



# Monthly data collection on the current migration situation in the EU

## July 2016 monthly report

1–30 June 2016

### Contents

Highlights: 1-30 June 2016	2
Thematic focus: Impact of the asylum crisis on local communities	6
Main findings.....	9
Information provision .....	10
Accommodation.....	12
Education .....	14
Impact on local budget and finances.....	16
Social responses to the asylum crisis .....	17

**Note the full monthly July 2016 report is available on the FRA website at:**

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/asylum-migration-borders/overviews/july-2016>

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## Highlights: 1-30 June 2016

### New arrivals

As in May, some 20,000 people arrive in Italy; many dead are recovered from the sea. Around 80 asylum seekers arrive through a church-financed humanitarian corridor.

Arrivals in Hungary do not decrease despite fences and restrictive admission to the transit zones.

### Criminal proceedings

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) that supported migrants and asylum seekers when they arrived in Italy at the end of 2014 is charged with facilitating irregular stay.

According to the law in Hungary, volunteers helping refugees can be considered as facilitators of irregular stay and sentenced to several years of imprisonment.

In Sweden, the police considers the drivers of cars transporting individual asylum seekers across the border as facilitators of irregular entry, and registers between four and five such cases every week.

Criminal proceedings for irregular border crossing drop in Hungary, while all those tried (some 100 people) receive expulsion orders.

### Initial registration and processing

Greece starts a large-scale operation to pre-register asylum seekers on the mainland having entered Greece prior to 20 March 2016. People seeking asylum in the country, requesting family reunification or applying for relocation are issued a card that legalises their stay and provides access to basic services.

Along the Hungarian-Serbian border, hundreds of people, including many vulnerable persons, continue to wait up to weeks in inhumane conditions to enter the transit zones – without shelter, sanitary facilities, healthcare or protection from the heat, while only 15 to 30 people are admitted each day.

In Hungary, there are reports of an increase in push-back incidents and abuse by the police and military against people trying to enter Hungary irregularly.

Some 70 Afghan asylum seekers, including 27 children, are sent back from Bulgaria to Greece as they attempt to cross the green border.

Asylum procedures in Germany may be insufficiently quality controlled. Very few asylum decisions are controlled randomly. Inaccuracies occur in the transcriptions of asylum hearings.

In Hungary, many asylum cases are closed as the applicants have left the country. Information and legal aid are insufficiently available to asylum seekers or not provided at all.

Asylum applications in Italy have doubled in the first half of 2016, compared with 2015.

## Reception conditions

Reception facilities on the Greek islands are overcrowded and lack sanitation facilities. In Samos, some people have to stay in tents, and clashes regularly break out among inhabitants.

Reception conditions in Italy generally remain very poor while reception staff have been implicated in financial mismanagement.

Several facilities in Germany provide insufficient privacy; some have implemented concepts for violence prevention, protecting women and children in particular. The demand for protected accommodation remains strong as a result of the high number of vulnerable persons.

Asylum seekers held in detention in Hungary, including many women and children, are faced with very poor and deteriorating conditions, including dirty mattresses, limited food, no access to legal advice and excessive charges for phone calls.

Interpreters for healthcare services are insufficiently available in Austria.

Medical staff deciding on access to doctors or hospitals are not always present at reception centres in North Rhine-Westphalia. On the other hand, reception facilities are reported as having improved their healthcare by providing access to a clinic or the presence of health mediators.

There are reports of cost-intensive medical treatment for asylum seekers being increasingly rejected in Germany, as well as seriously ill people being expelled from the country without access to essential treatment.

## Child protection

Children make up 40 % of the people waiting to enter the transit zone in Hungary in inhumane conditions. In many cases, they are treated as adults upon entry in the transit zone and prior to a medical age assessment.

Children are hosted together with adults in some facilities in Italy (Calabria and Sicily) and have no access to basic services. In Brindisi, Italy, unaccompanied children are accommodated in tents outside the centre without any support due to overcrowding.

Unaccompanied children arriving in Bulgaria are increasingly young, including four to nine year old children. Problems with appointing guardians and providing specialised accommodation persist.

The municipality of Mantamados, Greece, restricts unaccompanied children from eating in local restaurants and swimming in the sea.

Some 100,000 children, including approximately 9,000 unaccompanied children, applied for asylum in Germany during the first half of 2016.

The capacity for accommodating unaccompanied children in Greece (621 beds) is insufficient.

Incidents of violence by staff and abusive forms of reprimands are reported from child accommodation facilities in Sweden (intimidation) and Lesbos, Greece (violence, degrading treatment).

Material conditions in child accommodation facilities are inadequate in Sweden. The mental health of unaccompanied children is an increasing concern.

Children born in initial reception facilities and refugee shelters in Berlin, Munich and Stuttgart, Germany, do not, in some cases, receive birth certificates and can thus not be formally assigned to their parents. They are also unable to access healthcare, including vaccination programmes. At facilities in Bamberg and Manching, Germany, children receive insufficient food, healthcare and education.

## Legal, social and policy responses

A new law in Hungary allows for returning irregular migrants – if apprehended within eight kilometres from the border – to the Serbian side, where they have to wait again for admission to the transit zone.

New legislation in Sweden temporarily restricts the possibility for family reunification and obtaining a residence permit.

In Austria, the region of Upper Austria reduces the benefits granted to refugees to less than the minimum benefits for Austrian nationals, which is below the poverty threshold. Proposals to restrict or withdraw basic care for asylum seekers are also being discussed in the region of Styria (Austria).

A new law in Germany allows pre-emptive undercover infiltration of migrant smuggling networks in order to improve information exchange to combat international terrorism.

The Court of Cassation in Italy confirms the right to health as a sufficient reason to suspend removal.

Oral court hearings on alleged push-backs at the Austrian-Slovenian border establish problematic aspects regarding procedures (extremely short interviews, incorrect translation by lay interpreters).

Greece changes the composition of the three-member Appeals Committees by replacing two lawyers proposed by the National Committee for Human Rights with two judges from the Administrative Court, and abolishes the appellant's right to request an oral procedure before the Committees. The Appeals Committees examine appeals on inadmissibility decisions and return to Turkey.

Police trade unions in Italy support the proposal of 'floating hotspots', which continues to be criticised for a lack of fundamental rights safeguards.

Italy plans to open three new hotspots, in Messina (Sicily), Mineo (Sicily) and Crotona (Calabria). In Messina, the mayor publicly objected to the opening of the hotspot.

Hungary announces it will open a new transit zone in Ásotthalom, with the capacity of receiving up to 15 people a day.

Sweden decides to extend internal border controls until 11 November 2016.

Charges against Bulgarian police are dropped in the case of the Afghan asylum seeker who was shot after crossing the Bulgarian-Turkish border. According to the prosecution, the officer had performed his functions and the death was due to unforeseen circumstances.

Austria accelerates procedures for recognising qualifications obtained abroad.

Public discourse and opinion towards migration is reported to be deteriorating in Austria.

Several large-scale demonstrations against racism take place in cities in Germany ahead of World Refugee Day.

Civil society associations protest against the mayor of Carcare (Liguria), Italy, who refuses to accept people from African countries at local reception centres unless they provide a formal healthcare certificate attesting their good health condition.

## Hate speech

Hate crime incidents affecting asylum seekers and refugees in Austria and Germany continue. A newly built refugee home in Upper Austria is burnt down.

Activists and citizens in Bulgaria protest against the Prosecutor's refusal to open pre-trial proceedings against the Prime Minister after he expressed his thanks to vigilante groups that illegally detain asylum seekers at the border, known as 'refugee hunters'. The Prosecutor found that the statement could not have a negative effect on a large part of the population, did not intend to incite hostility, hatred or unfair treatment, and only expressed a personal opinion.

## Thematic focus: Impact of the asylum crisis on local communities

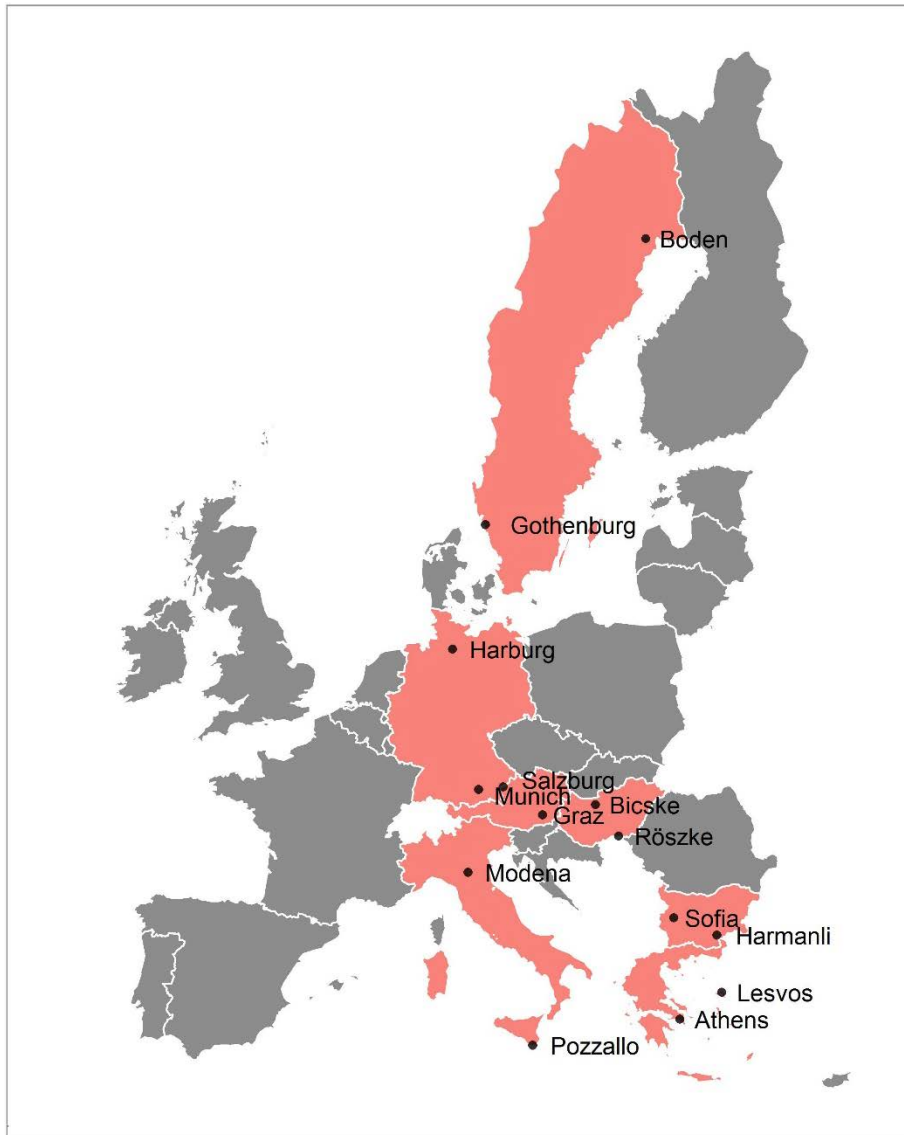
**Local communities are most directly affected by the major inflows of asylum seekers. The initial reception and the long term integration of asylum seekers and refugees needs to be organised in close cooperation with local communities to ensure that the needs of different groups – with respect to both asylum seekers and members of the local community – are taken into account. These include the need for proper accommodation, education, information provision and organisation, alongside the need for adequate finances and recognition of the impact of the crisis on local economies and social responses, which can be both positive and negative. With the notable exception of the importance of organising appropriate housing for asylum seekers and refugees, the way local governments and the local population are affected by the asylum crisis differs across European countries. Herein, there is no general guidance on how local governments or communities can or should react to the challenges faced by large scale immigration. This thematic focus section examines these different responses across the Member States, and highlights promising as well as worrying developments concerning the impact of the asylum crisis on local communities.**

This thematic focus section examines the impact of the asylum crisis on local communities in seven European Union (EU) Member States, including Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Sweden. For each of the Member States two localities were selected and examples provided with respect to issues related to the impact of the crisis on the local communities. The localities and cities covered in the report were selected due to the extent to which the localities were affected by new arrivals of asylum seekers. They present a variety of different examples in terms of geographic position, population size, asylum inflows and the challenges faced when coping with asylum inflows.

This thematic focus section gathered information in five areas:

- 1. Information provision and organisation**
- 2. Accommodation**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Impact on local budget/finances**
- 5. Social responses to the asylum crisis**

Figure 1: EU Member States and localities selected



*Note: "Harburg" refers to the district of Harburg.*

*Source: FRA, 2016<sup>1</sup>*

Despite the increased awareness and efforts being made to involve local levels of governance in assisting and integrating migrants<sup>2</sup>, there is no general guidance or strategy for municipalities to tackle the challenges related to the recent

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<sup>1</sup> The map was prepared based on shapefiles made available through Eurostat, © EuroGeographics for the administrative boundaries (available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/gisco/geodata/reference-data/administrative-units-statistical-units>).

<sup>2</sup> See for example the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities Programme: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/home> (accessed on 6 July 2016), the coalition of cities against racism launched by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO): <http://www.eccar.info/welcome-eccar> (accessed on 6 July 2016) and the Eurocities network's statement on asylum in cities, available at: [http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROCITIES%20stmt\\_asylum\\_May%202015.pdf](http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROCITIES%20stmt_asylum_May%202015.pdf) (accessed on 7 July 2016).

asylum inflows. This might also stem from the variety of situations that local communities in Europe find themselves in when dealing with the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

A recent example of a response in this regard concerns Greece:

The Central Union of Greek Municipalities (KEDKE) has recently published proposals for the involvement and role of municipalities when dealing with the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees – also with reference to compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The proposals state that the refugee and migration flows are systemic issues that require long-term EU responses based on a common strategy addressing

- border protection;
- first reception; and
- integration.

Municipalities play an important role to ensure that social investment and measures taken cover sufficiently the needs of both refugees and local populations to retain community cohesion and a welcoming social environment. It is therefore essential to develop empowering actions – including peer learning and review, as well as exchange of best practices across governance levels in close cooperation with civil society. In their proposal, the Central Union of Greek Municipalities highlights that:

- municipalities must participate in the structures and procedures for the management and integration of refugee populations as an essential precondition for building trust between central and regional/local government and administrations;
- refugee distribution in the country must be based on objective commonly agreed criteria taking into account (a) the current administrative capacity in terms of know-how, as well as human and financial resources; (b) the available infrastructure;
- cooperation with NGOs is essential, but municipal services can also provide significant support to housing, education and vocational training and employment opportunities;
- municipalities do not have the financial resources to address the needs of the current refugee/migration populations; the residents of municipalities cannot be expected, especially in the context of the current economic crisis, to undertake the cost of reception and integration through local taxation; therefore, the participation of municipalities in the decision taking procedures for the allocation of EU and national funds is essential; in parallel, municipal authorities should participate in the planning and in the implementation of relevant actions.<sup>3</sup>

These challenges and potential ways forward reflect the situation in Greece as one of the main entry countries for asylum seekers. This report provides an

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<sup>3</sup> ΚΕΔΚΕ (2016): ΜΕΛΕΤΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΚΕΔΕ ΓΙΑ ΤΟ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥΤΙΚΟ ΠΡΟΒΛΗΜΑ ΚΑΙ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΟΣ ΣΧΕΔΙΑΣΜΟΣ ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΧΡΗΜΑΤΟΔΟΤΗΣΗ ΔΡΑΣΕΩΝ, available at [http://www.ita.org.gr/el/images/meletes\\_ita/parousiasi\\_meletis-ITA\\_2-1.pdf](http://www.ita.org.gr/el/images/meletes_ita/parousiasi_meletis-ITA_2-1.pdf), (accessed on 6 July 2016).



overview from different localities across Europe, which differ significantly from location to location – in terms of the number of asylum seekers and the level of local response and resources.

Moreover, the EUROCITIES network has made a statement highlighting the importance of involvement at the local level, including cities, when dealing with asylum seekers and integration of refugees in order to respect the fundamental rights and realise the benefits immigration can bring in full. The network highlights measures to facilitate the integration at local level, including measures to ensure fundamental rights in the area of housing, subsistence and healthcare, the importance of sharing responsibilities and solidarity across Europe, and the necessity to fund services provided at the local level.<sup>4</sup>

**The locations covered in this thematic report are indicated on the map (Figure 1). The findings cannot be considered as representative of the situation in the Member States covered; they rather give an indication of the nature of some of the challenges faced.**

## Main findings

While the situation of different local communities with respect to the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees differs considerably and no general statement about the impact of the asylum crisis at the local level can be made, some challenges related to the inflow of asylum seekers are shared by most local areas.

- **Information provision** about actions taken by government is of central importance to reduce negative reactions in the local population. Despite not always being responsible for the measures taken (e.g. setting up reception centres) or information provision, local government can – in cooperation with civil society – organise the provision of information to the local population in a transparent way. For example, public information events, the availability of hotlines, frequently updated websites and distribution of information material can counteract negative responses in the local population to the influx of new arrivals.
- One of the main challenges faced by all local communities affected by asylum inflows includes the need for providing appropriate **accommodation** for asylum seekers and refugees. The unprecedented number of arrivals of asylum applicants in many local communities throughout Europe required immediate action and a high level of organisation between different levels. In the southern parts of Europe, the localities are struggling with organising the reception of asylum seekers and are confronted with problems in providing basic infrastructure, such as electricity and water. In the main destination countries, such as Sweden, Germany and Austria, the organisation differs to the extent to which it is

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<sup>4</sup> EUROCITIES (2015): EUROCITIES statement on asylum in cities. May 2015, available at [http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROCITIES%20stmt\\_asylum\\_May%202015.pdf](http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/EUROCITIES%20stmt_asylum_May%202015.pdf) (accessed on 7 July 2016).

possible to organise privately or publicly arranged housing for refugees and asylum seekers, and its possible negative impact of segregation. The aim is to avoid having areas with almost exclusively asylum seekers and refugees, for example to avoid school classes where all or most of the pupils are not fluent in the teaching language.

- In the destination countries, the quick organisation of **education** is important and creates some difficulties due to limited capacities. Efforts are made to try to keep the waiting periods to be enrolled in schools for children as short as possible (e.g. around two weeks in Salzburg (Austria), around four to five months in Boden, (Sweden). The availability of language training and integration classes is challenging for many localities with the resources available, for example in the district of Harburg (Germany) refugees have to wait between three and nine months to be admitted to an integration class. Municipalities in Sweden try to avoid segregation in schools to the extent possible.
- Local budgets are affected by inflows of asylum seekers and refugees, even though the main costs are often covered by or shared with higher levels of governance. There are positive and negative cases of **local businesses** being affected by asylum inflows or the transit of asylum seekers through an area. Tourism has suffered a great deal in the Greek islands, but not in northern municipalities of European countries covered in the report. Several localities realise that there is a potential of newcomers for the local economy, where even immediate positive effects are reported.
- The **local population** reacts differently to the asylum crisis. Very positive reactions, particularly shown through a very high level of volunteering, go hand in hand with negative reactions including protests and attacks against refugees. The municipalities are concerned with negative reactions, which seems to hamper their willingness to cooperate with civil society in some instances. Protests by the local population also sometimes succeed in preventing the construction of housing for asylum seekers. The rise of negative attitudes needs to be counteracted in order to avoid potential human rights breaches. Even though the very high levels of volunteer engagement have gone down in the past months, it is important to highlight that there is an ongoing high level of engagement and initiatives that support the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

## Information provision

In general, cooperation between municipalities and other stakeholders, including civil society and national/regional governments, works well. In some instances civil society is struggling with the cooperation with local governments due to the governments' fears regarding the reactions of the local population to certain actions taken.

According to the reports from the local communities covered in this overview, there is the need for increased efforts in the area of information provision to the local population already living in the areas impacted by the new arrivals; for example, awareness raising campaigns. Many of the municipalities do not actively inform the local population about the numbers, structure and situation of

refugees coming into the areas, with almost no information campaigns reported and only limited numbers of information via press releases, initiatives of NGOs or information provision via websites. Some notable exceptions are reported from Germany and Sweden.

In Germany, efforts were increased to inform the general public about planned accommodation centres. This includes holding public information events in order to counteract increased protests against refugee accommodation, reflecting also a more transparent approach of the local administration. Every time a new facility for refugee accommodation was set up, the district of Harburg (Germany) invited the local population to public information events, where people were informed about all details and people could raise questions.<sup>5</sup> In Munich (Germany), about 35 public information events for neighbours and new homes for asylum seekers took place since 2015.<sup>6</sup> Information about accommodation of refugees and information events can be found at the website of the city, where there are also contact details (address, phone and email) for any questions related to the topic of refugees.<sup>7</sup>

The City of Gothenburg (Sweden) also invites the local population to information meetings whenever a decision to establish new accommodation is made. This is in addition to keeping their website<sup>8</sup> up to date and having representatives of the city being present at other events and seminars organised by the civil society and the City of Gothenburg.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Booklet for local population 'Dare to face your prejudices' in Sweden**

The Swedish municipality of Boden published a booklet titled 'Dare to face your prejudices' (*Våga möta dina fördomar*) that it continuously distributes to its population. In the publication, the city describes the situation for asylum-seekers, the importance of integration and the need of immigration to Boden in order for the city to maintain economic growth. According to the integration coordinator, the booklet has been very well received by the citizens of Boden.<sup>10</sup>

"Dare to face your prejudices" (*Våga möta dina fördomar*) available at:

[www.formsmedjan.se/upload/files/integrationa6\\_20sid.pdf](http://www.formsmedjan.se/upload/files/integrationa6_20sid.pdf)

Through on-going conversations with the local branch of the Swedish Federation of Business owners (*Företagarna*), the municipality of Boden (Sweden) encourages local businesses to set up internships for refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>11</sup> The NGO Save the Children North points out that even more could be

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<sup>5</sup> District administration Harburg, Coordination Migration and Participation.

<sup>6</sup> District administration Munich.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.muenchen.de/rathaus/Stadtverwaltung/Sozialreferat/Fluechtlinge/Unterkuenfte.html> (accessed on 6 July 2016).

<sup>8</sup> [www.goteborg.se](http://www.goteborg.se) (accessed on 6 July 2016).

<sup>9</sup> City of Gothenburg.

<sup>10</sup> Integration coordinator, Boden.

<sup>11</sup> Integration coordinator, Boden.

done in order to inform citizens of Boden (Sweden) about the positive effect of immigration for the region and setting up internships.<sup>12</sup>

One challenge faced by municipalities is that more detailed information about the numbers and background of refugees coming is not available in advance and therefore only general information about the migration and refugee situation in the country can be provided at information events.

## Accommodation

The types, capacities and organisation of accommodation varies greatly across countries and within countries across different local communities. Local communities are affected depending on the extent to which the organisation of accommodation lies with the municipalities/cities and the numbers of applications in relation to the capacities of the locality and the composition of asylum seekers (e.g. share of children, vulnerable persons). The following examples show that while accommodation is the challenge in most countries, the issues are somewhat different.

In Greece, as reported from Lesvos and Athens, the sheer number of asylum seekers creates difficulties in providing appropriate housing, where even challenges with the provision of electricity and water arise.<sup>13</sup>

The town of Rösztke (Hungary) is not affected by accommodation needs because asylum seekers are not allowed to leave the 'transit zone', and if the decision on the asylum application takes longer than 28 days people are brought to open centres somewhere else in Hungary.<sup>14</sup> In Bicske (Hungary), there is an open refugee camp with a capacity of 350 people, whereas no one is accommodated in private houses, hotels or flats in the city.<sup>15</sup>

In Germany, Austria and Sweden there are additional options for more de-centralised organisation of accommodation and higher numbers of asylum seekers and refugees living in private accommodation.

In Austria, a relaxation of the housing situation is observed, where after an initial struggle to provide the quantity of accommodation needed, the authorities can now focus better on the improved quality of accommodation as reported for the cities of Graz and Salzburg.<sup>16</sup> In the Bundesland of Styria, where Graz is the capital, there are three types of housing available, including private housing, organised accommodation (run by difference organisations) and special accommodation (e.g. for sick people or unaccompanied children). The majority of people are staying in organised accommodation at around 85 percent. Private

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<sup>12</sup> Save the Children North.

<sup>13</sup> Municipality of Lesvos and municipality of Athens.

<sup>14</sup> Office of the City Mayor of Rösztke.

<sup>15</sup> Office for the City Mayor of Bicske.

<sup>16</sup> Caritas Styria and Plattform Menschenrechte Salzburg.

housing is usually not available for recent arrivals as it takes some time to organise. There is the general strategy to aim for small housing units that are well distributed in the region.<sup>17</sup>

In Germany, it is the Federal States (*Bundesländer*) which are responsible for the accommodation and care of asylum seekers. The States usually operate the initial reception centres for asylum seekers (*Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen*) and the local communities are responsible for the accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees at a later stage. Local communities receive newly arrived asylum seekers and those who are distributed from other States or communities. In the district of Harburg (Germany), there is hardly any accommodation on the private rental market that is suitable and affordable with the available funds per person. Thus the district of Harburg rented and renovated for example former nursing homes, hotels and other large suitable buildings and, predominantly, constructed several container camps for about 58 persons, with some for up to 180 persons (usually residential units with three double rooms, some triple rooms, one bathroom and one kitchen). At the same time the community has to provide refugee counselling services close to the accommodation.<sup>18</sup>

Munich (Germany) has established more than 11,000 places for asylum seekers from 2015 until April 2016, and 10,000 more are being planned. Altogether there are 45 accommodation sites at the moment (not including homes for unaccompanied children and homeless persons and also not including the initial reception centres of some 3,000 places which are run by the State of Bavaria).<sup>19</sup> According to the district administration in Munich (Germany), more houses must be built for permanent accommodation. A task force was set up with several institutions such as the Social Department, the government of Upper-Bavaria, the Construction Department, the Department of Education and Sport and other committees to coordinate planning and build houses by state and private investors.<sup>20</sup> To cope with the challenge, the city set up modular and minimal projects and reduced certain standards in terms of accessibility, and waived regularities for housing construction, e.g. a reduced key for parking lots per house.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, in Sweden there are also differences in the country in terms of the proportion of private and public accommodation. On 1 June 2016 the municipality of Boden (Sweden) had 1670 asylum applicants placed in asylum accommodation centres (1500) or private housing arrangements (66). In addition 104 unaccompanied children are placed in special housing, so-called residential care accommodation centres for young people (*HVB-hem*) or family

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<sup>17</sup> Caritas Styria.

<sup>18</sup> District administration Harburg, Coordination Migration and Participation.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.muenchen.de/rathaus/Stadtverwaltung/Sozialreferat/Fluechtlinge/Unterkuenfte.html>, (accessed on 6 July 2016).

<sup>20</sup> District administration Munich.

<sup>21</sup> District administration Munich.

homes (*familjehem*).<sup>22</sup> The city of Gothenburg had 5,883 asylum applicants placed in asylum accommodation centres (164) and private housing arrangements (4,145). In addition, 1,574 unaccompanied children are placed in special housing called residential care accommodation centres for young people (*HVB-hem*) or family homes (*familjehem*).<sup>23</sup> The high proportion of asylum applicants living in private housing arrangements (as compared to Boden (Sweden) can partly be explained by the fact that family and friends of the asylum applicants already lived in the city and take them into their homes.

The need to appropriately accommodate unaccompanied children creates a challenge in several municipalities. For example, according to the NGO 'Borderline Sicilia' the regulation for hosting unaccompanied children in special reception centres for no more than 60 days can currently not be fulfilled in Pozzallo (Italy).

There is also the challenge to appropriately accommodate children and provide for their special needs. For example the NGO 'Save the Children North' (*Rädda barnen*) points out that the current housing situation for children in asylum accommodation centres is a major challenge in the municipality of Boden (SE). Problems include the lack of opportunities to play for children and the location of the accommodation centre in the vicinity of military facilities, which could be problematic for traumatised children and adults.<sup>24</sup> Providing access to schools for children as soon as possible after arrival presents a challenge as well, as discussed in the next section.

## Education

The numbers of asylum seekers or refugees in schools differ across the localities included in this report, with often no data available. Comparably low numbers of asylum seekers and refugees enrolled in local schools are reported from areas that are often not deemed to be final destinations for the refugees, where the families plan to move to another Member State.

In Athens (Greece) there is currently a pilot project ongoing where six schools remain open over summer for refugees, and there is the establishment of a programme for afternoon classes in the new school year.<sup>25</sup> At the hotspot in Pozzallo (Italy) no children are enrolled in schools<sup>26</sup> and there are only very few children in Modena (Italy), who go to school regularly.

The number of children in schools are also low in the selected areas in Hungary (around 30-40 children in the school in Bicske (Hungary), which are put in a

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<sup>22</sup> Swedish Migration Agency.

<sup>23</sup> Swedish Migration Agency.

<sup>24</sup> Save the Children North.

<sup>25</sup> Municipality of Athens.

<sup>26</sup> NGO 'Borderline Sicilia'.

separate class)<sup>27</sup> and in Bulgaria, with 50 to 60 children in Sofia and none in Harmanli. In the latter case, it is mentioned that asylum seekers usually plan to leave the city and therefore do not want their children to go to school.<sup>28</sup>

The main receiving countries of Austria, Germany and Sweden are particularly concerned with schooling of refugee children. In response, in Germany, there are several hundred places for students to learn German in different programmes within regular schools.<sup>29</sup> In both areas covered in Germany (district of Harburg and city of Munich), the availability of special classes and programmes for support of immigrant students for learning German has been extended.<sup>30</sup>

In Germany the provision of language and integration classes – for adults –<sup>31</sup> is difficult in more rural areas, but the district of Harburg (Germany) and Munich (Germany) are also struggling to provide places for such courses on time. In Munich (Germany) there are currently about 1,000 places for “BAMF German classes” and some 400 places for professional qualification and vocational language classes.

For primary education in Austria, the cities are responsible. There is a school introduction phase (*Schuleingangsphase*) offered in cooperation with the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, where pupils receive a special course, including language training, where they are accompanied by social workers and teaching staff for a period of eight weeks.<sup>32</sup> The organisation Caritas supports parents in finding a place in a school, which is usually successfully done within two weeks, and pupils are usually put into the classes right away during the school year. It is reported that while the reception of new pupils was a challenge in the beginning for schools, there is now more experience and routine.<sup>33</sup>

In Sweden asylum seeking children should be enrolled in schools within one month, but in reality the waiting period can be up to 4 or 5 months in the municipality of Boden (Sweden), where there are currently about 300 new pupils in primary and secondary schools. Challenges include to find the space needed for additional pupils and to recruit new teachers with required diplomas (*legitimerande lärare*). The goal is to place asylum seeking children in different schools in order to improve integration.<sup>34</sup> This is difficult in Gothenburg (Sweden), where segregation is increased due to the fact that asylum seekers arrange their own accommodation often with relatives and friends, who live in

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<sup>27</sup> Office for the City Mayor of Bicske.

<sup>28</sup> Municipality of Harmanli.

<sup>29</sup> District administration Munich.

<sup>30</sup> District administration Harburg, Coordination Migration and Participation, District administration Munich.

<sup>31</sup> *Erstorientungskurse für Geflüchtete* and *Integrationskurse* organised by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF).

<sup>32</sup> Mayor's office Graz.

<sup>33</sup> Caritas Styria.

<sup>34</sup> Integration coordinator, Boden.

rather segregated parts of the city with most pupils not having Swedish as their first language. Moreover, many asylum seekers aged 14 to 17 have poor educational backgrounds, which requires extra staff to be recruited for support.<sup>35</sup> There was the agreement among city districts that asylum seeking children from one of the most segregated districts are brought by busses to schools in another city district with significantly less asylum seekers at school.<sup>36</sup>

## Impact on local budget and finances

The impact of the asylum crisis has very negatively affected the financial situation in Lesvos due to the collapse of tourism (with an 80 percent reduction in bookings in June 2016 compared to June 2015) and the need to finance the provision of electricity, water and works to the reception facilities.<sup>37</sup> Transit areas, such as Harmanli (Bulgaria), Rösztke (Hungary), and Bicske (Hungary) do not report exceeding costs for local budgets. However, the city of Graz faced some considerable costs related to transit facilities and costs for interpretation services.<sup>38</sup>

With the significant increase in the number of asylum seekers, the German state governments and communal associations like German Association of Cities (*Deutscher Städtetag*) or German Association of Towns and Municipalities (*Deutscher Städte- und Gemeindebund*) called for relief for local budgets and a reimbursement of the expenses for the reception of asylum seekers by the federal government. From 2010 to 2013, the expenses under the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*) of around EUR 1.5 billion have almost doubled.<sup>39</sup> The delays in the processing of applications for asylum by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge* BAMF) lead to long residence times and other costs in respect to housing and care. Although the municipalities get reimbursements for the reception of asylum seekers by the State, usually the full costs are not reimbursed.<sup>40</sup>

There is no clear negative or positive impact on local business reported in the areas covered in Bulgaria, Hungary or Austria. The Chamber of Commerce, regional office Styria (Austria), mentions that the situation is no big issue for local businesses at this stage and during the major inflows positive and negative

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<sup>35</sup> Processmanager, New Arrivals, central administration, city of Gothenburg.

<sup>36</sup> Business developer public sector education, city district Angered, city of Gothenburg.

<sup>37</sup> Municipality of Lesvos and Chamber of Commerce Lesvos.

<sup>38</sup> Mayor's office Graz. Annette Zepp-Glinoga (2015), Kommunale Flüchtlingspolitik aus der Sicht des Bundes, <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/207698/meinung-kommunale-fluechtlingspolitik-aus-der-sicht-des-bundes>, accessed on 4 July 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Annette Zepp-Glinoga (2015), Kommunale Flüchtlingspolitik aus der Sicht des Bundes, <https://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/207698/meinung-kommunale-fluechtlingspolitik-aus-der-sicht-des-bundes>.



examples can be found. At the moment there is no fact based evidence to give a qualified opinion on the economic impact in general or for the business sector. Border controls were a problem for Styrian businesses for a short time period last year when controls were stricter at the Austrian-Slovenian border. Trucks had longer waiting times than had not been calculated for.<sup>41</sup> At the Salzburg-German border, cargo companies had to calculate an additional two or more hours in both directions. Just-in-time delivery could not always be fulfilled, which caused financial loss for cargo companies. Particularly the last point is still an issue, even though border controls at the Bavarian side decreased. From a logistics point of view, stronger border controls (to Germany, to Italy and to Slovenia) can cause important difficulties particularly with sealed containers.<sup>42</sup>

Asylum seekers and refugees are also seen as a potential and actual labour force, but unclear residence status and language issues create some difficulties for businesses to employ asylum seekers.

A very positive example regarding the impact of refugee inflows on the local economy is the municipality of Boden (Sweden). According to the Norrbotten Chamber of Commerce (where Boden (Sweden) is located), immigration is essential for the economic growth of the region. Due to new job openings and no negative effect on tourism, the municipality of Boden (Sweden) experienced immediate positive effects on the local economy. The chamber stresses the importance of internships for asylum seekers to learn the language and culture, and sees the potential of opening new markets/businesses due to immigrants coming from the Middle East.<sup>43</sup>

The West Chamber of Commerce (operating in Gothenburg (Sweden)) believes that immigration will have a positive effect on the Swedish economy in the long-term because most immigrants are competent workers. However, bureaucratic procedures for issuing residence permits and recognition of qualifications attained abroad cause a delay in finding employment for refugees.<sup>44</sup>

## Social responses to the asylum crisis

In Bulgaria, there was a lot of support for asylum seekers among Bulgarian communities, but also a few demonstrations against reception centres. Reactions in both directions are reduced due to lower inflows of asylum seekers. The local population living close to the hotspots in Lesvos (Greece) and Pozzallo (Italy) are reportedly indifferent towards asylum seekers, but general complaints about the situation are increasing in Lesvos.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Chamber of Commerce, regional office Styria.

<sup>42</sup> Chamber of Commerce, regional office Salzburg.

<sup>43</sup> Norrbotten Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>44</sup> West Sweden Chamber of Commerce and Business Region in Gothenburg.

<sup>45</sup> Municipality of Lesvos and NGO 'Borderline Sicilia'.

Based on information from the UNHCR for the hotspots in Greece, it may be the case that local authorities rejected the provision of classrooms during the holidays for educational purposes and asked UNHCR to close certain camps due to the fear that this might impact on the already existing resistance in the population and rising negative attitudes.<sup>46</sup> Also in the hotspots, the work of Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is getting more difficult due to increased negative feelings from some local communities and lack of co-operation with some local authorities.<sup>47</sup>

A changing atmosphere was observed in Rösztke (Hungary), where after initial support from the local community in 2015, the community became less tolerant with increasing pressure and less people willing to help.<sup>48</sup> In Bicske (Hungary), the majority of people seem to have negative attitudes towards refugees and ask frequently to close the refugee camp, while no initiatives to foster social inclusion or communication between migrants and local communities or campaigns on the positive impact are reported.<sup>49</sup>

## Hostility

Most localities report positive attitudes; however, there are certain levels of hostility reported as well, which also leads to cases of hate crime. Many demonstrations against places of accommodation of asylum seekers and refugees are reported, together with cases of arson attacks in Germany and Austria.

While there were no demonstrations against (or for) refugees in the district of Harburg (Germany) in the past six months, there were at least two demonstrations in Munich (Germany) and even arson attacks against refugee accommodation. According to the website 'Mut gegen rechte Gewalt' (*courage against right-wing violence*)<sup>50</sup> the number of arson attacks against homes for refugees in Germany amounts to 90, with five in Bavaria, in 2016.

In the Swedish municipality of Boden, there is an overall positive response and no demonstration or major incidents against refugees; however, the ongoing need to inform the population is acknowledged. Negative attitudes might have increased and need to be counteracted through awareness raising.<sup>51</sup> Positive and negative responses are reported in Gothenburg, which mainly focused on the construction of new accommodation for refugees, while it was not possible to say if there was an increase or decrease in hate crimes or harassment in the past months.<sup>52</sup>

There is also the danger of increased hostility *between* certain immigrant and minority groups. For example in the hotspots, it is often not understood why

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<sup>46</sup> UNHCR field team.

<sup>47</sup> MSF field visit.

<sup>48</sup> Office for the City Mayor of Rösztke.

<sup>49</sup> Office for the City Mayor of Rösztke and office for the City Mayor of Bicske.

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/service/chronik-vorfaelle>, accessed on 6 July 2016.

<sup>51</sup> Integration coordinator, Boden.

<sup>52</sup> Integration Coordinator, Boden.

certain nationalities are treated differently in the asylum procedures, which is a basis for hostility and riots.

### **Actions of support**

The reports also highlight the positive reactions to the inflows of asylum seekers among the local population, which is mainly indicated by high levels of volunteers. Although the high numbers of volunteers during the major inflows were not maintained in the long term, the level of volunteer support has stabilised in most areas at a high level with continuing regular support. For example in the district of Harburg (Germany) there are around 1,600 volunteers providing support.<sup>53</sup>

At the local level several initiatives have been set up in order to support the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. These initiatives come from the municipalities, civil society or independent groups of volunteers. Since the initiatives and actions of support are often organised at the district level it is difficult to provide an overview.

Initiatives often provide support in language learning, support in homework for pupils or even general information about the country such as the initiative Welcome2Sweden by the Red Cross Gothenburg.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> District administration Harburg, Coordination Migration and Participation, contact details for initiatives in the area can be found here: <https://www.landkreis-harburg.de/buergerservice/dienstleistungen/hilfe-fuer-fluechtlinge-oertliche-initiativen-901001628-0.html?myMedium=1>, accessed on 7 July 2016.

<sup>54</sup> <http://kommun.redcross.se/goteborg/vart-arbete/welcome2sweden/>, accessed on 7 July 2016.