We worked this, especially with the students, which was very important to help them understand the obligation each human being have to help each other." By inviting each school class to visit their project 'Casa PAR' Escravas was able to help the community overcome these initial conflicts and fears through cultivating understanding and exposure to the children and parents.

After initially involving school communities, many CBIs also developed educational and awareness raising programmes directed to local Portuguese students and parents. From the São Cirilo Centre, forced migrants themselves go to schools to speak about their experience directly to the students, showing their country on the map, explaining their context, sharing their personal story and their difficulties.

### Support and Service Provision

Most of the CBIs provide basic services to the forced migrants. Some of them provide more than one service at the same time. On overall, these services include legal support, Portuguese language classes, skills training, Job training, accompaniment to public services, recreational activities, housing support, health care and food support. Employment and job search assistance for beneficiaries is a primary concern of service provision for CBIs because many see it as an urgent need for comprehensive integration to occur.

CBIs work best when they tailor an intervention plan for working with a forced migrant to that individual person in order to leverage personal capacities. Here there is also a great need to accompany people to public services because bureaucratic issues are complicated to deal with alone.

Forced migrants reported that learning Portuguese language with local people and developing their skills in CBIs helped them to become more autonomous in accessing public services and obtaining support. Some initiatives also observed as a negative aspect the lack of language courses provided by the public authorities, which leads some of them to develop their own courses of language training, sometimes with scarce means and dependent on volunteers.

### Interculturalism

Most CBIs do not have specific projects focusing on intercultural activities, but in general, they all assume there should be space and time for forced migrants to share their culture with local community, especially in order to celebrate things like music and food. CBIs also mention that they invite forced migrants to typical Portuguese celebrations and Christmas parties. Some organize specific events where forced migrants can share their culture and know more about Portugal. Confraria da Nazaré, allows refugees to cook their own meals at the Day Centre cafeteria along with Portuguese cooks so they can share their meals every day at lunch.

Also, most CBIs report they organize group visits to mosques, which at times are great distances away from the community, and they raise awareness in the community around being considerate of others' prayer time and

religious festivities. A good example of this was in Fafe as one beneficiary of the Câmara Municipal described, “The municipality of Fafe showed interest in knowing how the Ramadan is celebrated, namely by getting information from the Islamic community. We went to the mosque in Braga – far from Fafe – for celebrating our baby’s name. We named her after Dalila, one of the municipality technicians that welcomed the family. I got a job in a local supermarket and my boss got me a small room where I can pray four times a day.”

One CBI, Aguiñenso, has a mentoring project that pairs a local with a forced migrant with the aim to give direct support and insights about Portuguese culture, this project an initiative of the High Commission for Migration. Another example, SPEAK, promotes cultural exchange through the organization of specific activities. Renovar a Mouraria has a project where migrants work as tourist guides in Lisbon to educate visitors on the history and current context of the neighbourhood where they live – this is an interesting example of how newcomers have learned about Portuguese culture and are also active members in its sharing and future formation.

In a project run by Caritas in Guarda, Isabel, a member of the CBI recounted that many local people are open to intercultural exchange when given the opportunity: “Sometimes, people ask me ‘Do we have all of these people in Guarda?’ When we promote activities, Portuguese people make questions, they are curious about who people are, where they came from, and their culture.”

### Dignity

Dignity is seen by CBIs, beneficiaries and volunteers as a pivotal criterion when it comes to describe their practices. However, most of them assume there is no specific plan besides their own principles, values and mission. CBIs see this criterion as treating forced migrants with respect and equality, cherishing their own wills and opinions, and listening to them, especially in those cases where CBIs serve both nationals and migrants.

In Fafe, for example, after listening to the concerns of the new community members, the local library

placed a computer with free access to the internet and skype so forced migrants could be able to contact their relatives – having a connection to family and their former life upheld their ability to more fully live their lives in Portugal.

Maher<sup>16</sup>, a refugee from Syria who is a member of the CBI Salesianos says, “If I had to choose between Portugal and other country I would chose Portugal because I feel very happy and welcomed by this organization. They let us live with dignity. We kept our dignity and they don’t ask for anything in return.”

### Hospitality

Hospitality is part of the DNA of all CBIs, as it is also an integral part of Portuguese culture and mentality. As such, the welcoming of forced migrants and refugees into the fabric of society was strongly felt during the interviews with both beneficiaries and local volunteers interviewed. For example, a refugee mother from Syria living in Nazare told us, “Thank God we are very happy and feeling comfortable near to such people... with this weather and with this people we should forget what we went through. Thank God, I forgot everything and my life is here. My children and I, our life is here, and our future is here. I am trying my best for my children can integrate in school and to be happy with their friends.”

We also came across examples of diverse group of local people, who were perceived by CBIs as not typically being the ones involved in offering hospitality to newcomers, who came together to organizing welcome kits, offer transportation cards, donate furniture and clothes, and offer hairdressing services. At times, these people were replicating the work of CBIs and complimenting the services offered by authorities and at others they were responding to the needs of people that were not being filled. CBIs reported these actions demonstrated positive contributions of local society motivated by kindness and altruism.

Dalia, a member of the CBI Câmara Municipal of Fafe noticed this sense of hospitality in her community, she said, “The neighbours ask if everything is ok, they care, they ask them what they need. When the baby was born, everyone went to their house to offer them clothes and the

16 Name changed.

neighbour takes care of the baby sometimes, when Mariam goes shopping.”

### Sustainability

CBIs have struggled with a lack of funding, or difficulties in maintaining some activities that require more resources as they are very dependent on public and European funding and have a certain degree of uncertainty about the continuity of their future actions. In PAR, for example, host communities are part of structures that already exist and therefore depend on their own funds for some expenses, even though they receive European funding for each relocated refugee.

A good example that we found regarding this issue was how Guimarães Acolhe created a committee with several institutions, public and private, to develop a fundraising strategy to ensure employment offers, housing support and other services. In addition, in the São Cirilo Centre and SPEAK activities are already self-sustaining through the saving and reusing on materials, donations and the sale of some small goods that are produced, but they collect symbolic payments for the activities to increase the commitment of their participants and to build a reserve fund if one day required.

All CBIs emphasised the role and importance of volunteers for performing some of their activities and their reliance on the commitment and quality of the volunteers they work with to continue.

### Innovation

Some CBIs, with beneficiaries who are not only forced migrants or refugees, reported that points that their innovative strategies involved creating channels for working with a new population, having to adapt the ‘new’ actions and activities to the ‘old’ ones.

In addition, most of CBIs see the creation of new partnerships and the establishment of new networks as innovative, mainly in different or diverse geographic regions. Working together with different organizations, private or public, was also mentioned as innovative by some CBIs. Other positive aspects specified are related to the role of private companies, for example to develop some partnerships with local organisations to develop employment projects for newcomers.

Initiatives like ‘MyGrandTour’ promoted by Renovar a Mouraria have a high level of innovation since it places the forced migrant as the one who is primarily responsible for the activities of the CBI. CBIs also see the application of monitoring and evaluation tools to deal with new intervention approaches, such as those used by Fundação Salesianos, as positive in increasing their innovation because it enables them to effectively adapt their activities to changing contexts.

### 3.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

Despite the diversity of activities carried out by CBIs in Portugal, the commonalities that *I Get You* has found as transversal to all are the values of hospitality and dignity. In addition, it seems that low-threshold activities, relationship building and utilising people’s knowledge and experience to build networks to help others is the main work of CBIs in Portugal.

On the other hand, a lot of them mentioned that obstacles to integration of forced migrants have to do with the difficulties they face when trying to access public services, namely in the health, social security and language classes. Nevertheless, Portuguese CBIs show their resilience and their capacity for mobilization and networking to expedite some procedures, as well as their ability to give a more personalized accompaniment to the forced migrants when it comes to solve bureaucratic issues.

Some CBIs developed creative and innovative ways, as part of a network or with direct partnerships, to solve immediate problems encountered by the beneficiaries they work with. This is particularly notable in initiatives created to assist refugees recently arrived to Portugal as a result of the relocation scheme. Here, civil society contributed positively, mobilised by the desire to provide welcome and provide for people’s basic needs.

In addition, the engagement of school communities by CBIs enabled a positive effect on both the community and forced migrants’ participation and inclusion in local society. Another positive contributor to inclusion and participation was empowering forced migrants, through CBIs activities, and giving them the autonomy to move freely in the community. Other positive aspects are related to the role of private companies to develop some partnerships in employment

projects. However, this is not a trend among the overall of the initiatives or a widespread practice, despite acknowledgement from CBIs that helping beneficiaries to access the labour market is one of their primary activities and challenges.

Some initiatives observed the lack of language courses provided by the public authorities as a negative aspect and barrier for forced migrants'

inclusion. As a result, some have developed their own courses, sometimes with scarce means and dependent on volunteers. Initiatives also face financial challenges and difficulties maintaining activities with many or complex resources, being very dependent on public funding and living with a certain degree of uncertainty about the continuity of some of their actions in the future.

📷 Helena, Mariam and Alexandra as part of the CBI Fundacao Salesianos which supports refugees with hosting and education. (Photo via I Get You)



ALEXANDRA



STAFF MEMBER, FUNDAÇÃO SALESIANOS

"This intervention is born of the long work that the Fundação Salesianos has been developing for several years, especially with young people and families with minors. We decided to join PAR, and in March 2016 we hosted a Syrian couple with three children of three, six and eight years old. We immediately sought to find the tools to work with them, because this was a new population for us. We had to do a lot of research to find the best way to deal with cultural differences and we had to have a lot of creativity mainly because we didn't speak the same language and the translator was not there 24 hours a day.

The children stayed in one of the schools of the Fundação, we were able to arrange Portuguese language teachers who went to the house that we have prepared for them and we worked to create protocols with several entities of the county. We looked at this project and prepared it as if we were to do this forever. This is the spirit of Salesianos.

We try to work for the quality of life of these families and create, from the beginning, a relationship of trust with them. This is building up over time and we, step by step, have succeeded. Now our concern is with the child who is about to be born. She will be called Sarah, which means 'the one who brings hope.' Is this anything to do with it? I guess so!"

# Inspiring Community Building Initiatives

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All CBIs / *Get You* interviewed are unique in their activities and work. The initiatives below are those who received high evaluations against the established Delphi criteria.

## **SPEAK**

SPEAK is a linguistic and cultural program built to bring people closer together and is built on crowdsourcing research. Here language and culture exchange between migrants and locals breaks barriers, promotes multilingualism and equality and democratizes language learning. SPEAK is open to people of all backgrounds and anyone can apply to learn or teach any language or culture course. Besides classes, there are social events aimed at creating a bond between participants and where there is room for dialogue, celebration and friendship.

The courses in SPEAK are diverse and inspiring because of the high levels of energy and passion the participants bring. Throughout the learning process, participants get to know other people, learn and explore common interests, break prejudices, misunderstandings and even promote comprehension and cooperation.

## **RENOVAR A MOURARIA**

The Associação Renovar a Mouraria was created in 2008 by a group of residents with the aim to revitalise the historical neighbourhood of Mouraria, which is home to people of more than 50 nationalities, located in the centre of Lisbon. This is a non-profit private organisation with public utility status. Teaching Portuguese as a foreign language for migrants, literacy education, study support for children and youngsters, legal support services, traditional Chinese medicine or the solidarity hairdresser are its leading community development projects.

The Associação Renovar a Mouraria promotes a wide array of activities with the major goal

to strengthen the social inclusion of various communities by fostering cultural interaction and mutual support. It undertakes its activities mainly at the Communitarian House in Mouraria, a former derelict building which was thoroughly revitalised, demonstrating the importance of space as the lynchpin for a CBI with a diverse range of activities. Centro Comunitário São Cirilo

The São Cirilo Centre is an insertion community created by the Jesuits in Porto that welcomes and (re)enables foreign and national people and families to overcome vulnerable situations in their life. For example, it gives holistic support and accompaniment to people who have been evicted from their homes, people formerly living on the streets and wanting to find work, and people of a migration background who have lost their jobs and may not have family support. While temporary, the centre provides the opportunity for people to have a sense of security and stability for a time in order to work on other goals in their lives.

São Cirilo gives the opportunity of locals, members of religious communities and the forced migrants that are there to get together, promote shared activities and engaging them on the life of the centre. The centre cherishes the participation of the forced migrants there and actively includes them as main leaders of some activities, such as raising awareness at local schools or leading cultural groups.

## **CONFRARIA NOSSA SENHORA DA NAZARÉ (PAR)**

A member of the larger Plataforma De Apoio Aos Refugiados (PAR) network, a growing platform in Portugal which brings together all stakeholders working to help refugees, the Confraternity of Our Lady of Nazare welcomes relocated refugees in their town. This CBI operates a social centre that acts as a host organisation for the refugees that helps to arrange housing, support in enrolling the children in school, provides legal information,

assistance registering for training courses and provides supplemental food for the family during their early days of adapting to life in Portugal.

The refugee families have been warmly welcomed by the locals of Nazare into the fabric of the community, where neighbours get to know the refugee families through simple, daily interactions and surf instructors help children to become accustomed to the waves that have made their town famous around the world. This CBI demonstrates the importance of working within a larger national network to provide a highly structured reception and service provision to newly arrived forced migrants as well as shows the strong, genuine value of hospitality that has emerged from local citizens willing to welcome people seeking safety in Portugal.

### **GUIMARÃES ACOLHE (CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE GUIMARÃES)**

This is a recent initiative promoted by Guimarães Municipality with the aim to welcome relocated refugees that arrived in Portugal at the end of 2015.

This is an initiative of Guimarães Municipality in partnership with Conselho Português para os Refugiados and a group of organizations in the city that are members of the Social Network of Guimarães.

This CBI strongly embodies elements of partnership and sustainability to coordinate varied actions to bring together different entities already present in the region. This has positively impacted the support offered to forced migrants because it is broader and more cooperative. The CBI engaged several organisms in the municipality in order to promote collaboration on different levels, such as education, service provision, fundraising and cultural activities aimed at the forced migrants.

📷 Group photo from a special training for migrant women as part of the project GeriCuidar which gives participants skills in caring for the elderly. (JRS Portugal)



# Policy Recommendations

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## Recommendations for the Portuguese Government

- **Promote and invest in local, small scale initiatives.** Our research shows that many citizens' initiatives rely on local networks and personal contacts to organise activities and to overcome obstacles, such as bureaucratic procedures. It is therefore important to invest in local initiatives so that they can further strengthen local partnerships and networks.
- **Identify and evaluate good practices among citizens' initiative and make sure they are replicated throughout the country.** Developing a 'Good Practices' manual and making it available at several public services (education, health, social security, employment and training offices) could be helpful to harmonize local practices and offer solutions to similar challenges in the provision of the same services in different places.
- **Strengthen and increase the offer of Portuguese language courses provided by public authorities, in particular by adjusting it to the geographical distribution of forced migrants and by involving municipalities in developing and providing such courses.** Our research shows that current offer of language training is not sufficient, mainly because it is concentrated in big cities and is therefore unable to fulfil the needs of forced migrants living in smaller municipalities or rural areas. This does not fit with the logic of the PAR (Platform for Support to Refugees), that is based on a decentralized distribution of relocated refugees throughout the national territory. The government, through the Institute for Employment and Vocational training (IEFP), should take this into consideration and make sure language courses are provided across the country in cooperation with municipalities.
- **Invest in information campaigns for those communities that will welcome or are**

**already welcoming forced migrants.** Our experience shows that the local populations react in a more positive way to the arrival of forced migrants among them and is more ready to engage directly with them once they understand who these people are and why they are fleeing. Government administrations, in particular the Portuguese High Commissioner for Migration, should develop and invest in broader raising awareness campaigns addressing the general public on migration and asylum issues. This should include public press conferences for example in the occasion of the arrival of a new group of relocated asylum seekers or resettled refugees.

- **Ensure access to public funding for citizens' initiatives by simplifying administrative procedures. For initiatives hosting relocated asylum seekers or resettled refugees ensuring availability of funding as soon as the people arrive is also crucial.** Our research shows that most initiatives have identified difficulties in having access to public funding. In particular organisations hosting relocated asylum seekers or resettled refugees, under a specific protocol with a State agency, experienced particular challenges due to the length of the procedure related to the actual transfer of funds. These organisations are often not in the position to finance their activities in advance, therefore it is crucial for the Government to make the funds immediately available for them as soon as the forced migrants arrive.
- **Involve the private sector to find creative ideas on how to facilitate access to the labour market for forced migrants.** Employers and enterprises are the best placed to provide such trainings as they know what skills they need. At the same time, such cooperation helps to raise awareness and understanding among employers about the situation of forced migrants and can positively contribute to the fight against discrimination in the labour market.

### Recommendations for Municipalities

- **Promote and facilitate the creation of local partnerships and networks to share good practices and foster exchange among initiatives, so that initiatives can capitalise on each other's experiences.**
- **Involve school communities in the integration process of forced migrants.** Most of the initiatives mapped by *I Get You* mentioned to the involvement of school communities in welcoming forced migrants as a good practice, especially in the case of families, as locals and migrants can better relate to and understand each other. School communities can also play an important role in raising awareness about the situation of forced

migrants in the broader community. The involvement of school communities can be facilitated by promoting partnerships with local organizations that accompany the migrants.

- **Develop, promote and invest in trainings for volunteers who are active in welcoming forced migrants.** Most of the initiatives mapped by *I Get You* rely on the help of volunteers. Our research shows that these volunteers often did not receive training when they start working for their initiative. Adequate training is crucial to ensure quality in the services provided and to foster volunteer's motivation in the long term. Municipalities should look into ways to cooperate with citizens' initiatives to organise training programs, in particular on legal issues and psychological and mental health issues.

FILOMENA



MEMBER, RENOVAR A MOURARIA

"I am a native of Angola, but my nationality has always been Portuguese. I always felt Portugal as my homeland. But as I grew up and lived for many years in Brazil, having returned to Portugal, I ended up feeling a migrant in my own land.

Since I worked as a secretary at a university in Brazil, when I came to Portugal, I initially sought work in the administrative area, but I felt some prejudice because of my accent. I became aware of the Migrantour project, and I started the training as an Intercultural Guide in Mouraria. During training we were taught the history of Mouraria, its multiculturalism and the role of guides. The objective is to make Mouraria known to visitors under the eyes of a migrant. I get to know 'my' Mouraria and throughout the visits I tell the historical facts of the neighborhood, I talk about the communities that live there and about my experience as a migrant woman with a Brazilian accent.

Mouraria is the most multicultural neighbourhood in Lisbon. By showing it to those who visit us, we have shown that it has always been a place that welcomes migrants. When entering Mouraria you feel you are arriving in another country. The smells, the flavours, the colours, the food, the mosques, the languages and the clothes of its people carry us to countries like Bangladesh.

When Portuguese people think of Mouraria they associate it to negative practices, but when they enter their opinion changes. Here, communities live peacefully. In Largo São Domingos, where the visits begin, there is a mural where it is written in 33 different languages: 'Lisbon, city of tolerance.' What fascinates me in Mouraria is the fact that we break stereotypes, promote respect for each other, we value cultural differences. The fact that it makes me feel that I am part of this multiculturalism and that, after all, being a migrant is very good."



Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and others who are forcibly displaced.

[Jrseurope.org](http://Jrseurope.org)

[Igetyou-jrs.org](http://Igetyou-jrs.org)