

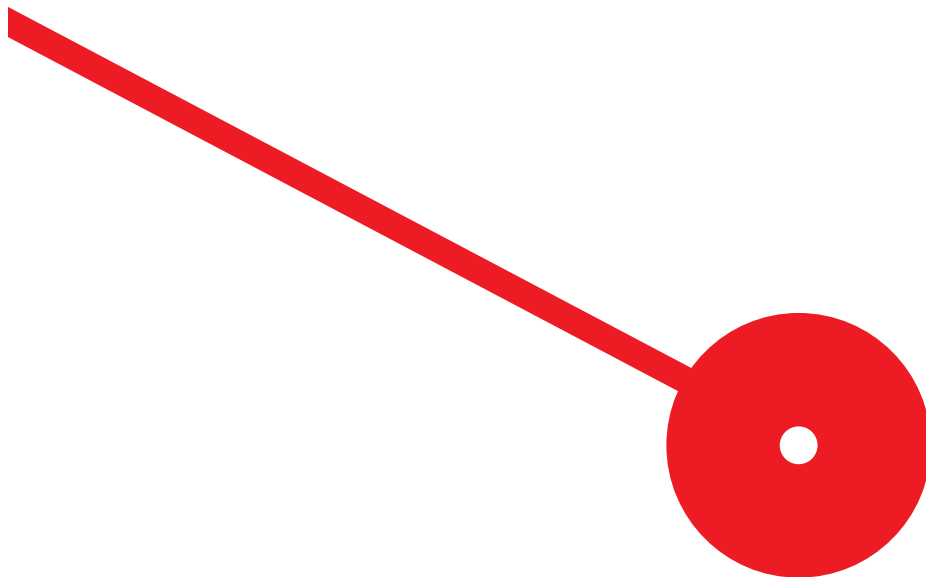


From Displacement to Belonging: Sport as an Agent of Refugee Integration

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Final version. *This version contains the jury's input and suggestions.*

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Preface

All the topics related to the integration of refugees in their new social environments have become a major issue in contemporary societies. Within this scope, the search for suitable solutions and adequate inclusion policies and models is a moral and ethical obligation.

It can be stated that governments have been facing increasingly difficult challenges in the last few years, thus sharing the responsibilities in this particular field with other national and international social organizations. Considering these premisses, the academic world in general, and universities, in particular, have to provide a sound and active contribution to this dramatic reality, trying to find the best strategies and actions to deal with the forced displacement of people around the world.

This being said, it is absolutely crucial to start by congratulating my former student Natacha Machado for her decision regarding the main theme of her academic dissertation. Her choice is a natural reflection of her personality, which embodies a perfect combination between human and academic qualities, an identity trace that has defined her path as a student. This undisputed reality also implied that I felt deeply honoured when Natacha invited me to write the preface to this dissertation.

The reading process was indeed a memorable one. The thoroughness and high level of detail of this research are the main driving forces of the project, which was able to address the most important aspects that can be associated to the topic: the social, political, economic and public health challenges of migration flows, the increasing number of conflicts and war environments, the different stages that identify the migration process, the physical and psychological implications of such events, multicultural and intercultural contexts, integration policies and many other crucial elements that are part of this process.

After the diagnosis, which highlighted a series of uncertainties and critical problems that must be addressed immediately, the author presents a solution that stands as the perfect tool to develop social integration: the practice of sports. In fact, the core values that are part of sports' activities may work as a key integration factor and as a reliable inclusion approach, thus playing a decisive role along this complex and troubled journey.

For all the reasons previously stated, the importance and emergency of this dissertation is a major input, not only for the studies in this field, but also for public and private institutions whose main purpose is to improve the social integration of migrants. The author, Natacha Machado, should be complimented for her courage when she decided to cover this topic, and for the superlative quality of her research. After finishing this extremely pleasant reading, I strongly believe that *sport can make a difference*.

Jorge Lopes

Acknowledgements

I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to the individuals who have been a source of unwavering support and encouragement throughout my academic journey.

First and foremost, my deepest gratitude goes to my parents, Ana Isabel and Sérgio. Your love, patience, and belief in me have been the cornerstone of my academic pursuits. Your unwavering support and understanding, even during the most challenging moments, has made this achievement possible. To my dear brother, Rodrigo, your presence and positivity have always been a true source of motivation for me. Thank you for your constant encouragement and understanding when I needed it most. I also wish to acknowledge my beloved grandparents and great-grandmother: António, Maria Alzira, Manuel, Maria Erminda, and Maria de Lurdes. Your wisdom and unwavering faith in my abilities have been a guiding light during this academic endeavour.

A heartfelt thank you goes to my friends who have stood by my side throughout this challenging and rewarding journey. Your support, valuable insights, and willingness to brainstorm ideas to enrich my dissertation have been truly invaluable and appreciated. Your presence has not only made this academic endeavour more enjoyable but has also contributed significantly to the depth and richness of my research.

I extend my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Clara Sarmento. Your invaluable guidance and unwavering support have been instrumental in the successful completion of this dissertation. Your expertise and insightful feedback have played a pivotal role in shaping my initial idea into a remarkable dissertation. Finally, I must express my appreciation to Professor Jorge Lopes for his willingness to write the preface. His insights have added significant depth to this work, and I deeply appreciate his generosity in sharing his expertise and time, which enriched the overall quality of this dissertation.

To all of you, I owe a debt of gratitude that words alone cannot adequately express. This achievement is a testament to the collective support and encouragement I have received from my family, friends, and mentors. Your belief in me has been instrumental in reaching this milestone. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being a part of this significant chapter in my life.

Success is the progressive realization of a worthy idea.

Earl Nightingale

Abstract:

The significant surge in the refugee population over the past decade has elevated the issue of their integration into host societies to a global scale. This phenomenon offers national governments and organisations with a unique opportunity to harness the power of a omnipresent aspect of everyday life – sport – to facilitate the integration of refugees, with a particular focus on the younger demographic, into their new societies.

In recent years, sport has emerged as an exceptionally effective, yet often underutilized, means of fostering the integration of refugees into host societies. Sports have the unique capacity to act as a catalyst for building bridges between communities, fostering intercultural dialogue, and cultivating a profound sense of belonging amongst refugees. Whilst sport alone cannot address all the challenges faced during the refugees' migration journey, it can be an instrumental tool in ensuring the proper integration of these individuals into the local communities.

The universal language of sport has the remarkable ability to bring and unite people from different backgrounds together, and, when coupled with other cultural and social activities, may play a pivotal role in this integration process. Sport clubs and project developers worldwide have a special opportunity to support this vulnerable group of people by providing not only a sense of normalcy in their lives but also a smoother transition into their new societies. Consequently, there is an urgent need for continued investment in sports-based integration projects, which have consistently demonstrated notably positive outcomes in addressing the complexities of refugee integration.

This dissertation aims to provide insights, recommendations, and a comprehensive outlook on the diverse challenges faced by refugees throughout their migration journey and the possibilities for creating inclusive and harmonious societies. It underscores the importance of understanding the multifaceted dimensions of the Global Refugee Crisis, the complexities of integration, and the transformative potential of sports in shaping a more inclusive future.

Key words: Refugees; Refugee Youth; Integration; Inclusion; Sport.

Resumo:

O aumento significativo da população de refugiados na última década elevou a questão da sua integração nas sociedades de acolhimento a uma escala global. Este fenómeno oferece aos governos e organizações nacionais uma oportunidade única de aproveitar o poder de um aspecto omnipresente da vida quotidiana – o desporto – para facilitar a integração de refugiados, com especial incidência na demografia mais jovem, nas suas novas sociedades.

Nos últimos anos, o desporto emergiu como um meio excepcionalmente eficaz, mas muitas vezes subutilizado, de promover a integração dos refugiados nas sociedades de acolhimento. O desporto possui a capacidade única de atuar como um catalisador para construir pontes de contacto entre comunidades, promover o diálogo intercultural e cultivar um profundo sentimento de pertença entre os refugiados. Embora o desporto, por si só, não possa resolver todos os desafios enfrentados durante a viagem de migração dos refugiados, pode ser um instrumento fundamental para assegurar a integração adequada destes indivíduos nas comunidades locais.

A linguagem universal do desporto tem a capacidade notável de aproximar e unir pessoas de diferentes origens e, quando associada a outras atividades culturais e sociais, pode desempenhar um papel fundamental neste processo de integração. Os clubes desportivos e coordenadores de projetos em todo o mundo têm uma oportunidade especial de apoiar este grupo vulnerável de pessoas, proporcionando não só uma sensação de normalidade nas suas vidas, mas também uma transição mais suave para as suas novas sociedades. Consequentemente, há uma necessidade urgente de continuar a investir em projectos de integração baseados no desporto, os quais têm demonstrado resultados notavelmente positivos na abordagem das complexidades da integração de refugiados.

A presente dissertação tem como objetivo fornecer conhecimentos, recomendações e uma perspetiva mais abrangente sobre os diversos desafios enfrentados pelos refugiados ao longo do seu percurso migratório e as possibilidades de criar sociedades inclusivas e harmoniosas. Destaca a importância de compreender as dimensões multifacetadas da Crise Global de Refugiados, as complexidades da integração e o poder transformador do desporto na construção de um futuro mais inclusivo.

Palavras chave: Refugiados; Jovens Refugiados; Integração; Inclusão; Desporto.

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List of Abbreviations

ACM	<i>Alto Comissariado para as Migrações, I.P.</i> High Commission for Migration
AMIF / AMF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund / Asylum and Migration Fund
BIPs	Beneficiaries of International Protection
CPR	<i>Conselho Português para os Refugiados</i>
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ESC	European Sports Charter
ESF / ESF+	European Social Fund / European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
FDPs	Forcibly Displaced Persons
GCM	Global Compact for Migrants
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
IdS	<i>Integração durch Sport</i> Integration through Sport
IEFP	<i>Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional</i>
INE	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estatística</i>
IOC	International Organization for Migration
IOM	International Olympic Committee
IPDJ	<i>Instituto Português do Desporto e da Juventude, I.P.</i>
MIPEX	Migration Integration Policy Index
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIEM	National Integration Evaluation Mechanism
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAR	<i>Plataforma de Apoio aos Refugiados</i>
PEM	<i>Plano Estratégico para as Migrações</i>
PII	<i>Plano para a Integração de Imigrantes</i>
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SCML	<i>Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa</i>
SEF	<i>Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras</i>
SJPF	<i>Sindicato dos Jogadores Profissionais de Futebol</i> Portuguese Players Union
SPIN	Sport Inclusion Network
TCNs	Third-Country Nationals
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by unprecedented waves of global migration and displacement, the plight of refugees has emerged as one of the defining humanitarian challenges of our time. The world has witnessed a significant increase in forced displacement, with millions of individuals compelled to leave their homes due to a plethora of factors, including, but not limited to, conflict and persecution. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as the “Global Refugee Crisis”, is characterised by an alarming increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) and refugees over the past decade, and there are no indicators of this trend abating. As of mid-2022, the number of forcibly displaced individuals had surpassed the daunting threshold of 100 million, reaching an estimated number of 103 million (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 3).

The worldwide number of refugees is especially concerning. By mid-2022, there were approximately 32 million refugees globally (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 10), with two of the major contributors to these numbers being the 2015 European Refugee Crisis and the 2022 Ukrainian War. Within this vulnerable demographic, a specific and highly marginalised subgroup emerges – young refugees. These young individuals face heightened vulnerabilities and unique challenges that merit special attention. Alarming, UNICEF (2022) has reported a staggering 132% increase in the number of refugee children over a mere decade (2010 to 2021), culminating in a population of approximately 10 million young refugees in 2021. To put this into perspective, in that same year, individuals aged up to 17 years of age comprised a significant 41% of the total forcibly displaced population (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 3). It is crucial to emphasize that the population of young refugees continues to grow steadily, evolving into a pressing global issue that cannot be ignored.

The journey of a refugee is filled with profound challenges and traumatic experiences that have far-reaching implications, impacting not only for their physical health but also for their psychological well-being. Refugees face distinct challenges at the different stages of their migration journey, which can be broadly divided into three phases: 1. the pre-departure phase; 2. the travel phase; and 3. the destination phase (Zimmerman et al., 2011; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2021). Throughout this arduous journey, these individuals are inherently more predisposed to an array of issues and challenges that test their resilience and adaptability. Importantly, it must be emphasized that refugee youth are especially vulnerable during this migration journey. The traumas and harrowing experiences they endure during each phase of their

migration journey may leave lasting “scars” that resonate throughout their lives. Consequently, individuals such as refugees and asylum seekers are more susceptible to suffer from harsh and adverse conditions that not only affect their physical health but also jeopardize their mental well-being, potentially hindering their successful integration and inclusion into host societies. Alarmingly, despite their heightened susceptibility to mental health problems, these people are less likely to receive appropriate support than the general population (Mental Health Foundation, n.d.).

In recent times, the resettlement of refugees within European borders has witnessed a remarkable surge. This influx of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds sharing the same geographical space marks a challenging period of adjustment for all parties involved, in this case, the refugees and the host societies. This intricate process, characterised by mutual contact and subsequent changes in the culture of either or both groups involved, falls under the umbrella of “Acculturation” (Berry, 2017, p. 15). Within Berry’s acculturation model (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 296), Integration stands out as a key strategy employed by individuals and governments to navigate the cultural changes brought about by the migration process. This strategy encompasses a dynamic two-way process of mutual adaptation between refugees and the host community. It entails the full incorporation of refugees, enabling these individuals to actively participate and engage in the various aspects of host society’s economic, social, political, and cultural life.

Integration is widely regarded as the most advantageous acculturation approach, yielding highly positive adaptative outcomes for all those involved (Bierwiazzonek & Kunst, 2021, pp. 1476/1477; Choy et al., 2021, pp. 3/4). Furthermore, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2013a, p. 8) considers it to be the most pertinent and enduring solution for the majority of refugees in Europe. To tackle the challenges brought about by the cultural diversity resulting from migration, the European Union (EU), alongside many of its Member States, has consistently invested in programmes and accompanying support mechanisms aimed at facilitating integration. Consistently, sports have long been acknowledged as a powerful tool for the integration of refugees into host societies. Its universal language enables people to interact and connect despite their different backgrounds. Throughout history, sports have even played a role in blending cultures and serving as an intercultural bridge, fostering contact, dialogue, understanding, and acceptance amongst individuals from different cultural

backgrounds. For newly arrived refugees, sports can not only help them overcome some of the challenges of settling into a new environment but also provide a means to cope with past traumatic experiences, whilst simultaneously improving their physical and mental well-being. Over the past decade, the EU's financial support for sports has significantly increased and, since 2017, through the Erasmus+ programme, the EU has funded a diverse array of projects that use sport to facilitate the integration and inclusion of refugees into host communities. With the growing recognition of sports as an effective tool for refugee integration and the availability of more funding options, there has been a notable rise in the number of refugee integration projects centred around sports, many of which have a particular focus on refugee youth.

Whilst Portugal historically had a minimal refugee population, this demographic has seen significant growth in recent years. Although not a primary destination for individuals seeking international protection, the country's refugee numbers have increased gradually from 368 in 2010 to 2.651 in 2021. However, in 2022, this number experienced a historic spike, largely due to the Ukrainian War, reaching 59.777 individuals (UNHCR, n.d.d). Portugal has long since maintained a pro-refugee stance and made efforts to integrate refugees into the national society, but there is still work to be done regarding targeted national integration policies. Nevertheless, over the years, noteworthy sports-based refugee integration projects have emerged within the country, yielding positive results. However, much more remains to be done.

All these issues will receive a comprehensive and in-depth analysis throughout this dissertation. Chapter I will offer a thorough exploration of the current Global Refugee Crisis, delving into the dynamics of forced displacement and its profound impacts on individuals' lives. In subchapter 1.1., the essential distinctions surrounding the refugee crisis will be addressed, focusing especially on differentiating migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees. Subchapter 1.1.1. will provide an examination of the historical evolution of refugees, with particular emphasis on the most significant factors that have contributed to the increasing number of FDPs.

Following this historical perspective, the attention will shift towards the situation of refugees in Portugal (1.1.2.), offering insights into the remarkable growth in the refugee population within the country's borders over the past decade. A central aspect of this crisis is the challenging journey of forced displacement, which unfolds in several distinct phases. In subchapter 1.2., there will be an examination of the migration journey (1.2.1.),

breaking it down into the pre-departure (1.2.1.1.), travel (1.2.1.2.), and destination (1.2.1.3.) phases. Each of these phases is characterised by unique challenges and vulnerabilities which will be highlighted. Furthermore, subchapter 1.2.2. will focus on a specific group within the refugee population – young refugees. Here, there will be an assessment of the hardships they encounter throughout their migration journey, and their unique experiences and difficulties will be explored.

Chapter II examines the potential of refugee integration within the broader framework of intercultural societies. In subchapter 2.1. we will delve into the concept of integration as the most pertinent and lasting solution for refugees in Europe. This will encompass an examination of the various acculturation strategies, with a particular emphasis on the integration ideology. Within this context, we will explore related aspects such as social inclusion, cohesion, and the intricate relationships between these concepts (2.1.1.).

Subsequently, subchapter 2.1.2. will offer a more detailed examination of the main European integration policies and models. It will shed light on the European Union's efforts to transition from multicultural to intercultural societies and implement the intercultural model of integration in Member States. We will also highlight some of the best European practices in integration and introduce tools for measuring integration policies on a global scale, with a special focus on two specific tools designed to assess the integration of migrants and beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs).

Within the Portuguese context (2.2.), this chapter will provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration policies implemented by the country, with a specific emphasis on refugee integration (2.2.1.). We will delve into the key players, elements (2.2.2.), funding mechanisms, and measurement tools (2.2.3.) employed by Portugal. This multifaceted approach will hopefully highlight the collaborative efforts made by the Portuguese government and relevant stakeholders to facilitate a smoother integration of refugees into the local society.

Finally, the last chapter (Chapter III) shifts the focus to the role of sports as a dynamic avenue for refugee integration. By investigating the intersection of sports, social engagement, and cultural exchange, this chapter underscores the positive effects that sport participation can have on the lives of refugees, with a particular emphasis on the younger demographic. Subchapter 3.1. aims to distinguish between the concepts of physical

activity and sport, whilst also highlighting some of the main reasons why sport can be leveraged for refugee integration efforts. Moreover, this subsection includes an exploration of the positive and negative effects that sports have on people's lives, again with a specific focus on young refugees, as well as an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of using sport for social integration and inclusion. Shifting to subchapter 3.2., the emphasis is placed on the European context, and the main efforts undertaken by the European Union and other relevant stakeholders to employ sport for the social integration and inclusion of refugees across the continent. Additionally, within this subtopic, we introduce two impactful projects that have employed sports for refugee integration over the years: the German project "Integration durch Sport" (IdS) and the multinational project "Sport Inclusion Network" (SPIN).

In subchapter 3.3., we turn our focus to the Portuguese perspective. Here, we will highlight the opinions of key national figures on the importance of utilizing sport for refugee integration. Following this, the landscape of the Portuguese sport culture and the investments made in this sector over the past few years, by both the Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (*Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude* [IPDJ]) and by the Portuguese Municipalities, will be analysed (3.3.1.).

Although on a national level, and due to the limited number of refugees in Portugal, there are not many sport projects and programmes for refugee integration, there has been a growing trend in this regard (3.3.2.). Notably, two of the most renowned national projects are the "Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro" project (3.3.2.1.) developed by the Portuguese Olympic Committee (*Comité Olímpico Português* [COP]) and the Welcome Sports Club (3.3.2.2.), a collaboration between two Portuguese NGOs, Positive Benefits and Social Innovation Sports. These two projects will be comprehensively analysed, and some of their results will be showcased to illustrate the potential of sports-based integration projects in the country.

Lastly, in subchapter 3.4., the attention shifts to the future of sport for refugee integration, by highlighting some of main barriers that need to be overcome. We will also offer some recommendations on how to effectively leverage digital advancements for sports-based integration projects (3.4.1.) and suggest some changes and considerations for future sports-related integration projects, especially those with young refugees (3.4.2.).

To sum up, this dissertation navigates through the complexities of forced displacement, integration policies, and the transformative potential of sport for the integration of refugees. It aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that define the lives of refugees in an ever-evolving global landscape.

CHAPTER I – THE GLOBAL REFUGEE CRISIS

1.1 Forced Displacement of People and Refugees

The contemporary world has been deeply affected by numerous issues and conflicts, most of which take on international and global proportions. One of the most pressing and worrying global issues of our time concerns the forced displacement of people and the resulting emergence of refugees (United Nations, n.d.a). Considering this, and although migration is a natural feature of humankind, nowadays many people are being forced to move out of necessity instead of by choice (United Nations, n.d.b; United Nations, n.d.c). This is confirmed by Oxfam International (n.d.) and by the United Nations (n.d.b) who, respectively, claim that “[e]very single day, families around the world are being forced from their homes” and that “[t]oday, more people than ever live in a country other than the one in which they were born”.

Bearing this in mind, over the past decade especially, the number of forcibly displaced persons (FDPs) has skyrocketed and has reached unprecedented and never before seen numbers. Consequently, there has also been a significant increase in the amount of people that have obtained refugee status in the past years (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 5). Authors such as Gibney (2010), Esses et al. (2017) and Richardson et al. (2020) even refer to this phenomenon as the “Global Refugee Crisis”.

As such, we can say that displaced people and, more particularly, refugees are a dominant matter of time and of modern society (IDOS, n.d.). Knowing this, and taking the words of Filippo Grandi, the current United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “[e]ither the international community comes together to take action to address this human tragedy, resolve conflicts and find lasting solutions, or this terrible trend [of continuous increase of FDPs] will continue” (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 5). The exponential growth in numbers over the previous decades has been particularly worrying, as there has been a lack of proper response for this problem. In Europe, it has become increasingly harder for host countries to not only welcome, but also ensure the proper care and safety for those who have crossed national borders in search of help and a safe sanctuary (World Bank, 2022). Ultimately, the current Refugee Crisis is far from over, and given the different conflicts that are arising across the world, there is no ending in sight.

It is important to note that, as it is to be expected, the number of displaced people will accordingly fluctuate depending on times of upheaval and will settle back into “normalcy” when durable solutions are found (UNHCR, n.d.b). For the UNHCR (n.d.a)

durable solutions are those which ensure that the situation of “persons of concern to [the] UNHCR can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved through ensuring national protection for their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights”.

At the end of 2021, and according to the 2021 Forced Displacement report by the UNHCR (2022a, p. 2), there were 89.3 million people worldwide which were forcibly displaced “as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public peace”. Of these, 27.1 million were refugees and 4.6 million were asylum seekers. Moreover, in that same year, there were 53.2 million internally displaced people mainly due to conflict and violence. The remaining 4.4 million refer to Venezuelan displaced abroad. More worryingly, and as of June 2022, the threshold of 100 million FDPs has been reached, meaning that 1 in every 77 people worldwide has been forcibly displaced. When looking at it, it becomes apparent that there has been a substantial increase in numbers, considering that a decade previously, in 2012, only 1 in every 167 people had been forcibly displaced (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 5).

This worrying trend of increase in the numbers of displaced people and, more particularly, of refugees has brought notions such as forced displacement, asylum seekers, refugees, and many more to the forefront of world affairs (IDOS, n.d.). Given their importance in modern society, it is necessary to clarify and understand these concepts before trying to fully comprehend how they have impacted our world. As such, the UNHCR (n.d.a), leading United Nations (UN) organisation for the protection of refugees (Jastram & Achiron, 2001, p. 21), describes the phenomenon of (forced) displacement as:

The movement of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence (whether within their own country or across an international border), in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters.

Forced displacement, also known as forced migration (UNHCR, 2016b, p. 280), is considered both a development challenge and a humanitarian concern (World Bank, 2022). In essence, this phenomenon involves an involuntary or coerced movement of individuals away from their habitual places of residence or home regions, and it can happen due to a plethora of reasons. More specifically, the Global Protection Cluster (2007, p. 164) believes that forced displacement:

[O]ccurs when individuals and communities have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of events or situations such as armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights abuses, natural or man-made disasters, and/or development projects.

The defining factor of forced displacement is the “absence of will or consent”, and thus can include situations where people have fled and situations where people have been “forcibly removed from their homes, evicted or relocated to another place not of their choosing, whether by State or non-State actors” (Global Protection Cluster, 2007, p. 164). International law prohibits any form of forced displacement, although with some exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, whilst there is no specific right to protection against forced displacement, a number of international and regional human rights, including, but not only, the rights to freedom of movement and choice of residence and the right to an adequate standard of living, tend to guarantee rights which safeguard people against forced displacement (Global Protection Cluster, 2007, pp. 164/165).

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) comprise the largest group of forcibly displaced persons, considering that, according to data previously presented, there were over 53 million IDPs worldwide in 2021 (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 2). The UNHCR (2007a, p. 4) recognizes the fact that “[f]or decades [IDPs] tended to be forgotten or ignored, but nowadays they (...) form the single largest group of vulnerable people in the world”. Accordingly, for Fielden (2008, p. 1), this group of people “remains silent, largely ignored, and without hope for durable solutions to their plight”. The European Commission (n.d.a) defines an internally displaced person as:

A person or groups of persons who has been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised State border.

Ultimately, there are two important elements that are crucial to identify IDPs. Firstly, their movement is involuntary, that is to say, they were forced or coerced to leave, and secondly, and most importantly, they remain within the borders of their home country or country of residence. Nevertheless, “IDPs are entitled to all the rights and guarantees as citizens and other habitual residents of their country”. Given this, “national authorities

have the primary responsibility to prevent forced displacement and to protect IDPs” (UNHCR, 2015).

Internally displaced persons differ from refugees simply due to the fact that refugees cross borders seeking sanctuary, whilst IDPs are forced to move within national borders (UNHCR, 2007a, p. 7). Furthermore, and according to El-Bushra and Fish (2007, p. 1), “[a]lthough international law generally provides [IDPs] with protection, there is no international law or standard specifically covering IDPs, and no UN agency is specifically mandated to ensure their welfare”.

Within the scope of forcibly displaced people, there is a lot of confusion surrounding the terms of “refugee”, “asylum seeker”, and “migrant”. People tend to use these terms interchangeably, but there are, in fact, crucial distinctions between them. Therefore, we will begin by analysing one of the most talked about terms in modern society, that of refugees. Although the concept of refugees has broadened over the years (Esses et al., 2017, p. 79), one of the most universally accepted definitions was presented in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Given this, and according to Article 1A(2) of the aforementioned Convention (UNHCR, n.d.c, p. 6), a refugee is a person who has a:

[W]ell-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

Jastram and Achiron (2001, p. 22) make the important distinction between ‘convention refugees’ and ‘mandate refugees’. According to the authors, convention refugees are “persons recognized as refugees by the authorities of States that have acceded to the [1951] Convention and/or [1967] Protocol”. On the other hand, mandate refugees are “persons considered by the UNHCR to be refugees according to its Statute or under the broader mandate given by the General Assembly”. Mandate refugees differ from convention refugees because the “UNHCR’s determination of refugee status is not dependent upon the country of asylum being party to the Refugee Convention or Protocol”.

Nevertheless, and according to the Australian Red Cross (n.d.) a refugee is a “person who asked for protection and was given refugee status”. McBrien (2017, p. 116) also provides a very simple and clear definition for this term. The author claims that refugees are those who “leave their homeland due to imminent fear for their lives or those of their family members”. Moreover, and as stated in SEF’s (*Serviço de Estrangeiros e Fronteiras*) *Relatório de Imigração, Fronteiras e Asilo* (2015, p. 63), a refugee is:

A person who has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or affiliation to a particular social group, who is outside their country of nationality and cannot, because of such fear, return¹.

The 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention, and its 1967 Protocol are “the only global legal instruments explicitly covering the most important aspects of a refugee’s life” (UNHCR, 2011a, p. 2). As mentioned by Esses et al. (2017, p. 79), these documents were signed by 148 countries and they “[define] the term *refugee* and [outline] the rights of the displaced, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them [and assist in finding durable solutions for these people]” (UNHCR, n.d.a). Even though the 1951 Refugee Convention is no longer the only international protection regime for refugees, it continues to be the main source and cornerstone of refugee protection laws and regulations (UNHCR, 2016a; Asylum Access, 2021). Ultimately, it “safeguards the right to seek asylum, and protects against being forcibly returned to a country where one would face persecution [principle of *non-refoulement*]²” (PHAP, n.d.).

Like previously mentioned, refugees have the particularity of being defined and protected in international law. However, according to Goodwin-Gill and McAdam (2021, p. 1), refugee law “remains an incomplete legal regime of protection, imperfectly covering what ought to be a situation of exception”. That is to say, the authors consider it lacking because “refugees and asylum seekers may still be denied even temporary protection, safe return to their homes, or compensation”.

¹ My translation. Original text: “Refugiado: Pessoa com fundado receio de ser perseguida por razões de raça, religião, nacionalidade, opinião política ou filiação num determinado grupo social, se encontre fora do seu país de nacionalidade e não possa, em virtude daquele receio, regressar” (SEF, 2015, p. 63).

² This principle is not only the essential foundation for international refugee law (IRL), but it is also an integral part of human rights protection and a rule of customary international law (Goodwin-Gill, 2014, p. 40).

Nevertheless, refugees fall under the protection of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, more commonly known as the UNHCR (McBrien, 2017, p. 116). This organisation is the primary UN agency concerned with helping refugees, and it is “mandated by the UN General Assembly to provide international protection to refugees and seek permanent solutions to their plight” (PHAP, n.d.). This agency was established following World War II to help Europeans who were displaced due to the conflict (United Nations, n.d.d). After this, and as it has been mentioned, the UNHCR changed its focus to provide international protection to those in need and to seek permanent solutions for the problem of refugees (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam, 2021, pp. 19/20).

As claimed by McBrien (2017, p. 116), the UNHCR works to create one of three durable solutions, namely: i. repatriation; ii. local integration; and iii. resettlement. According to the same author, repatriation consists in the return of refugees into their homelands or former places of residence after they become sufficiently secure to allow this transition. Local integration, like the name entails, involves the integration of refugees into the society of their place of first refuge. On the other hand, resettlement consists in the transition of refugees from their country of first refuge into a third country of permanent resettlement which allows for them to start their lives anew.

Jastram and Achiron (2001, p. 44) assert that in order for States to protect refugees they must first know who they are. That is, a “State must be able to differentiate those in need of international protection from other people seeking entry to its territory”. For this reason, the process of Refugee Status Determination (RSD) becomes a crucial step in a refugee’s life. As such, the RSD is a process by which “governments or [the] UNHCR determine whether an individual seeking international protection [meets the eligibility criteria and therefore] is a refugee under national, regional or international law” (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 28). This procedure for officially acknowledging refugee status can often be a lengthy one. Moreover, it is important to mention that the refugee status can be granted both individually and on a group basis. Even so, and as claimed by the UNHCR (2022a, p. 28), in most cases, “individuals being granted refugee status on a group basis will be directly registered as refugees, as opposed to an individual recognition where an individual will first be registered as an asylum seeker”.

Refugees and asylum seekers are defined in a plethora of ways but ultimately, they can be considered as “those who did not make a voluntary choice to leave their country

of origin and cannot return home in safety” (Bradby et al., 2015, p. ii). For Esses et al. (2017, p. 79) the distinction between refugees and asylum seekers “is often blurred so that at times they are viewed and treated similarly”. Even so, and according to the same authors, asylum seekers are “individuals who have claimed refugee status and are waiting for that claim to be evaluated”.

According to the UNHCR (2005, p. 441), an asylum seeker is an “individual who is seeking international protection”. That is to say, “[i]n countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted”. Moreover, and as claimed by Briskman (2015), countries that have “ratified the [1951 Refugee Convention] are obliged to assess asylum seekers’ claims for protection”.

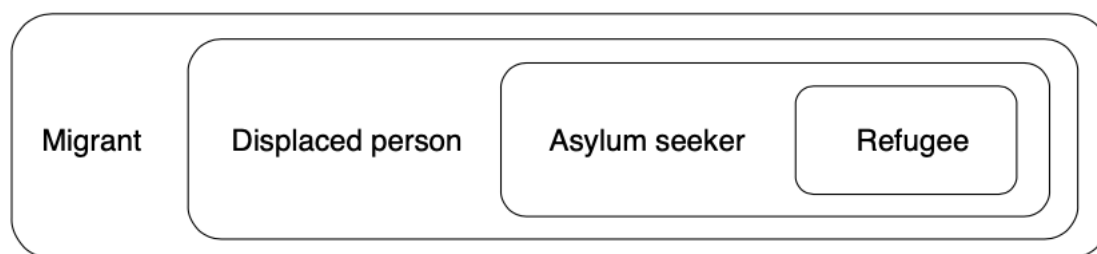
McBrien (2017, p. 117) argues that asylum seekers differ from refugees because “rather than applying for refugee status with the UN, they migrate directly to the country in which they hope to receive resettlement”. A crucial distinction that must be made between refugees and asylum seekers is that “[n]ot every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognized as a refugee, but every refugee was initially an asylum-seeker” (UNHCR, 2005, p. 441).

The term migrant is one of the most inclusive within the scope of displaced people, as it can encompass “all people who move from one place to another” (McBrien, 2017, p. 115). According to the UNHCR (2016b, p. 281) there is no universally accepted definition for migrant, but in a simple way we can say that this term refers to someone who is not in dire need of international protection and “who moves across an international border for a period that is not intended to be short”. Moreover, this agency defines migrants as “people who choose to move across international borders, not because of a direct threat of persecution, serious harm, or death, but exclusively for other reasons, such as to improve their conditions by pursuing work or education opportunities, or to reunite with family” (UNHCR, n.d.a).

For Eldridge (2022) the main difference between migrants and refugees is that “a migrant is someone who chooses to move, and a refugee is someone who has been forced from their home”. Although it is common in public discussions to refer to refugees as forced migrants, the UNHCR (2016a) advises for a proper distinction between these two notions to be made and for the blurring of the terms of ‘migrant’ and ‘refugee’ to be

abolished. Consistently, the UNHCR (2016a) suggests that referring “to refugees as ‘forced migrants’ shifts attention away from the specific needs of refugees and from the legal obligations the international community has agreed upon to address them”. Ultimately, one must never forget that the right to seek protection and enjoy asylum is recognized in international human rights law, and it is critical for protecting not only refugees but all those seeking help (Jastram & Achiron, 2001, p. 44). Figure 1 displays a potential typology of migrants, including the placement of refugees within this framework.

Figure 1. Typology of Migrants



Source: Michelini (2023, p. 15)

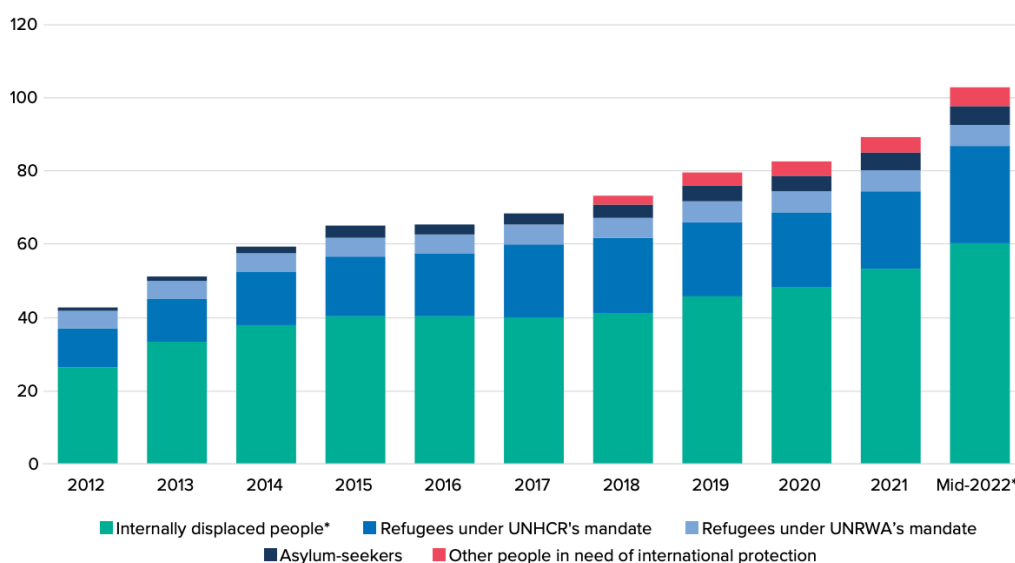
1.1.1 The Transformation of the Refugee Crisis

The last decade has been particularly affected by serious events that have led to the severe increase in the number of forcibly displaced persons and refugees. Migration has become a dominant world issue, and many consider it a “major social, political and public health challenge” (Bradby et al., 2015, p. ix). As perfectly described by O’Hagan (2015), “[m]ass migration is no ‘crisis’: it’s the new normal (...)”. The author also claims that these ‘refugee crises’ cannot be considered as temporary disasters that can be quickly and easily “solved” by politicians. These phenomena have become a permanent issue of the modern world and they cannot “be cleared away at any given moment”. Moreover, and given the rise and upsurge of issues and conflicts around the world, it is expected for things to worsen and for mass migration to become the “new normal”.

Pai (2020) mentions that the “2010s [and the beginning of the 2020s] have been marked not only by the global movement of people across national borders but also attempts by governments to erect walls and fences in their path”. Undoubtedly, Europe has been particularly affected by this mass migration. The continent “has seen hundreds of thousands of people from Africa, the Middle East and south Asia, fleeing chronic poverty, political instability, wars, and the climate crisis in countries often laid to ruin by western-backed institutions” (Pai, 2020).

As it becomes apparent when looking at the Figure 2, the number of FDPs has grown significantly in the last ten years. This growth can be intrinsically linked to many different occurrences, although it is crucial to highlight two of the ones that severely impacted and were the biggest drivers to the increase in the numbers – that of the 2015 European Refugee Crisis and the 2022 Ukrainian War.

Figure 2. Evolution of the Number of FDPs (2012-2022)



Source: UNHCR (2022b, p. 6)

In 2015, the continuous conflicts in Syria, alongside ongoing violence in Afghanistan and Iraq, abuses in Eritrea and poverty in Kosovo led to one of the biggest mass migrations of the 21st century (BBC News, 2016). Europe was particularly affected by a dramatic increase in the number of migrants and refugees in the second half of the beforementioned year. According to the UNHCR (2016c, p. 7), “[h]undreds of thousands of individuals embarked on a dangerous journey, crossing the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe in an effort to find safety”. From 2014 to 2015, there was a fourth fold increase in the number of individuals that arrived by sea into the European continent, growing from approximately 216,000 to more than a million arrivals. About half of the people that traversed into Europe by sea hailed from the Syrian Arab Republic, “but those from Afghanistan and Iraq also accounted for a significant proportion” (UNHCR, 2016c, p. 7).

Following the world’s efforts trying to contain the Coronavirus (CoVid-19) in 2020 and 2021, an invasion rocked the world in 2022. On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded and occupied parts of Ukraine in a major escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which began in 2014 with Russia’s annexation of Crimea (Center for Preventive Action, 2023). This occupation has created the fastest and one of the largest displacements of people since World War II and has resulted in thousands of casualties (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 6). Accordingly, and as of mid-2022, roughly 6.3 million Ukrainians were internally displaced within the country, and more than 5.4 million refugees sought protection in

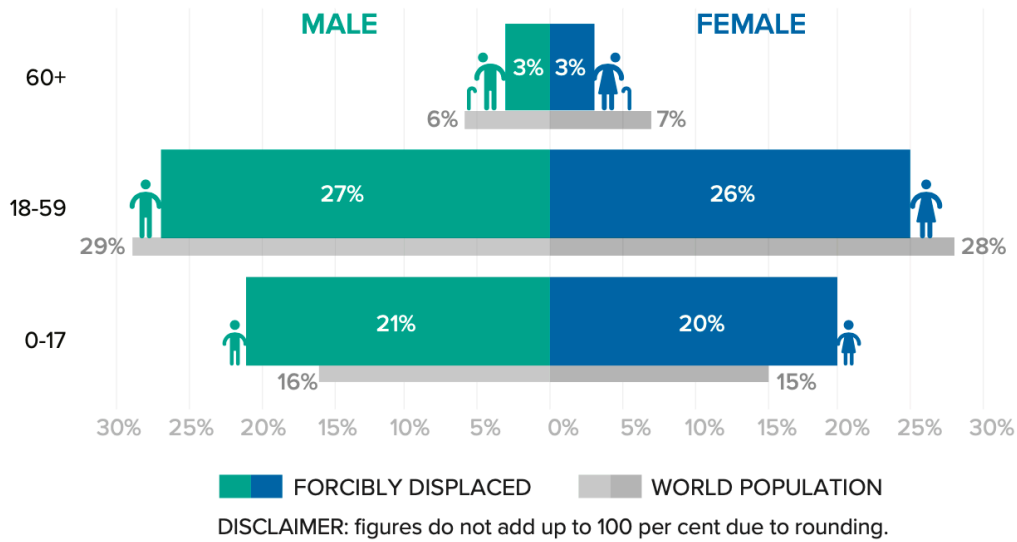
neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 6). The United Nations has condemned Russia's actions and has called for immediate withdrawal of its forces from Ukraine. Nevertheless, the conflict is still ongoing and shows no true signs of abating (Al Jazeera, 2023).

The UNHCR's reports are a key piece that help convey the evolution in the number of forcibly displaced people. Like previously mentioned, at the end of 2021, there were roughly 89.3 million FDPs worldwide (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 2). However, by mid-2022, the barrier of 100 million forcibly displaced individuals had been crossed, reaching an estimated number of 103 million (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 3). Given this, and comparing with the end of 2021, there was an increase of 15 per cent in the number of FDPs, equating to roughly 13.6 million people. This was, according to the UNHCR 2022 mid-year report, the largest ever increase between years (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 5).

When it comes to the global refugee population it suffered an increase of 24 per cent, solely in the first half of 2022. With more 5.3 million refugees, this was the "biggest proportional increase between years since 1979-1980 when millions of Afghans and Ethiopians were forced to flee to neighbouring countries" (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 6). This means that by mid-2022 there were roughly 32 million refugees worldwide. Of these "nearly 24.5 million refugees, 2.2 million people in refugee-like situations, and some 5.3 million other people in need of international protection" (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 10).

Worryingly, the number of refugee children and young people (up to the age of 17) has also been increasing over the years. UNICEF (2022) presents the notion that "[b]etween 2005 and 2021, the global number of child refugees under UNHCR mandate more than doubled from four million to ten million". More specifically, from 2010 to 2021, the number of child refugees increased by 132 per cent. This is particularly significant when considering that, in comparison, during almost the same period (2010 to 2020), "the total number of non-refugee child migrants rose by only ten per cent" (UNICEF, 2022). Furthermore, and as mentioned in the UNHCR's (2022a, p. 3) report, and as visible in Figure 3, even though children and young people "account for 30 per cent of the world's population, [they ultimately represent] 41 per cent of all forcibly displaced people".

Figure 3. Demographics of FDPs (2021)



Source: UNHCR (2022a, p. 3)

When it comes to the country of origin, it is said that the “majority of the world’s refugees and internally displaced people originated from 60 fragile states (...)” (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 8). Moreover, the UNHCR claim that roughly 86 per cent of refugees originated from just 10 countries, and that more than half of all refugees, more particularly 56 per cent, are Syrian, Venezuelan, or Ukrainian (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 10). Ten countries host 53 per cent of all refugees, with Turkey hosting the highest number (roughly 3.7 million refugees), followed by Colombia (2.5 million), and by Germany (2.2 million). Germany, in particular, experienced a sharp increase between the end of 2021 and mid-2022, going from 1.3 million refugees to the 2.2 million mentioned above (UNHCR, 2022b, pp. 11/12).

Most people fleeing conflict and persecution remain near their country of origin, and as such, as of mid-2022, 69 per cent of refugees were hosted by neighbouring countries, although this number has been steadily decreasing over the years (72 per cent in 2021 and 73 per cent in 2020) (UNHCR, 2021a, p. 2; UNHCR, 2022a, p. 2; UNHCR, 2022b, p. 12). Nevertheless, 74 per cent of refugees and other people in need of international protection are housed in low- and middle-income countries, those of which tend to host a disproportionately large share of the displaced people in the world. By mid-2022, high-income countries (including Portugal) held only 26 per cent of the world’s refugees (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 12).

1.1.2 Refugees in Portugal

Historically Portugal has not been amongst the top destinations sought after by people in need of international protection, and as such, has received only a small number of refugees over the years (Santos, 2022). According to Oliveira (2021, p. 21), in 2019, Portugal ranked twenty-first amongst the 28 European Union (EU) Member States, in order from those that received the most refugees to those that received the fewest. Furthermore, the same author claims that Portugal only took in around 2.4 thousand or 0,1% of the total number of refugees in the EU28 in 2019.

As per Sousa and Costa's (2018, p. 29) words, the "number of asylum seekers [and refugees] in Portugal is a relatively peripheral phenomenon". That is, Portugal remains "one of the European countries with the fewest applicants per million inhabitants" (Sousa & Costa, 2019, p. 35). As presented by Matos (2019, p. 11), from 2008 to 2014, Portugal granted "humanitarian protection to less than 600 individuals", meaning that "humanitarian inflows [represented] less than 1% of permanent migration inflows over this period". However, the situation radically changed, and the number of asylum requests tripled between 2014 and 2017, a phenomenon that can be intrinsically connected to the 2015 European Refugee Crisis (Matos, 2019, p. 11). Furthermore, and according to a projection by the UNHCR (n.d.c), an unprecedented increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Portugal is expected, in 2022, in response to the Ukrainian War.

In virtue of the growth in the number of refugees, the country has responded by increasing resources and support for these vulnerable groups of people, in line with its commitment to international law and human rights (República Portuguesa, 2022a). Observatório das Migrações (n.d.a) claims that the resettlement of refugees in Portugal brings two significant benefits for the country, namely: 1. it "places Portugal on the world stage as a humanitarian player and participant in global social responsibility", and 2. "with an aging population and a declining birthrate (...), it provides an effective and immediate solution to Portugal's workforce needs".

In 1960 Portugal signed and acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to its 1967 Protocol in 1976 (UNHCR, 2018a, p. 1). In this sense, the country has thus made an international commitment to the reception of people in need of international protection (Oliveira, 2021, p. 21). As such, Portugal has had an active

participation in the European Union's emergency schemes and has welcomed thousands of asylum seekers and refugees under the EU's relocation and resettlement programmes since 2015 (Matos, 2019, pp. 12/13). According to Esteves (2021), Portugal was the country that received the sixth-highest number of refugees under the EU's relocation programme, welcoming "1.190 relocated refugees from Greece and 360 from Italy between December 2015 and March 2018".

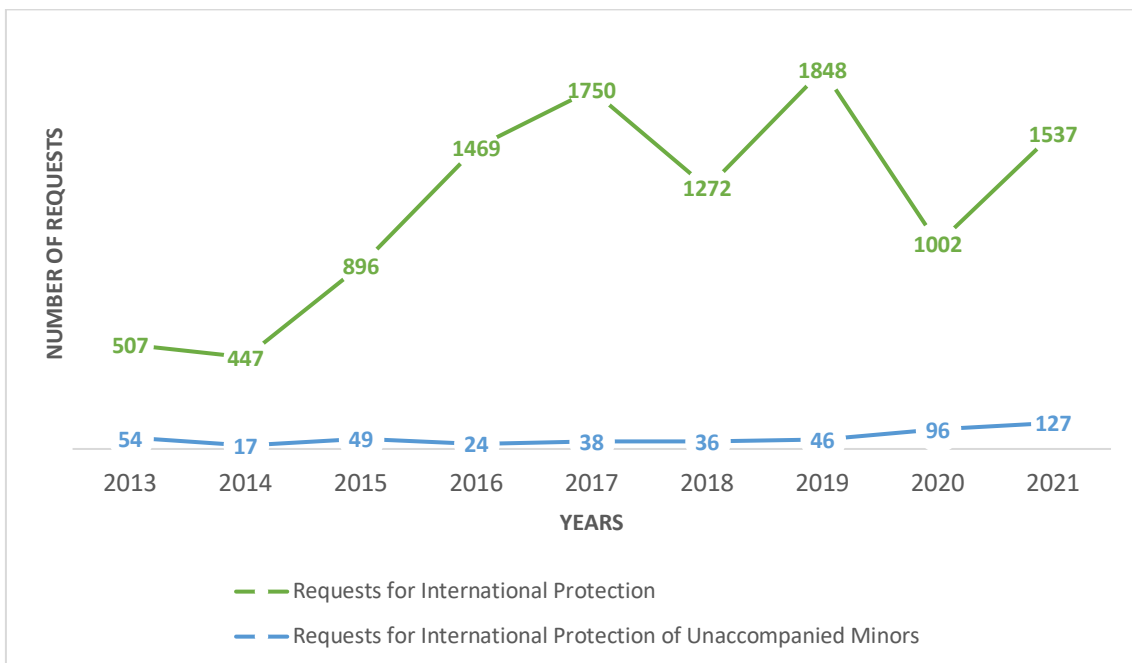
It is noteworthy to mention though that, when comparing different sources of information, in this case the European Parliament, the UNHCR, and SEF's annual reports, there is a clear lack of consensus regarding the true number of asylum seekers and refugees pursuing protection in Portugal. The numbers given by the European Parliament and the UNHCR are identical, however when comparing those numbers with SEF's reports there are some inconsistencies. For this reason, it becomes vital to present the information from all these distinctive sources, as to be able to be the most accurate possible.

Taking this into account, it is necessary to refer that, in Portugal, SEF is the competent authority responsible for deciding on the acceptance of applications for international protection (Goldberg, 2020, p. 3; SEF, 2022, p. 68). This institution's annual reports offer a broader view of the different groups of people that request asylum in Portugal. For this purpose, SEF's reports from 2013 through 2021, the latest available report, will be analysed. Notably, and as can be viewed in Illustration 1, the number of requests for international protection has grown significantly over the years, being this growth particularly noticeable since 2015. As far as age and gender are concerned, in the year 2021, 68.4% of the asylum applications were submitted by males, and 56.3% of the applicants were aged between 19 and 39. It is a fact, however, that the age group of 0 to 18 was the second biggest, with 316 males and 170 females seeking asylum in this country. It is also worth noting that 56.4% of the asylum seekers came from Asia, with Afghanistan recording the highest number of asylum seekers (665) in Portugal (SEF, 2022, pp. 68-70).

Worryingly, the number of cases regarding unaccompanied minors has likewise been growing over the last decade. Whilst 54 unaccompanied minors applied for asylum in Portugal in 2013, SEF received 127 applications for the international protection of unaccompanied minors in 2021 (SEF, 2014, p. 39; SEF, 2022, p. 70), marking a considerable increase in the number of applications done by this specific vulnerable

group. Although in Portugal, in comparison with other EU countries, the representativeness of unaccompanied minors amongst the total number of asylum seekers is not very expressive, they are a group of vulnerable persons that has been steadily increasing over the years, and which has garnered and deserved the biggest attention from national and European authorities (SEF, 2019, p. 48). Consistently, Esteves (2021) states that “as of March 2021 Portugal has received the fourth-highest number of unaccompanied minors of European Member States, after Germany, France and Finland”.

Illustration 1. Evolution of Requests for International Protection in Portugal (2013-2021)³



Source: Adapted from SEF (2016, p. 42; 2018, p. 40; 2022, p. 68)

As reported by the European Parliament (n.d.), and as displayed in Table 1, from 2010 to 2021, the number of people with refugee status in Portugal grew from 368 to 2.651. Moreover, the UNHCR (n.d.d) estimates that by mid-2022 the number of refugees in Portugal was of 48.670, an historical increase comparing to the year before. For a country as “small” as Portugal, this is a significant upsurge, particularly when considering that this country was known to have one of the EU’s highest refugee refusal rates (Santos,

³ There is a difference between SEF’s 2015 and 2018 (and following years) reports on the number of Requests for International Protection of Unaccompanied Minors, with the number exposed on the 2018 report being substantially higher (73) than the one shown in the 2015 report (49). In the interest of accuracy and consistency, the number pertaining to the year of 2015, in Illustration 1, is the same number that was first introduced in SEF’s 2015 report.

2022). Accordingly, in Portugal, 77% of the total first instances of asylum applications were refused in 2019 and 2020, however it improved to 40% refusal rate in 2021 and to merely 23% in 2022 (Eurostat, 2023).

Table 1. Evolution of Refugees in Portugal (2010 - 2022)

Refugees in Portugal		
2010	368	
2011	399	+ 31
2012	473	+ 74
2013	596	+ 123
2014	704	+ 108
2015	851	+ 147
2016	1.189	+ 338
2017	1.619	+ 430
2018	2.130	+ 511
2019	2.375	+ 245
2020	2.405	+ 30
2021	2.651	+ 246
2022 ⁴	48.670	+ 46.019

Source: Adapted from European Parliament (n.d) and UNHCR (n.d.d)

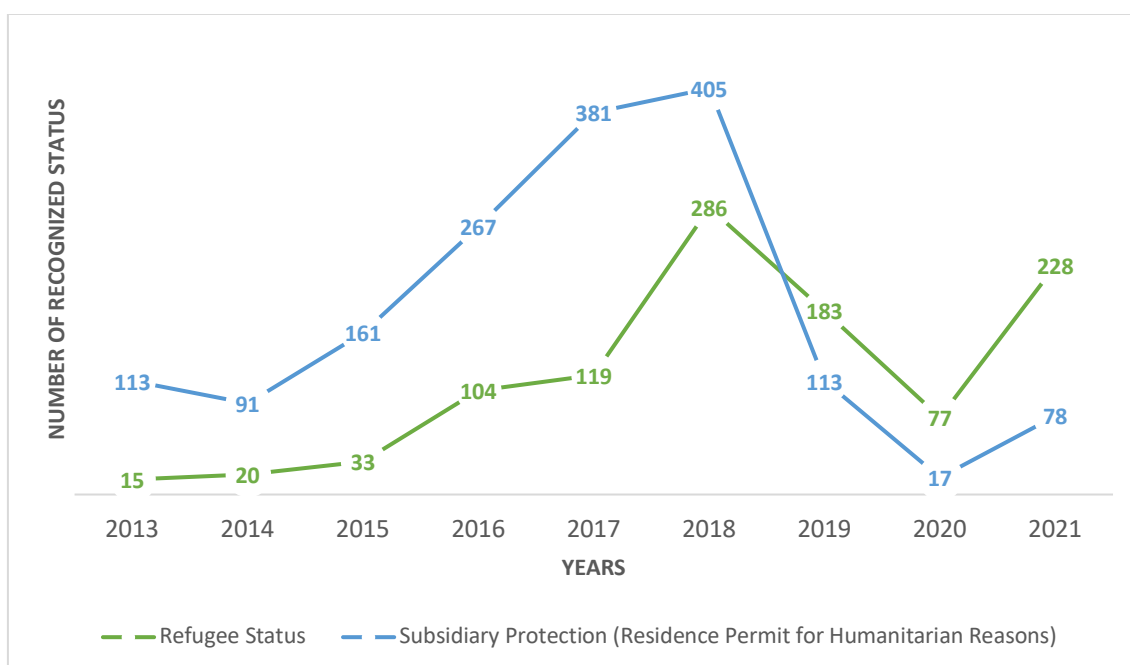
Although SEF's reports lack in showing the true numbers of people with refugee status in Portugal, they have the particularity of exposing how many individuals have been granted refugee status and those who have been granted a subsidiary protection each year. The abovementioned subsidiary protection is a type of protection, complementary to the refugee status, and that, in Portugal, translates into a residence permit for humanitarian reasons. This permit is given by the Portuguese government to those who don't quite meet the necessary grounds to be qualified as refugees (as per the 1951 Convention's definition) but "in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in case

⁴ The data for the latest year (2022) is available up until the mid-year, and as such these numbers correspond solely for the months of January through June (UNHCR, n.d.d), and was retrieved on 21 March 2023.

of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering” (European Commission, n.d.b).

Illustration 2 displays the evolution in the recognition of international protection status, being this, refugee status and subsidiary protection, in Portugal over the last decade. The illustration shows that there has been a clear increase in the number of refugee status granted by the Portuguese government over the years, and that the number of residence permits for humanitarian reasons approved has been on a steady decline since 2019.

Illustration 2. Evolution Recognition of International Protection Status in Portugal (2013-2021)



Source: Adapted from SEF (2014-2022)

Moreover, through the annual reports it becomes possible to understand the progression of the country with its different international commitments, including, but not only, the EU’s relocation and resettlement schemes. According to UNHCR (n.d.e), Portugal participates in intra-EU relocation schemes, including the “relocation of asylum seekers from Italy and Malta (since 2018), (...) the relocation of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from Greece (since 2020)”, and in 2021, “the Portuguese Government introduced a humanitarian admission scheme for people fleeing Afghanistan”.

As such, and according to SEF's 2015 report, Portugal made the commitment to receive and integrate 4.574 resettled applicants for international protection and refugees in the following two years (SEF, 2016, p. 42). As shared by SEF (2019, p. 49), from 2015 to April 2018, Portugal welcomed and relocated 1.552 applicants for international protection, which placed the country in the 6th position amongst the EU Member States that had relocated the highest number of applicants, and in the 8th position amongst all Member States as regards to the percentage of fulfilment of their commitments.

In 2017, Portugal received 171 refugees, the majority of Syrian nationality, who came from refugee camps in Turkey (SEF, 2018, p. 42). In the following year, 86 applicants for international protection were transferred to Portugal, and the Portuguese government also agreed to accommodate and resettle 1.010 refugees under UNHCR's protection. By the end of 2018, 33 refugees arrived in the country from Turkey and Egypt, representing the first out of the 1.010 refugees the government agreed to take in (SEF, 2019, p. 49). From 2019 to 2021, Portugal received 897 refugees in the context of resettlement programmes from other countries (376 in 2019, 222 in 2020, and 299 in 2021) (SEF, 2020, p. 51; SEF, 2021, p. 59; SEF, 2022, p. 67).

Although Portugal tries to attract and is willing to take in a large number of refugees, this group of people tends to think of Portugal as a mere transitory country. This becomes obvious when considering that roughly 51% (768 refugees) of the 1.520 refugees that were welcomed in Portugal between December 2015 and November 2017, left the country, and moved, mainly, to other EU Member States (Agência Lusa, 2018). Thankfully however, over the last years, less and less refugees leave this country, as there has been a clear improvement in the process of integration of refugees into the Portuguese society. As such, and according to Machado and Filipe (2021), now only around 6% of the refugees that were either given refugee status by SEF or were relocated and resettled in Portugal through the EU's programmes, leave for other European countries.

1.2 The Hardships of Forced Displacement

The act of human migration is nothing new. As a matter of fact, it is a fundamental characteristic of humanity (Fonseca, 2019, p. 5), and has been occurring throughout history with a diversity in context, frequency, and magnitude (Jayakody et al., 2022, p. 1). According to Zimmerman et al. (2011, pp. 1/2), Azmi and Basir (2019, p. 689) and Anderson (2020), the recent refugee crisis is a global phenomenon and issue that affects every country or region and which, unfortunately, is personified by a continuous and unprecedented rise in the number of FDPs, especially in the last decade. As described by Teixeira et al. (2021, p. 267), refugees and asylum seekers alike “constitute a specific group in the international migration process”. For these people, who suffer so much and are constantly exposed to dangers in their home country, the decision to migrate, to embark on this difficult and arduous journey, is not made lightly and is influenced by a plethora of factors (Greenwood, 2015). The decision to take such a drastic measure is undeniably complex and is often taken as a last resort. Those who go forth with this choice, do so with heavy hearts and a sense of uncertainty, as making such a decision requires much courage and resilience. However, it is important to note that even though migration can be an opportunity for individuals to pursue a better life, it is also an immense challenge not to be taken lightly.

In virtue of this, it is discernible to conclude that asylum seekers and refugees’ lives are unquestionably hard and unique. These people leave everything behind in their home nations and begin a “new” life in a “different country with different laws, different education and health systems, different languages and different cultural expectations” (Roads to Refuge, n.d.). Like mentioned previously, they do this in pursuit of a somewhat “normal” and safer life for themselves and their families. Many individuals with refugee backgrounds “cross dangerous terrains and weather conditions, put themselves and their loved ones at risk to cross international borders just to have a chance at a better life” (Malim, 2019). In this regard, displacements, and particularly forced displacements, can be often viewed as traumatizing processes (Williams et al., 2016, p. 840; Project HOPE, 2022). Consistently, and according to Becker and Ferrara (2019, p. 1), “[f]orced migration as a consequence of wars, civil conflicts, or natural disasters may have consequences different from those of voluntary migration”. Furthermore, Zimmerman et al. (2011, p. 2) claim that the act of forced migration can be impactful and damaging for the lives of not only those who go through these events, but also for the communities that surround them.

People with experiences of displacement, and particularly of forced displacement, are at risk of complex physical, mental, and social problems, which can contribute to poor health outcomes and impede successful social integration and inclusion (Gorasia et al., 2023). Refugees and asylum seekers are particularly exposed to not only conflict, but also organised violence or natural disasters which result in immediate losses to health and access to healthcare, “as local health workers are killed or themselves flee, health facilities cease to function, nutritious food, clean water and shelter become less available and safe spaces diminish” (Williams et al., 2016, p. 840). Moreover, and as explained by Bempong et al. (2019, p. 2), the migration process can increase migrant and refugees’ vulnerability to ill health, through increased exposure to risk factors. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022a) discloses the idea that refugees “have a variety of different physical and mental health needs, shaped by experiences in their country of origin, their migration journey, their host country’s entry and integration policies, and living and working conditions”. The same source also claims that, ultimately, it is necessary to consider that refugees and asylum seekers “are a diverse group and have a variety of health needs, which may differ from those of the host populations”. These individuals “often face worse health outcomes in countries of transit and destination due to barriers including language and cultural differences, institutional discrimination and restricted use of health services” (WHO, 2022a).

According to the British Medical Association (BMA, 2022), refugees and asylum seekers tend to have an increased risk of experiencing mental health problems, particularly if they “have experienced violence and trauma, including exploitation, torture or sexual and gender-based violence”. The Mental Health Foundation (n.d.) contends that both asylum seekers and refugees are “more likely to experience poor mental health than the local population, including higher rates of depression, PTSD [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder] and other anxiety disorders”. Furthermore, and as claimed by Zimmerman et al. (2011, p. 3), mental health “outcomes often appear worse for migrants, displaced populations, and refugees than for native-born populations”. The same authors, however, complement this idea by saying that asylum seekers “with temporary protection tend to have poorer mental health than refugees who have permanent residency”. This can be intrinsically connected to how uncertain asylum seekers lives are in comparison to refugees’, who, unlike them, have been granted and assured permanent protection (Momartin et al., 2006). Nevertheless, and in spite of their different legal situations,

refugees and asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable, especially in terms of mental health (Momartin et al., 2006; Wessels, 2014, p. 6). These individuals tend to suffer more, and more intensely, than “normal” people and often require different, and sometimes, more support and assistance than the native citizens.

The WHO states that mental health has intrinsic and instrumental value and is an integral component of health and well-being. Ultimately, it can be valued as a basic human right that is “crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development” (WHO, 2022b). According to the WHO (2022b), mental health is “a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community”. Like it has been mentioned, and quoting the UNHCR (n.d.g), forced displacement can “put significant psychological stress on individuals, families and communities”. Refugees and asylum seekers, unlike other individuals, face harsh conditions that put their mental health under significant stress, and whilst many of them “show remarkable resilience, some need extra support to rebuild their lives” (UNHCR, n.d.g). Moreover, and according to the Mental Health Foundation (n.d.), although “research suggests that asylum seekers [and refugees] are five times more likely to have mental health needs than the general population, (...) data shows that they are less likely to receive support than the general population”.

Over the years, there have been numerous efforts done by individuals and organisations to elevate the physical and mental health and well-being of those forcibly displaced to the forefront of global discussions. It is crucial for the international community and governments to address the trials and tribulations that refugees face on their journey to, hopefully, a safe haven, from their departure in their home country to the resettlement process in their “new country”. One must understand that “[m]igrants and refugees contribute positively to society, but they cannot reach their full potential unless they are in good physical and mental health” (WHO, 2021).

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, also regarded as the Global Compact for Migrants (GCM), was the first-ever intergovernmentally negotiated agreement, which was prepared under the auspices of the UN. This Global Compact, which was adopted in 2018, was created in an attempt of better managing migration at local, national, regional, and global levels (United Nations, n.d.e). It is a non-legally binding agreement that “seeks to set out comprehensive and holistic guidelines for healthier lives of migrants and refugees” (Bempong et al., 2019, p. 4). As mentioned

on Point 4 of this Global Compact's Preamble, "[r]efugees and migrants are entitled to the same universal human rights and fundamental freedoms, which must be respected, protected and fulfilled at all times" (Global Compact for Migrants, 2018, p. 2). This Global Compact promotes not only migrants and refugees' access to basic services (Global Compact for Migrants, 2018, pp. 22/23), which are most of the times not available for these people, but it also "promotes the well-being of migrants and the members of communities in countries of origin, transit and destination" (Global Compact for Migrants, 2018, p. 4).

Also in 2018, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) was adopted by the vast majority of UN State Members "as guidance to address the main drivers and challenges of migration and forced displacement" (CMI et al., 2020, p. vi). Through this specific Global Compact, "the international community commits to do its utmost to mobilize support for the achievement of four objectives", namely: i. ease pressure on host countries; ii. enhance refugee self-reliance; iii. expand access to third-country solutions; and iv. support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity (UNHCR, 2022c, p. 7). As a matter of fact, the GCR gives the international community and host countries a "roadmap to better include refugees in national systems, societies and economies, to enable them to contribute to their new communities and to secure their own futures" (UNICEF, n.d.a).

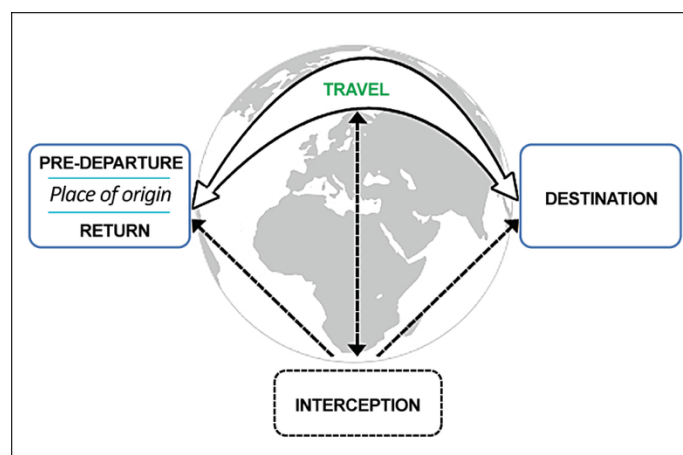
These are just two of the many different agreements and programmes which have been created to, not only spread awareness, but also help these acutely vulnerable people throughout their migration journey. Although many programmes⁵ have been developed to ensure that those affected by forced displacement are taken care of, it is firstly important to discern and understand the challenges and vulnerabilities that these people face at every step of the migration process in order to help them throughout their refugee journey.

⁵ The UNHCR's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programme is one of the many projects organised by the UNHCR to help refugees and migrants. This programme "builds the capacity of local health staff and communities and supports the management of mental, neurological and substance use conditions in health facilities" (UNHCR, n.d.g).

1.2.1 The Migration Process

Like Zimmerman et al. (2011, p. 2) point out, “contemporary mobility is a [...] complex process, [that can be] accurately viewed as a multistage cycle (...)”. Many researchers believe that the migration process can be deconstructed into three big phases. Considering this, authors like Khawaja et al. (2008, p. 3), Zimmerman et al. (2011), Wessels (2014, p. 9) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2021) believe that the refugee journey can be divided into the following three stages: 1. the Pre-migration, or pre-departure, Phase; 2. the Travel, or in transit, Phase; and 3. the Destination, or post migration, Phase. Figure 4 illustrates a simple and straightforward depiction of a migrant’s, and more particularly, of a refugee’s treacherous journey into a “new” and hopefully safer life. Using this figure, it becomes possible to identify the various phases associated with a refugee’s migration process, those of which were presented above.

Figure 4. Migration Phases



Source: Zimmerman et al. (2011, p. 1)

Over the years, the migration process has become increasingly more complex, involving long and hazardous journeys through a variety of countries and regions (Jung, 2023, p. 161). Moreover, Kanengoni et al. (2018, p. 2) and Jung (2023, p. 161) argue that migration itself cannot and should not be understood as a linear process, or solely as the unique act of moving from one country to another. Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 961) state that the process of migration involves three major sets of transitions, namely: “changes

in personal ties and the reconstruction of social networks, the move from one socio-economic system to another, and the shift from one cultural system to another”. Throughout their journey, refugees and asylum seekers encounter and are exposed to many risks and challenges which had not been considered in their first plan, and most of the times, they were not prepared for. Furthermore, migrants and refugees, at that, expect and “aspire to achieve something by moving and not just to move” (Jung, 2023, p. 161). It is important to understand that “[n]o one likes or chooses to be a refugee” (Barman, 2020), and in their journey to a “new” life these people encounter many twists and turns and go through unimaginable things.

Consistently, Khawaja et al. (2008, p. 3) and Wessels (2014, p. 6) assert that the plight of FDPs, and particularly of refugees and asylum seekers, is not limited to the pre-migration phase and is most of the times extended to the transitional phase and to the post migration stage, where these people are seeking asylum in a new country. Wessels (2014, p. 6) considers that “[r]efugees’ experiences across the relocation process, pre-migration to post-migration, have an impact on refugee’s mental health”. Moreover, the same author alludes to the fact that, throughout the migration journey, refugees experience and suffer severe distress, and these hardships can vary and manifest themselves differently depending on the stage of the relocation process at which these individuals are (Wessels, 2014, p. 6).

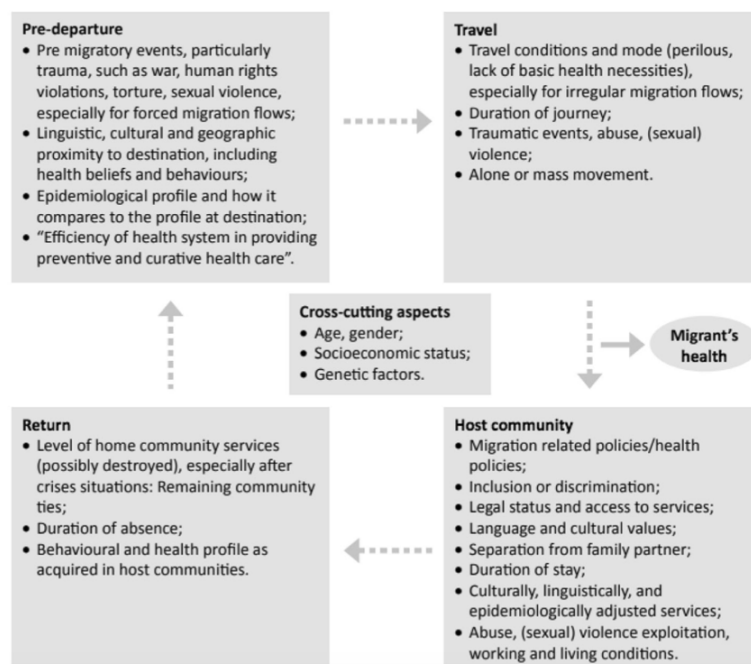
The Mental Health Foundation (n.d.) suggests that “the increased vulnerability to mental health problems that refugees and asylum seekers face is linked to pre-migration experiences (such as war trauma) and post migration conditions (such as separation from family, difficulties with asylum procedures and poor housing)”. As considered by the WHO (2021), migrants and refugees “often face various problems and stressors which can take place at various stages of the migration process”. Moreover, the WHO (2021) claims that the stressors that these people face all throughout the migration process “can also exacerbate pre-existing social and mental health problems”.

As was shown before, the refugee journey can be divided into various stages. In addition, it has been mentioned that refugees and asylum seekers encounter and face certain challenges and vulnerabilities at each step of this process (Wessels, 2014, p. 6). With programmes and agreements like the ones mentioned previously, it has become increasingly “easier” to take better care of these vulnerable people. Nevertheless, and with the continuous growth in numbers, it is to be expected that there will be a greater

struggle in succouring and aiding these individuals in their journey to a better and safer life. However, one of the best ways to assist these people is to properly understand, or at least be aware, of what they have experienced on their journeys, from their home country to their host community. Consequently, a better understanding of the refugees' problems on part of those in charge of helping them, and also of the community which will surround them every day, will hopefully lead to a mitigation of the consequences of the migration journey and will also give way to a better and smoother integration into the host society (UNHCR, n.d.h).

As such, Figure 5 displays some of the different aspects that can affect migrants and especially refugees' health in each of the various migration stages. When looking at this figure, it becomes clear that this vulnerable group of individuals is particularly susceptible to health issues, as they travel through numerous different environments and are exposed to different conditions and dangers. Moreover, and as previously mentioned, these people often lack access to the necessary healthcare and support they need, leading to increased risk of developing health problems. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that their limited resources often also prevent them from receiving timely and appropriate care.

Figure 5. Aspects that Can Affect Refugees' Health in Each of the Migration Stages



Source: Bempong et al. (2019, p. 3)

It is important to note that, in the course of the migration process, it is normal for some challenges to persist. However, their degree of complexity and impact on refugees' lives will vary depending on a number of reasons, for example: in which phase of the migration journey they are; if they have been granted temporary or permanent protection; if they suffer from previous health problems; whether they are receiving adequate follow-up; if they feel fully integrated into their new society; and much more. As such, there will be a more thorough and scrupulous analysis of the different problems and stressors that these people face at every phase of their refugee journey.

1.2.1.1 Pre-Departure Phase

The first phase of the migration process and of the refugee journey is the pre-departure or the pre-migration phase. This particular segment covers “the time before individuals leave from their place of origin” (Zimmerman et al., 2011, p. 2) and is the stage in the relocation process when the “refugees are in their home countries and are deciding and preparing to move to a safe country” (Wessels, 2014, p. 11). Ultimately, and quoting Bhugra and Jones (2001, p. 216), in a simple way, the pre-migration stage is “when the individuals decide to migrate and plan the move”. This can be considered as “the beginning of the migration process and as such affects the rest of the migratory journey” (Gushulak & MacPherson, 2011, p. 1).

Forced migrants, and specifically refugees and asylum seekers, are “particularly likely to have experienced traumatic events at this stage, which may affect their psychological and physical health status throughout their journey” (Zimmerman et al., 2011, p. 2). According to Wessels (2014, p. 5), refugees and asylum seekers “come from countries where the psychological pain and physical torture they experience is extreme”, and many of them “plan for a safe departure from their home country hoping to leave the terror and trauma they experienced behind”. As was previously stated, the decision for a person to leave their home is unquestionably difficult and, most of the times, done as a last resort. The IOM (2021, p. 18) alludes to the fact that “[f]leeing the country of origin (...) means leaving behind part of all of their history, identity, social status, family and social support”. However, they do so because, and like abovementioned, in their country of origin, refugees and asylum seekers “are exposed to abnormal stressors that [ultimately] force them to flee to another country seeking protection and asylum” (IOM, 2021, p. 16). The nature of the events that prompted the decision or the need to leave their home is varied (IOM, 2021, p. 11), but it is strong enough for them to make this choice and go on this hazardous journey.

Grasser (2022, p. 909) believes that “[s]evere stress exposure is a key predictor of mental health, and civilian war trauma, torture, and forced migration rank among the most traumatic life experiences”. Moreover, Wessels (2014, p. 11) considers that the trauma experienced in this stage of the migration process “is a significant factor associated with mental health outcomes seen in refugee populations”. In their home nations, refugees and asylum seekers can be constantly exposed to different kinds of dangers, and an obvious cause of distress for these individuals is “physical or psychological trauma, including the

death of a loved one, inability to live daily life, and denial of basic necessities” (Wessels, 2014, p. 11). Accordingly, the IOM (2021, p. 11) consider that the lack of “access to basic services, including health care, education, security, food and housing” often prompts these people to embark on difficult journeys to find asylum in other countries.

As has been mentioned previously, refugees and asylum seekers have the particularity of possibly being exposed to armed conflict, war or combat, violence, or poverty, as well as to persecution and discrimination (e.g., on the basis of gender, race or nationality) throughout their lives (IOM, 2021, p. 16; Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 366). It is important to note that refugees do not necessarily need to be persecuted in their countries of origin, but if they feel that there is a risk or at least a tangible fear of being persecuted in the future, which may result in them feeling threatened, they may flee and start their refugee journey (Wessels, 2014, p. 9). Nevertheless, there are many other reasons which explain why individuals choose to leave their home countries and seek asylum and a safe haven in other countries. These include, but are not limited to: torture and abuse; imprisonment; violations of their human rights; lack of safety and security; lack of access to basic services; lack of livelihood and opportunities for education and development; loss or separation from loved ones and homes; isolation; and uncertainty (WHO, 2021; IOM, 2021, p. 16; Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 366).

The IOM (2021, p. 12) alludes to the fact that being subjected to negative life events and adversity, such as forced displacement and human rights violations, can cause social and psychological distress at the individual, family, and community levels. These events can “exacerbate pre-existing mental health conditions and/or induce new mental health and psychosocial problems”, including, for example, anxiety, depression, grief, and PTSD (at the individual level), and family separation, breakdown of social networks and the collapse of the community structures (at the social level) (IOM, 2021, p. 12). The different stressors and challenges felt in the home nation, either individually or cumulatively, may create symptoms of psychological and social distress like the ones shown in Table 2 (IOM, 2021, p. 16). According to the same author, the manifestations described in Table 2 are “normal reactions of the body and mind to the unusual events and stressors”. However, it is necessary to mention that “every individual reacts differently to the same events and their impact cannot be generalized”. Moreover, “some people may experience more intense and long-lasting reactions that can affect their functioning” (IOM, 2021, p. 16), whereas others may overcome them fairly quickly.

Table 2. Refugees' Psychosocial Reactions Towards Stressors in the Pre-Migration Phase

<p style="text-align: center;">Emotional</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sadness Grief Anger Fear</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Behavioural and Social</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Social isolation Substance abuse Lack of self-care and hygiene Violent acts towards the self and/or others</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Cognitive</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Difficulties in concentrating Continual worry and helplessness</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Physical</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Changes in eating and sleeping patterns Fatigue Problems in sleeping Breathing difficulties and headaches</p>

Source: Adapted from IOM (2021, p. 16)

1.2.1.2 Travel Phase

The next phase of the migratory process is known as the travel or in transit phase. This is the period where individuals are “between their place of origin and a destination or an interception location” (Zimmerman et al., 2011, p. 2). According to Wessels (2014, p. 11), this transit phase is “the middle stage of the relocation process and is the physical transition and journey from the refugees’ home countries to [hopefully] a safer country”. The IOM (2021, p. 18) conveys the same idea by claiming that this second phase consists of the journey from a refugee’s or asylum seeker’s country of origin to the country of first asylum, which is normally done “through several established migration routes” (Marković et al., 2023, p. 2). Wessels (2014, p. 11) claims that, during this phase, refugees “feel unsafe, fear they will be sent back to their home country, or fear that they will be killed during their travels”. For Zimmerman et al. (2011, p. 2), this phase might, and most likely, will “include multiple ‘transit’ locations where individuals stop for short or long periods”.

Although many refugees and asylum seekers believe that “upon leaving their home country their struggles are behind them, the journey to a new host country can be a long and difficult one” (Wessels, 2014, p. 5). Consistently, Fazel and Stein (2002, p. 366) believe that the “journey to a country of refuge can also be a time of further stress”, as it can “take many months and expose the refugees to more life threatening dangers”. This is an opinion also shared by the WHO (2021), who claims that, during this phase of the migration process, these individuals are exposed to “challenging and life-threatening conditions including violence and detention”. The WHO (2021) and the IOM (2021, p. 18) even note that, during these times, there is a possibility that this vulnerable group of people have no access to essential services to cover their basic needs and may not be in possession of certain personal legal documents which could aid their refugee journey.

A large number of people seeking asylum, in this case, refugees and asylum seekers, often spend extended periods in refugee camps (Wessels, 2014, pp. 10/11; WHO, 2021; IOM, 2021, pp.19/20) “with poor resources and endemic violence” (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 961), before ending up in a permanent host country (Wessels, 2014, p. 5). More worryingly, and quoting Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 961), “in some countries, asylum seekers are kept in detention centres with harsh conditions, which lead to a sense of powerlessness” and which can cause or exacerbate certain mental health problems. As claimed by Zimmerman et al. (2011, pp. 3/4), immigration detention centres and/or

refugee camps “often have deleterious effects on mental or physical health and are commonly sites of human rights abuses”.

During this travel period, refugees may experience, between others, a “lack of safety, detention, infectious diseases, exploitation, human trafficking, physical harm, and other life-threatening events” (IOM, 2021, p. 18). Additionally, it is common, during this difficult and dangerous period, for refugees and asylum seekers to experience prolonged uncertainty about their citizenship status being that, with the ever-growing influx in the number of people living in refugee camps, it becomes increasingly harder and takes a longer time to have a clear answer on the asylum applications (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 961; IOM, 2021, pp. 19/20). Wessels (2014, p. 11) claims that, for refugees, this phase of the migration process “poses a unique threat because protection (...) is often only temporary” and these people live in a constant fear due to the “legal limbo”, and the instability of their future. According to a study conducted in Serbia, “over 80% of refugees were in a life-threatening situation during transit and (...), during their journey, experience an average of ten traumatic experiences”, which include “experiences related to smugglers, severe bodily injuries, death of a close person, discrimination by the local population, lack of water, food and shelter, and separation from family members” (Marković et al., 2023, pp. 2/3).

As a matter of fact, and as stated by the IOM (2021, p. 20), although refugee camps are seen as a temporary solution, “in some contexts they host refugees for many years or even decades”, which can lead to them “becoming dependent on external support and undermine their ability to be autonomous and to integrate”. Moreover, for Wessels (2014, p. 11), even though refugee camps are often viewed as an “initial point of refuge” and as a “safe escape”, they are “often as dangerous and may have higher mortality rates than the countries of origin” due to camp violence, sexual violence, quickly spreading disease epidemics, and many other reasons.

According to the IOM (2021, p. 19), once refugees and asylum seekers find themselves in the country of first asylum, they are “expected to adapt rapidly to new and different cultures, social dynamics and norms, language, values, and environments”, however they are often times “provided with little information (...)[, and suffer from] a lack of knowledge and information about their rights and entitlements and the bureaucratic procedures for receiving asylum (...)”. It is also possible for these people to have a “lack of job opportunities or restrictions on legal work [,] lesser rights compared

to the host population [,] and poor living conditions” (IOM, 2021, p. 19). As such, the IOM (2021, p. 18) deems that this phase, “[a]s in the pre-migration phase, (...) can provoke and cumulate distress, anger, fear, anxiety, a sense of loss of identity and grief and may entail experiencing and/or witnessing violations of fundamental human rights”. Nevertheless, the same author claims that the experiences these people go through, on the pre-migration and in transit phases, can “strengthen resilience and the development of new abilities to face challenging situations, including through creating new social networks”, and provide refugees with “an opportunity to restart their lives in a new community and enjoy security and safety they did not have in their country of origin” (IOM, 2021, pp. 18/19).

1.2.1.3 Destination Phase

The destination, or the post migration phase, is considered by many authors as the last stage of the migration process. It is during this phase that individuals are relocated to a host country, where they can possibly seek and apply for asylum (Wessels, 2014, p. 6). These people will settle either temporarily or long-term in their intended location, in this case, the host country (Zimmerman et al., 2011, p. 2). According to the IOM (2021, p. 41), “[t]his is the period following a refugee’s arrival in the resettlement country and includes the integration process”, which is a very important time in a refugee’s life. It is essential to note that this integration process does not require in any way for refugees to renounce their own cultural identity, but it involves an approach of mutual adaptation on part of both the refugees and the locals (IOM, 2021, p. 41).

This final phase can also incorporate a return movement on part of the migrants, either voluntarily or involuntarily, to their home nations or countries where they travelled from. The European Commission (n.d.c) contends that every year, “over 300,000 foreign nationals are ordered to leave the EU because they have entered or they are staying illegally”. However, only 21% out of the roughly 300,000 foreign nationals truly “return back to their home nation or to the country from which they travelled to the EU” (European Commission, n.d.c). Indeed, for refugees to return to their home country, a stable political and security environment is necessary, as well as access to basic services like healthcare and education. Moreover, refugees also need access to employment opportunities, and the ability to participate in the political and economic life of their communities needs to be ensured for an actual possibility of voluntary return (UNHCR, 2011b, pp. 32/33). Ultimately, and according to UNHCR’s mantra, it needs to be a “return [done] in safety and dignity” (Zetter, 2021, p. 8).

As we know, the trauma experienced by refugees and asylum seekers is extensive, and it is very “difficult to even define all of the types of events they have suffered (...)” (Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center, n.d.). The Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center (n.d.), Sengoelge et al. (2020, p. 2) and Feyissa et al. (2022, p. 1) claim that post-migration stress coupled with pre-migration suffering negatively influence the health and well-being of refugees. Moreover, the Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center (n.d.) and Sengoelge et al. (2020, p. 2) believe that post-migration stress often provides a risk similar or greater than pre-migration trauma. However, and according to Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 961), on the positive side, resettlement usually brings hope and

optimism for refugees, which can ultimately have an initially positive and good effect on their well-being.

It is important to remember that refugees and migrants remain amongst the most vulnerable members of society (Feyissa et al., 2022, p. 1) and are “often faced with xenophobia; discrimination; substandard living, housing and working conditions; and inadequate or restricted access to mainstream health services” (WHO, 2022a). These imposed barriers, alongside others, prevent these individuals from having a normal life in their “new” home and are also very detrimental for their health. Accordingly, Feyissa et al. (2022, p. 1) believe that “[a]lthough they might not necessarily signify mental health problems, asylum seekers and refugees are victims of stressors that make their day to day less bearable”.

As such, it is discernible to conclude that refugees and asylum seekers suffer a lot during this post-arrival phase. The Refugee Health Technical Assistance Center (n.d.) claims that “[w]hen refugees resettle to a host country, which is most often in a place that is not of the refugee’s choosing, the refugee must adapt to a new place and language under uncertain circumstances and with uncertain futures”. As stated by Bhugra and Jones (2001, p. 216), the third stage of the refugee journey is consistent with the time where “individuals deal with the social and cultural frameworks of the new society, learn new roles and become interested in transforming their group”. The same authors mention that in this stage, there is a high likelihood that people will suffer from culture shock and may take some time to understand and become involved into the host society’s day-to-day (Bhugra & Jones, 2001, p. 217). Moreover, it is common for refugees in the post migration phase to suffer from culture shock, as well as from challenges of assimilation, acculturation, and deculturation in their host countries (Bhugra & Jones, 2001, p. 217; Wessels, 2014, p. 12).

According to the WHO (2022a), there is a big chance that refugees and migrants arrive “in the country of destination with poorly controlled non-communicable diseases, as they did not have [access to proper] care on the journey”. Like it has been mentioned, the health, both physical and psychological, of refugees and migrants is “strongly related to the social determinants of health, such as employment, income, education and housing” (WHO, 2022a). Accordingly, Wessels (2014, p. 16) believes that in post-migration, “social and cultural adjustment can largely impact resettlement”. Refugees in the post migration stage and in the process of resettlement can be particularly vulnerable “to

mental illness if they are not accepted by their host country, experience rejection, alienation, and/or lack self-esteem and social support” (Wessels, 2014, p. 16).

During this stage, the primary causes of post migration distress include: social isolation; identity confusion; loss of cultural community and family members; the loss of important life projects; poverty; the loss of valued societal roles; employment difficulties; lack of social support; social and financial hardships; loss of social status and networks; lesser rights compared to the host population; deprivation of basic needs and necessities; poor living or working conditions; challenges with obtaining entitlements; tension between host population and migrants and refugees; violence; exploitation; possible deportation; and more (Wessels, 2014, p. 12; Sengoelge et al., 2020, p. 2; WHO, 2021; IOM, 2021, p. 19). According to the IOM (2021, p. 21), the psychological reactions to the different stressors mentioned above include, but are not restricted to: “anger, grief, fear, frustration, aggression, social withdrawal, speech impediments, fatigue, psychosomatic complaints (e.g. headaches, stomachaches), and difficulties in sleeping”.

Table 3 provides a simple and succinct overview of the various stressors that affect refugees throughout the three phases of the migration process, as well as some of the main reactions, positive and negative, that these people may have throughout their refugee journey. As the IOM (2021, p 19) suggests, living in a host country “can prompt positive psychosocial reactions among refugees, including strengthening and developing positive attitudes and abilities”. However, and like it has been mentioned, it is not easy for refugees to create a “new life in a place with new and unknown social, economic and other systems of meaning” (IOM, 2021, p. 19). For this reason, it becomes imperative that refugees have a good support system to help them through these arduous and difficult times, and that their host communities have an open mind and show willingness to, not only, welcome them but also to integrate them into their society. Sengoelge et al. (2020, p. 2) believe that, when it comes to asylum seekers and refugees, “social support in the host country may act as a buffer against mental health problems by providing tangible and instrumental support in coping with stressors, as well as by offering a sense of belonging, which in turn may reduce the likelihood of psychological problems”. It is important to remember that “moving to and settling in a new place is not only negative; it can offer refugees an opportunity to restart their lives in a new community and enjoy security and safety they did not have in their country of origin” (IOM, 2021, p. 19).

Table 3. Stressors and Possible Reactions of Refugees Throughout the Migration Process

	<u>Stressors</u>	<u>Psychosocial Suffering⁶</u>	<u>Resilience⁷</u>	<u>Adversity-activated Development⁸</u>
Pre-Migration Phase	Abuse Armed conflict Financial problems Loss of loved ones Loss of material possessions Persecution	Anger Anxiety Apprehension Disorientation	Activities (sports, arts, writing, etc.)	Creation of new social networks
Travel Phase	Abuse Detention Famine Infectious diseases Physical harm Unsafe travel conditions	Distrust Fatigue Fear	Creation of new life aspirations Creation of new relationships	Discovering new facets of the self Experiencing or accepting new gender, social and other roles
Post Migration Phase	Acculturation challenges (e.g. language, social norms, etc.) Changes in social roles and family dynamics Concerns about resettlement outcomes Difficulties in understanding and absorbing information Difficulty in accessing essential services Discrimination Financial problems Identity conflicts Lack of documentation Lack of social integration Poor living conditions Possibility of failure of application Social adjustments Stigma Undefined legal status Unemployment/lack of livelihood	Feeling of not belonging to the community Frustration Grief Guilt Hopelessness Low self-confidence and self-esteem Negative coping mechanisms Sense of hopelessness Sense of instability Stress Substance abuse Worry	Family and other social support networks Flexibility Patience Personal adaptive coping mechanisms Referring to traditional culture Revival of traditional ceremonies Self-confidence Social cohesion Tolerance of other cultures Value system	Increasing tolerance about other cultures Independence Innovation New ways of thinking and breaking traditional boundaries Non-traditional economic activities Non-traditional lifestyles Rights-oriented thinking and behaviour Transformative renewal of life aspirations

Source: Adapted from IOM (2021, pp. 32 & 61)

⁶ Suffering is defined by the IOM (2021, p. 17) as “responses that compromise a refugee’s well-being, cause various forms of social and psychological distress, and may include the aggravation or emergence of mental disorders”.

⁷ According to the IOM (2021, p. 17) resilience can be defined as the “qualities, characteristics, behaviours, social relations and support already possessed by a refugee that s/he can use to respond to the challenges posed by adversity”.

⁸ Adversity-activated Development includes “new qualities, relations, skills, and learning that refugees develop and learn to respond to adversity” (IOM, 2021, p. 17).

1.2.2 Refugee Youth

For Vaghri et al. (2019, p. 1), the phenomenon of forced displacement is particularly concerning when it comes to children, mainly because they are still developing mentally and emotionally and, unlike adults, lack the tools to navigate trauma and harrowing experiences (Concern Worldwide US, 2020). Accordingly, Grasser (2022, p. 912) claims that children suffer disproportionately from migration and conflict-associated morbidity and mortality. Alarming, in 2021, approximately 41 per cent, or 42 million, of the world's FDPs were estimated to be younger than 18 years of age (Dawson-Hahn et al., 2016, p. 2; UNHCR, 2022a, pp. 15/16). Of these, 10 million were young refugees (UNICEF, 2022).

Considering this, each year, millions of children arrive at state borders seeking protection and entry, but many are turned away, and many more are treated as invisible or with suspicion as false and overwhelming petitioners (Lawrence et al., 2019, p. 1). Governments, NGOs, and individuals are beginning to recognize the urgent need to address the issue of forced displacement of children, as there has been a growing realization that such displacement poses a serious threat to the physical and psychological well-being of these children. As a result, there is increasingly international pressure to find solutions for this problem (UNHCR et al., 2023, p. 18; Vaghri et al., 2019, pp. 11/12).

Childhood is an especially important phase of life that can be considered as a critical “period of accelerated growth and development [in all physical, mental, spiritual, and social domains,] as well as a time of great vulnerability” (Vaghri et al., 2019, p. 1 & 3). Accordingly, the same authors claim that this important phase in a person's life can be “negatively affected by the many stressors to which refugee and asylum-seeking children are subjected”. As a matter of fact, although young refugees are incredibly resilient, they face particular challenges because of their age and experiences (Anning et al., 2018, p. 10). Knowing this, Roads to Refuge (n.d.) asserts that these children tend to carry the scars of their experiences in their home countries and of the displacement journey with them. Grasser (2022, p. 912) claims that, given the exposure of these children “to chronic stress during critical and sensitive periods of development, youth who resettle as refugees are at a greater risk for health disparities that may be either aggravated or alleviated upon resettlement”.

It is important to remember that displaced children on the move are children first and foremost (UNHCR et al., 2023, p. 11). It is a right of every child to be protected, however, when it comes to refugee children, they are entitled to receive a special level of protection (UNHCR et al., 2023, p. 11; Azmi & Basir, 2019, p. 683). As claimed by the UNHCR et al. (2023, p. 12), “[a]ll actions related to displaced children must be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its four guiding principles”. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that recognizes the human rights of children, which are defined in Article 1 as persons up to the age of 18 (unless national laws recognize an earlier age of majority) (UNICEF, n.d.b; UNHCR, n.d.f). This Convention, which is an unique means of protecting children’s rights (Aliyev, 2021, p. 255), was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession on 20 November 1989, and entered into force in September 1990, in accordance with its Article 49⁹ (UNHCR, n.d.f). This particular Convention is known as being the most ratified human rights treaty in history, having been ratified by 196 countries¹⁰, also known as State Parties (SPs) (as of October 2015). The CRC was a breakthrough point in history as it signalled the first time in history that a “formal commitment was made to ensure the realization of child rights and monitor progress on the situation of children”. This Convention shows that “children’s rights can no longer be perceived as an option, as a question of favour or kindness to children or as an expression of charity” (UNICEF, n.d.b).

Vaghri et al. (2019, p. 3) remark the fact that “[d]espite their importance, protection and promotion of rights during [childhood] are seriously compromised when it comes to refugee and asylum-seeking children”. As such, the CRC has the particularity of providing special protection for refugee children, as Article 22(1) recognizes the “State’s obligation to grant protection to the refugee children” (Azmi & Basir, 2019, p. 683). The abovementioned article of the CRC reads the following (UNHCR, n.d.f):

States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person,

⁹ Article 49(1) of the CRC claimed the following: “The present Convention shall enter into force on the thirtieth day following the date of deposit with the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the twentieth instrument of ratification or accession” (UNHCR, n.d.f).

¹⁰ According to UNICEF (n.d.b), the United States of America (USA) is the only member state of the UN that has not ratified the Convention. The USA has signaled the intention of ratifying it by signing the CRC but has yet to do so.

receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties.

Nevertheless, Vaghri et al. (2019, p. 2) recognize that, in reality, many SPs, “who have a clear set of obligations under the CRC, fail to fulfil their responsibilities for refugee and asylum-seeking children and by doing so, subject children to a discriminatory treatment”. Moreover, such discrimination can, not only negatively impact children’s health and development, but it also violates their human rights recognized under the CRC. As it is known, and considering the words of Vaghri et al. (2019, p. 3), refugees suffer from prolonged exposure to unfavourable conditions, which can have “lasting effects on a child’s ability to thrive”. These experiences, which Vaghri et al. (2019, p. 3) call Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), not only have negative health outcomes and severely impact the rest of a child’s life, but can also directly impact their resettlement process in a host country.

Unfortunately, these traumatic experiences have detrimental ramifications on the health and development of children (Vaghri et al., 2019, p. 12) and therefore can “affect their mental and physical health long after the events have occurred” (National Child Traumatic Stress Network [NCTSN], n.d.). Moreover, it is important to remember that these children are deprived of crucial components that are indispensable to the development of a person, including: education, health, play, nutrition, safety, socialization, and much more (Vaghri et al., 2019, p. 12; Anning et al., 2018). Ultimately, refugee youth is faced with a sense of “lost” childhood as they have to grow up too quickly in order to survive, and most of the times have to prematurely assume adult roles, for example, by being a language link between their families and the outside world (Concern Worldwide US, 2020; Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 367).

On that account, and as was previously explained, refugee children are confronted with traumatic experiences in a very important part of their life, and these ACEs can lead to changes in their development and upbringing, particularly when it comes to physical and mental health (Williams et al., 2016, p. 840). These traumatic events can ensue “while the refugees are in their country of origin [pre-migration], during displacement from their country of origin [in transit], or in the resettlement process [post migration]” (NCTSN, n.d.). As such, and according to Robila (2018, p. 8), the needs of young refugees, similarly

to the adults', focus and are directly connected to their experiences throughout the three stages of the refugee journey. Figure 6 illustrates some of the different factors that affect refugee children (as well as adults) during their migration process. By observing the figure below, it is evident that both adults and children will be affected by a variety of similar factors, although to varying degrees.

Figure 6. Factors that Affect Migrant's Mental Health

Premigration	Migration	Postmigration
Adult		
Economic, educational and occupational status in country of origin	Trajectory (route, duration)	Uncertainty about immigration or refugee status
Disruption of social support, roles and network	Exposure to harsh living conditions (e.g., refugee camps)	Unemployment or underemployment
Trauma (type, severity, perceived level of threat, number of episodes)	Exposure to violence	Loss of social status
Political involvement (commitment to a cause)	Disruption of family and community networks	Loss of family and community social supports
	Uncertainty about outcome of migration	Concern about family members left behind and possibility for reunification
		Difficulties in language learning, acculturation and adaptation (e.g., change in sex roles)
Child		
Age and developmental stage at migration	Separation from caregiver	Stresses related to family's adaptation
Disruption of education	Exposure to violence	Difficulties with education in new language
Separation from extended family and peer networks	Exposure to harsh living conditions (e.g., refugee camps)	Acculturation (e.g., ethnic and religious identity; sex role conflicts; intergenerational conflict within family)
	Poor nutrition	Discrimination and social exclusion (at school or with peers)
	Uncertainty about future	

Source: Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 961)

For Aliyev (2021, p. 261), the rights of refugee children, which are expressed in the beforementioned CRC, are not only violated by the disturbances caused by war and other types of detrimental experiences suffered in the home nations, but also by the hardships felt during the migration process. Anning et al. (2018, p. 8) present the notion that many refugee children are subjected to unimaginable suffering, and they are often deliberately and systematically targeted in their countries. Considering this, whilst in their country of origin, refugee youth may have experienced: violence (as witnesses, victims, and/or perpetrators); war; lack of food, water, and shelter; physical injuries, infections, and diseases; torture; forced labour; sexual assault; lack of medical care; loss of loved ones; disruption in or lack of access to schooling; and more (NCTSN, n.d.). Moreover,

and as claimed by Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 962), during the first stage of the migration process, “most refugee children and their families face social upheaval and disruptions to their social and educational development”. During this time, children are faced and suffer direct and indirectly from the parlous and difficult situations in their conflict-affected settings, for example, by being prevented from going to school, lacking proper healthcare, as well as lacking access to basic sanitation, clean water, and food (Anning et al., 2018, p. 8).

The period of displacement itself can also be extremely traumatic for these children (Williams et al., 2016, p. 840), and it is a time where many of them are “separated from their parents and no longer have the emotional, physical and financial support of their relatives” (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 962). Throughout the refugee journey, these children are still left with many different problems and challenges that they must face, often alone, scared, and traumatized (Malim, 2019). Aliyev (2021, p. 261) concurs with this idea, and claims that, even after leaving their homelands, salvation is far from being acquired for these young refugees. Williams et al. (2016, p. 840) claim that “[c]hildren arrive in refugee camps often in parlous conditions of physical and mental health”. Additionally, it is common for refugee youth to be living in refugee camps where there is a lack of proper access to basic needs, and for them to face some of the same challenges experienced in the previous stage of the migration journey, for example, being exposed to violence and lacking access to food, water, and shelter. However, the NCTSN (n.d.) believes that in this phase, youth can often face new hardships, including separation from family, loss of community, uncertainty about the future, harassment by local authorities, traveling long distances by foot, and detention.

Having said that, whilst refugee children may feel some sort of relief when they are resettled, it is conceded that the difficulties they face may not end upon their arrival in the host country (NCTSN, n.d.). As such, the last stage of the refugee journey – the post migration phase – is increasingly referred to as a period of “secondary trauma” (Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 366), where refugee youth is faced with a variety of challenges and difficulties which had not been expected and previously considered. As claimed by Williams et al. (2016, p. 840), children arriving in high-income countries, like Portugal, are “liable to present with a combination of physical and psychological issues originating in trauma, exposure and inadequate access to basic rights, including care in their home country and through often long and arduous journeys before reaching [their final

resettlement destination]”. Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 962) and the NCTSN (n.d.) contend that it is also recurrent for refugee youth and families to suffer from acculturation and resettlement stress, as well as family poverty and isolation from the host community.

In essence, whilst trying to resettle into their “new” homes, refugee children are met with many challenges as they try to navigate their lives, as minorities in a new country, all whilst learning about a new culture and attempting to conjugate it with their own culture of origin. The NCTSN (n.d.), Roads to Refuge (n.d.), Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 962) and Vaghri et al. (2019, pp. 3-6) believe that some of the events that can ensue due to the stresses of the post migration phase include: conflicts between children and parents over new and old cultural views; conflicts with peers related to cultural misunderstandings; the necessity to translate for family members who are not fluent in English¹¹; problems trying to fit in school whilst also learning a new language; language and literacy difficulties due to disrupted or limited prior education; struggle to form an integrated identity including elements of their new culture and their culture of origin. Moreover, refugee children may experience feelings of loneliness and loss of social network; discrimination and racism; social isolation; experiences of harassment from peers, adults, or law enforcement; experiences with others who do not trust the refugee child and family; prejudice; feelings of not fitting in with others; loss of social status and much more (NCTSN, n.d.; Roads to Refuge, n.d.; Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 962).

It is worth acknowledging that not all refugees experience a reality of prejudice and discrimination, as modern society has become more conscious of the challenges faced by these individuals and has shown increased openness and acceptance into welcoming them into their communities (Rasmussen & Poushter, 2019). Nevertheless, according to Anning et al. (2018, p. 23), “[t]he traumatic aspect of the brutality they have witnessed, experienced, or have been forced to mete out themselves can have a psychological effect well in to adulthood”. Respectively, Grasser (2022, p. 912) asserts that children, like adult refugees, who were exposed to traumatic events, such as armed conflict, war, and more, “have increased rates of PTSD, anxiety, depression, behavioral problems, and somatic symptoms”. However, and worryingly, “youth who have lost a parent and youth who

¹¹ According to Carbonara and Taronna (2018, p. 265), English can be considered as a contact language and has become increasingly regarded as the world’s dominant lingua franca (ELF). As such, ELF allows for easier communication and social interactions with people from different backgrounds and different first languages, throughout the migration journey (Henry, 2015, p. 3; Carbonara & Taronna, 2018, p. 268). Whilst it is important to learn the host country’s language, English is undoubtedly a unifying language that enables people to understand each other, share ideas, build bridges, and create meaningful connections, regardless of their native tongue.

resettle unaccompanied are at a higher risk for PTSD, depression, and mental health problems more broadly” (Grasser, 2022, p. 912). Considering this, Figure 7 displays some of the most common symptoms of psychological distress affecting refugee youth. It is important to note that refugee children often present a “mixture of the symptoms listed and not necessarily fulfilling a single diagnostic category (...)” (Fazel & Stein, 2002, p. 367).

Figure 7. Common Symptoms of Psychological Disorders in Refugee Youth

<p><i>Post-traumatic stress disorder</i> Persistent avoidance of stimuli: specific fears; fear of being alone; withdrawal Re-experiencing aspects of the trauma: nightmares; visual images; feelings of fear and helplessness Persistent symptoms of increased arousal: easily aroused; disorganised and agitated behaviour; lack of concentration</p> <p><i>Other anxiety symptoms</i> Marked anxiety and worry: irritability, restlessness Other sleep disorders Somatic symptoms including headaches and abdominal pain</p> <p><i>Depression</i> Low mood Loss of interest or pleasure Declining school performance</p> <p><i>Conduct disorders</i></p>
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Source: Fazel and Stein (2002, p. 367)

It is imperative to recognize that “refugee children are owed appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance” (Whalen, 2022, p. 358) as they encounter, throughout their childhood, a range of challenging situations that, unfortunately, expose them to violations of their rights (Vaghri et al., 2022, p. 355). To support the successful integration of refugees into host communities, it is essential for the host country to have robust policies and systems in place that address the unique needs of refugees, including both adults and children. As a matter of fact, a comprehensive and inclusive approach to refugee integration is indispensable for promoting the well-being of refugees and creating cohesive and thriving communities. Accordingly, it is possible to conclude that host

countries must provide refugees with the necessary tools to help them adjust to their new reality, as well as help them build a new life in an entirely new home (Crawford, 2016).

Considering this, good social integration and acceptance from the host community are crucial in mitigating the hardships of refugees. Keeping this in mind, and as reported by Kirmayer et al. (2011, p. 962), “[p]ostmigration factors, including the quality of reception and support in the country of asylum, are important predictors of long-term outcome”. As such, host countries should prioritize the provision of inclusive and welcoming environments for refugees, as this can play a crucial role in their long-term recovery and integration. When refugees are accepted and welcomed into the host community, they are more likely to feel a sense of belonging and security, which can lead to improved mental health and well-being (Brar-Josan, 2015, pp. 4, 7, 9, & 14; Kitchen et al., 2015, p. 3). Fazel et al. (2011, p. 273) emphasized the significance of perceptions of acceptance or discrimination experienced by refugees within host countries. According to the authors, such perceptions can have a profound impact on how refugees respond to traumatic experiences and cope with the resulting psychological distress.

Social integration can facilitate refugees' access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, which are essential for their self-sufficiency and successful integration into the host society (Hammoud et al., 2022, p. 1). Studies have also shown that social integration and acceptance can reduce social tension and conflicts between refugees and host communities, leading to more peaceful and cohesive societies (Jayakody et al., 2022, pp. 12/13). For instance, the UNHCR (n.d.i) and Verme (2023) claim that successful integration of refugees into the host community can contribute to local economic development, cultural enrichment, and social cohesion. Therefore, investing in good social integration policies and fostering acceptance from the host community can benefit both refugees and their host communities (UNHCR, n.d.i).

**CHAPTER II – THE NEW REALITY: FROM MULTICULTURAL TO
INTERCULTURAL SOCIETIES**

2.1 Refugee Integration

Since the mid-1990s, the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees have been key priorities of the European Union. As a matter of fact, and according to the UNHCR (2013a, p. 8), over the past decades, EU Member States “have placed integration high on the policy and political agenda (...)”. Moreover, the UNHCR (2013b, p. 9) considers that the integration and inclusion of third-country nationals (TCNs) is, nowadays, the subject of some of the most significant discussions within the EU. With the increase in migration, the “composition of the EU’s population is thus changing, and European societies are faced with increasing diversity” (European Commission, 2011, p. 2). The same source claims that “[i]f the full benefits from migration are to be realized, Europe needs to find a way to better cope with its diverse and multicultural societies through more effective integration of migrants [and refugees]”.

In fact, integration has gained relevance in today’s world affairs mainly due to the fact that it is considered to be the “most relevant durable solution” for the majority of refugees in Europe (UNHCR, 2013a, p. 8). For the UNHCR (n.d.j, p. 1), including refugees “in the societies where they have found refuge after fleeing conflict and persecution is the most effective way of helping them to rebuild their lives”. As indicated in Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, n.d.c, p. 246):

The Contracting States [of the aforementioned Convention] shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings and to reduce as far as possible the charges and costs of such proceedings.

According to the European Commission (2011, p. 2), EU Member States have “confirmed their commitment to further [develop] the core idea of integration as a driver for economic development and social cohesion, in order to better enhance migrants’ contribution to economic growth and cultural richness”. This being said, and quoting the UNHCR (2013a, p. 10), “[i]n many EU countries, significant investment has been made in programmes and associated support to facilitate integration and identify good [practices]”. Moreover, over the years, there have been a number of different action plans and pacts drafted that target the integration and inclusion of refugees into host communities, with examples being the Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals and the Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (European

Commission, n.d.e). These plans are aimed at providing migrants and refugees with access to basic needs and services, as well as to other relevant areas, such as education, employment, social services, and much more, as to ensure their successful integration into society. A major focus of these plans is also the strengthening of relationships between migrants and refugees and their host communities in order to foster mutual understanding and trust.

Nonetheless, as claimed by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, 2018, p. 5), the process of adaptation “of life in a new country, particularly for those who may have had difficult journeys, is not always easy”. It is important to remember, and as it was mentioned in the previous chapter, that refugees and asylum seekers often reach their new host societies in a precarious mental and/or physical state, which in turn affects their process of integration into their new community, and makes this process inherently complex (Sorgen, 2015, p. 242). Similarly, the European Commission (2011, p. 6) contends that “[t]he integration of beneficiaries of international protection requires particular attention. They have often had traumatic experiences, which require specific social and psychological care”. However, this is not the only barrier to refugee integration. Sorgen (2015, p. 241) asserts that the integration process can be affected by other factors such as: the “reasons for fleeing one’s home country, linguistic proficiency, education, housing issues, and reception from host community”.

Therefore, providing appropriate support and resources, as well as having a comprehensive integration strategy in place may be essential for the successful integration of refugees into their new community. This will be especially true when it comes to refugee children and youth. This particular group of refugees have “specific needs which require a [more] targeted approach to integration planning” (UNHCR, n.d.k). As a matter of fact, the same author claims that “[s]upports provided to refugee families will be critical to the integration of children and youth”, and that “[p]lanning for refugee children and youth needs to be flexible and responsive”.

Overall, the European Commission (n.d.d) believes that the “successful integration of migrants [and particularly of refugees] is key to the future well-being, prosperity and cohesion of European societies”. This is an opinion further reiterated by the European Commission (2020a, p. 1), who states that “[e]nsuring effective integration and inclusion in the EU of migrants is a social and economic investment that makes

European societies more cohesive, resilient and prosperous”. In fact, the same author claims that:

The European way of life is an inclusive one. Integration and inclusion are key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for the long-term well-being of our societies and the stability of our economies. If we want to help our societies and economies thrive, we need to support everyone who is part of society, with integration being both a right and a duty for all.

The UNHCR (2014, p. 2) maintains that “[i]ntegration is a continuum”, and as such, the successful integration and inclusion of TCNs into the European society depends both on early action and long-term commitment (European Commission, n.d.e). For Gingrich and Enns (2019, p. 11), integration and inclusion “are regularly considered critical to settlement of refugee newcomers”. Likewise, the European Commission (2011, p. 4) claims that integration is “an ever evolving process, which requires close monitoring, constant efforts, innovative approaches and bold ideas”.

Both the Global Compact for Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees, which were mentioned in the previous chapter, recognize that host communities play a key role in integrating, protecting, and assisting migrants and refugees. As such, the purpose of these global compacts is “to put in practice the principles of burden-sharing and shared responsibility in order to better protect and assist migrants and refugees, support host countries and communities, and have broad multisectoral collaboration to address migration in all its governance dimensions” (Zoni, 2022). From the point of view of the European Commission (2011, p. 4):

Integration requires the engagement by the receiving society in accommodating the migrants [and refugees], respecting their rights and cultures and informing them about their obligations. At the same time, migrants [and refugees] need to show the willingness to integrate and to respect rules and values of the society in which they live.

As it was described beforehand, for refugee children and youth, both the refugee and resettlement experiences coincide and may interfere with critical stages of their social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development (UNHCR, n.d.k). Moreover, these experiences may also affect their sense of identity and belonging, as they have likely suffered the loss of their culture, home, and in many times, of secure and stable relationships. Knowing this, the host societies and all stakeholders involved in the

resettlement and integration process of these individuals, both adults and children, should advocate for the creation of individualized and adapted support for a person's specific needs and circumstances. All in all, when it comes to refugee children and youth, "their integration is about supporting their aspirations", as well as making sure they have the ability to fully participate and engage with their host community, or better call it, their new community (UNHCR, n.d.k).

Nevertheless, according to the UNHCR (n.d.j, p. 1), the integration and inclusion of migrants, and particularly of refugees, can be hindered in societies that outright "reject groups that come from a different culture, religion or ethnicity than theirs". As a result, refugees often face certain obstacles that "hinder their participation in the social, economic and political life of the host communities where they live" (UNHCR, n.d.j, p. 1). Spindler (2016) mentions that, unfortunately, "[t]he arrival of [millions of] refugees and migrants to Europe [in the last years have] also given rise to hostility and tensions within the societies hosting them. Refugees and migrants have suffered racist and xenophobic attacks, prejudice and discrimination". Consistently, Silove et al. (2017, p. 131) claim that "[t]hroughout history, recipient societies have responded in ambivalent ways to refugees, at times greeting them as heroes, and at others as interlopers who threaten the peace, integrity, cultural identity and economic stability of the host country".

Hajduković (2023, p. 6) states that the lack of integration of migrants and refugees into the host communities "does not only lead to social, economic, and psychological problems of the person arriving in a new country, but also to the loss of income taxes and contributions to the pension and social security due to poor integration in the labour market". Additionally, the same author mentions that the lack of integration can worryingly lead to "fragmented societies and political instability". As such, governments should have comprehensive national integration plans in place in order to "extinguish", or at least, minimize such behaviours on part of hosting societies. These plans should include not only migrants and refugees, but also the host communities themselves. Moreover, and taking into account the various problems associated with the lack of integration, good integration policies and strategies are essential for countries to ensure stability and cohesion within their national communities.

Having already mentioned some of the negative problems and outcomes that can arise if countries fail to invest in the integration of migrants and refugees into their society, it is important that the good outcomes of such an investment are also pointed out.

As such, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the UNHCR (n.d.i) acknowledges that the arrival of refugees “can trigger positive social and economic changes, transform civil culture and local institutions, and promote social cohesion, particularly when local communities are engaged in welcoming them”. Additionally, the OSCE (2018, p. 25) believes that “[i]n the process of integration, migrants [and refugees] stimulate change and development in receiving societies, resulting in greater diversity”.

The notion of diversity is essential in the integration process and the acknowledgement of this perceived diversity is unquestionable and indispensable in this process. As already stated, the proportion of displaced people, and particularly of FDPs, has grown rapidly especially in the last decade (Boda et al., 2023, p. 1). To this sense, Appave and David (2017, pp. 1/2) indicate that societies nowadays are far from homogeneous, and countries are encouraged, more than ever, to accommodate the diversity that comes from this “global megatrend” (Boda et al., 2023, p. 1). To that degree, the UNHCR (2022d) believes that diversity “creates economic opportunities for refugees, fosters dialogue, enriches communication and provides refugees with a sense of identity”.

As explained by the UNHCR (2013a, p. 10), integration policies within the EU allow newcomers, including refugees, “to become economically productive [and] leads to self-reliance, dignity, and social interaction (...)”. Nevertheless, Appave and David (2017, p. 2) note that the integration policy debates and models “have been strongly influenced by the evolution of the international human rights framework”, as well as by the uncertainty associated with the varying migratory patterns of the last few decades and those that will emerge in the coming years (OECD, 2020, p. 2). Ultimately, the UNHCR (2013a, p. 10) claims that “[g]etting integration right is therefore key to both a successful Europe and to an effective protection system for refugees in Europe”.

2.1.1 Bridging Cultures: Integration, Inclusion and Social Cohesion

The relationship between migrants and refugees and the communities in which they reside undoubtedly forms an integral and significant part of the migration cycle. Accordingly, this relationship will involve psychological and sociological processes of adaptation on part of both parties involved, that is, the migrants and the receiving communities, which in turn affects and ultimately determines the degree of integration and inclusion migrants and refugees will experience, including their sense of belonging (IOM, 2019b, p. 167).

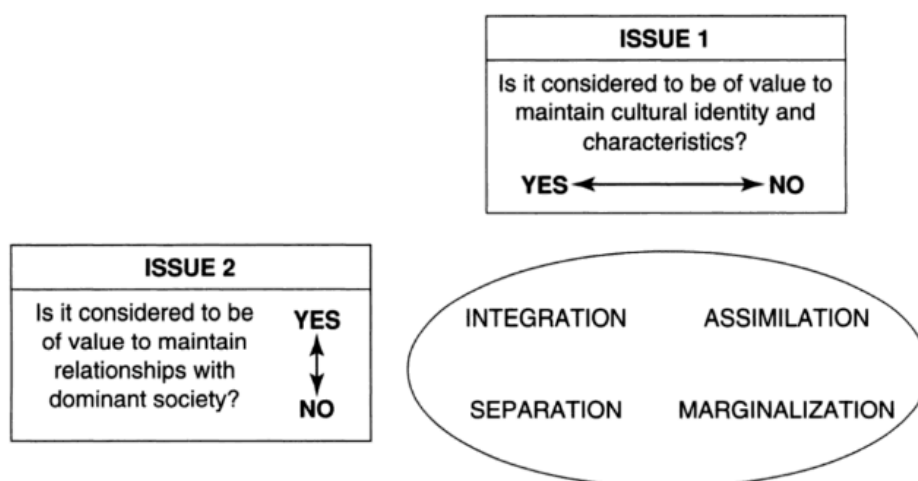
In this regard, migrants and refugees may find it challenging to adapt to a new culture, customs, social values, language, and more, when settling in a new community, especially permanently (IOM, 2019b, p. 167). Nonetheless, migrants and refugees are not the only ones who will be affected, as this process is sure to also result in changes in the communities receiving them. Berry (2017, p. 15) describes this process as acculturation. According to this author, acculturation “represents the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members”. Moreover, Berry (2017, p. 15) describes the abovementioned process as multifaceted and mutual, in which changes take place in all groups and individuals in contact with each other. From the point of view of Redfield et al. (1936, p. 149), acculturation “comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups”.

Because acculturation deals with cultural change, it becomes essential to clarify the notion of culture. As such, according to Williams (1976, p. 76), culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. For Hall (1997, p. 1), culture is all about ‘shared meanings’. Yasavievna (2021, p. 759) provides a more thorough definition for the concept of culture. As such, the author believes that culture is “a way of life of a group of people – the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next”. It is important, however, to point out that, like Schwartz et al. (2010, p. 240) clarify, culture “is sometimes, but not always, synonymous with nations and national boundaries”.

The notion of acculturation has significantly changed since it first was conceptualized. In the beginning, it implied that as “migrants [and refugees] acquired the values, practices, and beliefs of their new homelands, they were expected to discard those from their cultural heritage”, that is to say, it referred to the adjustment of the minority group (migrants and refugees) to the majority group (receiving society). However, since the 1980s, it has been recognized that “acquiring the beliefs, values, and practices of the receiving country does not automatically imply that an immigrant will discard (or stop endorsing) the beliefs, values, and practices of her or his country of origin” (Schwartz et al., 2010, p. 238).

As explained by Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 25), people with migrant background, and especially FDPs, may “experience some kind of conflict or struggle [when coming into contact with a new culture and social context] and might have to find a strategy on how to best adapt to their situation”. Appropriately, Berry developed a model that shows the various strategies which people can employ to cope with the cultural changes brought about by the migration process (Berry, 2017, p. 22). According to Berry and Sam (1997, p. 296) and Berry (2017, p. 22), the model created, and shown in Figure 8, addresses the relationship between two main issues: (1) the preservation of heritage culture and identity; and (2) fostering relationships between groups.

Figure 8. Acculturation Issues and Strategies



Source: Berry and Sam (1997, p. 296)

The interception of these two dimensions made for the identification of four main acculturation strategies, being these: i. Assimilation; ii. Segregation/Separation; iii. Integration; and iv. Marginalization (Berry and Sam, 1997; Berry, 2017). Table 4 summarizes the implication of each strategy identified by the abovementioned authors. Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 25) provided small descriptions for each of the strategies identified by Berry and Sam. According to the authors, the first strategy of Assimilation is when “the immigrant accepts the new culture and rejects the old ‘home’ culture”. The opposing strategy is that of Segregation, or Separation, and it is when “the immigrant holds on to the ‘home’ culture and completely rejects the new culture”. On the other hand, Marginalization is when the immigrant “rejects both the new and old culture”. Lastly, Integration is associated with the most positive adaptative outcomes, and it involves “both the cultural maintenance and participation [of migrants and refugees] in the wider society” (Mittelstädt & Odag, 2016, p. 25).

Table 4. Berry's Acculturation Typology

<p>Assimilation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + accepts new culture - rejects old culture 	<p>Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + accepts new culture + maintains old culture
<p>Segregation / Separation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rejects new culture + maintains old culture 	<p>Marginalization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rejects new culture - rejects old culture

Source: Adapted from Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 25)

Bierwiazzonek and Kunst (2021, pp. 1476/1477) claim that integration can be considered as the most beneficial acculturation strategy, as it involves the acceptance of both one’s heritage culture and the dominant mainstream culture of the host society. Not only that but, as mentioned by Choy et al. (2021, pp. 3/4), integration is associated with the most positive mental health symptoms, that is, the least depressive symptoms, on migrant populations. Accordingly, the European Commission (2016b, p. 1) believes that the integration of immigrants is a “precondition of an inclusive, cohesive and prosperous society”. Therefore, and in order to better understand it, it is necessary to clarify the concept of integration and what it entails.

For Appave and David (2017, p. 1), integration is a process that lies at the very heart of the migration experience. However, unfortunately, the concept of integration is difficult to define “as there is no legally binding and universal definition of the term” (OSCE, 2018, p. 24). Muus (1997, p. 38) further explains that, in fact, “[t]here is no uniform concept of migrants’ integration in the European receiving societies”, however, according to the Migrant Portal Data (2020), many definitions of integration tend share commonalities, as will be grasped, but nevertheless remain highly context and/or country specific. Conversely, the UNHCR (2013a, p. 13) believes that the “lack of a firm definition may reflect the subjective character of integration as a process and the way in which an individual can be integrated in one area of the receiving society but [unfortunately] not in others”.

From the point of view of Hynie (2018, p. 265), “[i]ntegration, in its broadest sense, refers to inclusion and participation, both economically and socially” of migrants and refugees in their host communities. For Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas (2016, p. 14), integration is basically “the process of becoming an accepted part of society”, both as individuals and as groups. It is, essentially, “the process of resettlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration” (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016, p. 11). For the UNHCR (2014, p. 1), the integration of refugees is:

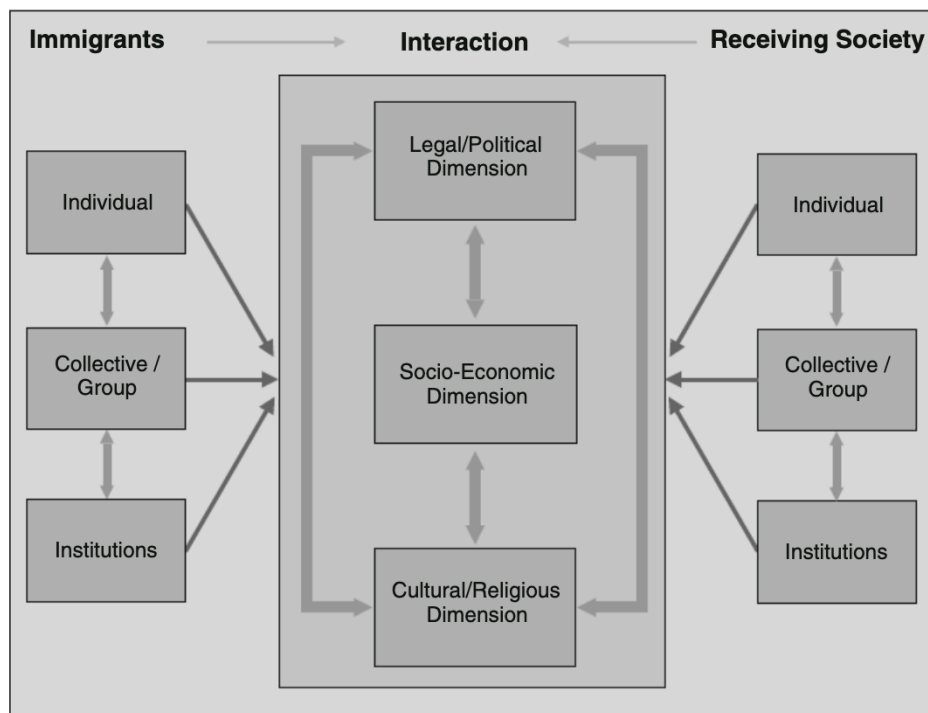
[A] dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires efforts by all parties concerned, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the host society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of host communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population.

Additionally, the European Commission (2011, p. 2) indicates that integration “is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by migrants and by the societies that receive them”. More than that, the IOM (2017, p. 2) believes that integration can be understood as a “two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and host societies in which migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community”. The same author claims that integration “entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and host communities, and (...) [it is also] a cross-cutting and multi-sectoral issue that pertains to policy areas that address the economic, social, legal, cultural, and civic spheres and impacts all aspects of migrants’ lives and their communities” (IOM, 2017, p. 2). That is to say, and like mentioned

previously, the host society is not left unaffected by this process, and thus plays an important role in its proper development and success (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016, p. 11).

The process of integration on part of the refugees is undoubtedly complex and gradual, “comprising distinct but inter-related legal, economic, social and cultural dimensions, all of which are important for refugees’ ability to integrate successfully as fully included members of the host society” (UNHCR, 2014, p. 1). Quoting the UNHCR (2013a, p. 14), integration can be “understood as the end product of a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process with three interrelated dimensions: a legal, an economic and a social-cultural dimension”. Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016, p. 14) build upon the UNHCR’s claim and say that the process of integration involves two parties (immigrants and receiving society) and encompasses “three analytically distinct dimensions in which people may (or may not) become an accepted part of society: (i) the legal-political, (ii) the socio-economic, and (iii) the cultural-religious”. The same authors illustrate their understanding of the integration process through a heuristic model, which is shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Heuristic Model of the Integration Processes



Source: Penninx and Garcés-Mascreñas (2016, p. 16)

According to Esser (2001, p. 16), integration can be divided into System Integration and Social Integration. Quoting Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 26), the focus of system integration is on the “integration of the society’s system as a whole, while social integration focuses on the integration of individual actors into the system”. Moreover, the United Nations (2010, p. iii) claim that social integration is “one of the key goals of social development and [... the] aim of social integration [is] to create a ‘society for all’”.

Esser (2001, p. 16) identifies four dimensions for the problematic of social integration, which are: *Kulturation* (Culturation); *Plazierung* (Placement); *Interaktion* (Interaction); and *Identifikation* (Identification). According to Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 26), these four dimensions contain the key aspects of social integration and can be applied to individuals and/or groups to assess their social integration status. Madera et al. (2016, p. 2) and Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 26) provide brief definitions for each of Esser’s four dimensions of social integration, as well as some of the most important notions related to each of the dimensions. These can be found in Table 5, which is presented below.

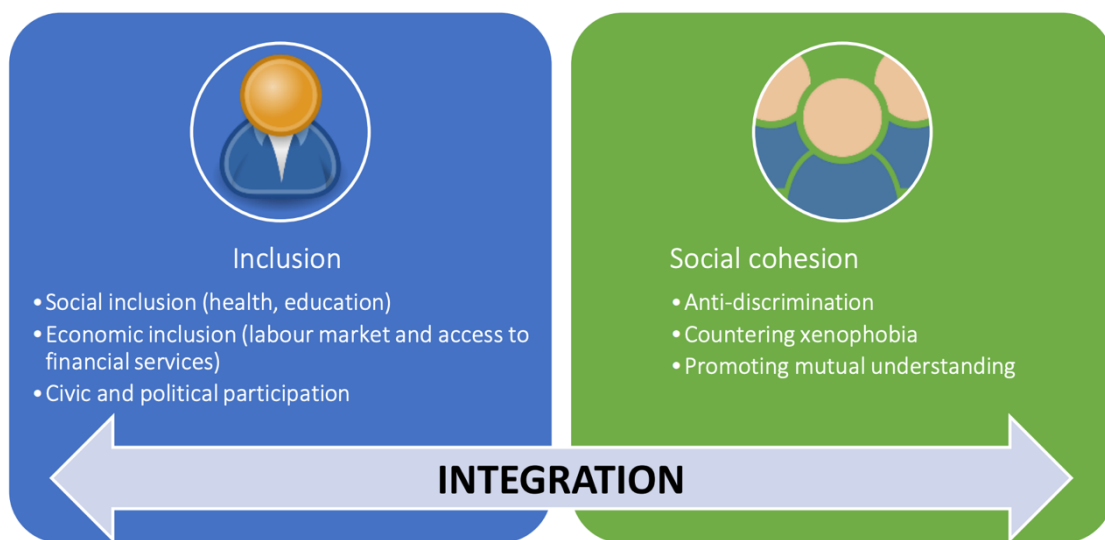
Table 5. Four Dimensions of Social Integration

<p>Culturation</p> <p>The transmission to and acquisition of knowledge, cultural standards, and competencies by an individual necessary for successfully interacting in society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Knowledge ◇ Language Competencies ◇ Human Capital 	<p>Placement</p> <p>An individual’s acquisition and occupation of relevant positions in society.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Rights ◇ Positions ◇ Opportunities/Acceptance ◇ Economic/Institutional/Political Capital
<p>Interaction</p> <p>Is a case of social action characterised by mutual orientations of actors and the formulation of relations and networks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Social Relations ◇ Communication ◇ Network Position ◇ Social Capital 	<p>Identification</p> <p>Indicates the identification of an actor with a social system by which they see themselves as an element of a collective body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Values and Norms ◇ Subjective Feeling of Belonging

Source: Adapted from Esser (2001, p. 16), Madera et al. (2016, p. 2) and Mittelstädt and Odag (2016, p. 26)

There are some other concepts which are intrinsically connected to the aforementioned process of integration, more specifically, those of inclusion and social cohesion. The IOM (2017, pp. 2/3) considers these two concepts as crucial elements of integration, as can be seen through Figure 10. Accordingly, the IOM (n.d.) believes that inclusion and social cohesion “are factors that work together when it comes to the healthy integration of migrants in host communities and implies the mutual adaptation of migrants and the host society”.

Figure 10. Elements of Integration



Source: IOM (2017, p. 3)

The concept of social inclusion is probably one of the most important in our modern society and is, according to the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound, 2023), “now central to the European policy agenda”. Moreover, social inclusion is a cornerstone of the European Pillar of Social Rights, a priority of the UN Development Goals, and it is also one of the eleven priorities for the EU’s Cohesive Policy 2014-2020 (Eurofound, 2023; European Commission, n.d.g). However, before diving deeper into this concept, it is necessary to firstly understand the notion of social exclusion, as these two concepts are closely related.

As such, the United Nations (2016, p. 18) describes social exclusion as a “state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural

life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state”. DESA (2009, p. 3) provides a more thorough definition, and claims that social exclusion is:

The condition (barriers and process) that impede social inclusion. Social exclusion is a process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from fully participating in all aspects of life of the society, in which they live, on the grounds of their social identities, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture or language, and/or physical, economic, social disadvantages. Social exclusion may mean the lack of voice, lack of recognition, or lack of capacity for active participation. It may also mean exclusion from decent work, assets, land, opportunities, access to social services and/or political representation.

Accordingly, the Eurofound (2010) states that social exclusion has “complex and multi-dimensional causes and consequences, creating deep and long-lasting problems for individual families, for the economy, and the society as a whole”. Worryingly, and as the United Nations (2010, p. iii) mentions, “inequality and exclusion not only persist, but are expanding in many parts of the world, both within and between countries”. Moreover, Neto (2018, p. 30) indicates that nowadays there is still “evidence of an ambiguous line between inclusion and exclusion involving refugees and the neighbouring population”, in this case, the host society. In view of this, it is possible to assert that there has been a continuous effort on part of international and European organisations, such as the European Union, as well as national governments to combat poverty and social exclusion, and to promote the social inclusion and cohesion of communities worldwide.

This being said, the UNHCR (n.d.j, p. 2) claims that social inclusion “allows people to fully participate in their community and fosters peaceful societies”. The same source believes that social inclusion can take many forms, including: “having the same rights as citizens, forging ties and friendships, being able to apply for local jobs or go to local schools, having access to different services like housing or healthcare”. As maintained by the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS, n.d.), social inclusion is “a process that ensures that those at risk of societal exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living considered normal in the society in which they live”. Moreover, social inclusion also “implies that people have greater participation in decision-making that affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights” (JRS, n.d.).

For the United Nations (2016, p. 17), social inclusion can be defined as the “process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights”. Inclusion is, quoting the IOM (2019a, p. 201), the process “of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society”. From the point of view of DESA (2009, p. 3), social inclusion can be understood as:

[A] process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities for all, regardless of their background, so that they can achieve their full potential in life. It is a multi-dimensional process aimed at creating conditions which enable full and active participation of every member of the society in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic, and political activities, as well as participation in decision-making processes.

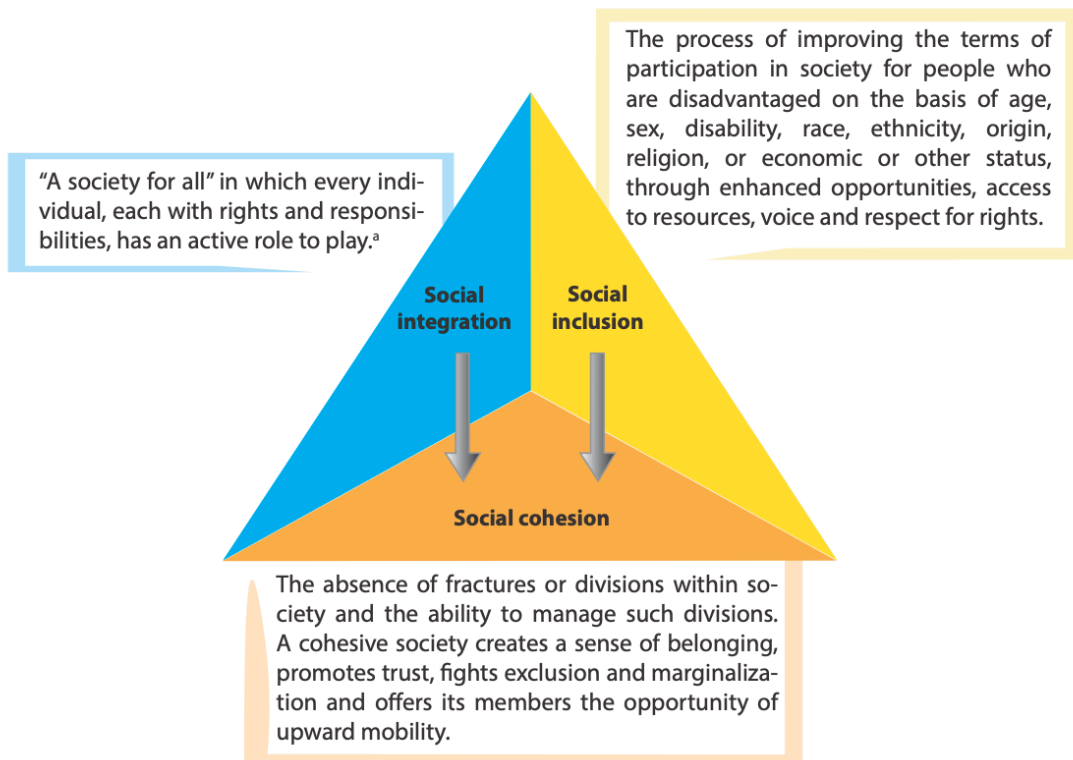
According to the United Nations (2016, p. 20), social integration and social inclusion should ultimately contribute to make societies more cohesive. As maintained by DESA (2009, p. 3), in a socially cohesive society “all individuals and groups have a sense of belonging, participation, inclusion, recognition and legitimacy”. In light of this, and according to the IOM (n.d.), inclusion and social cohesion are “factors that work together when it comes to the healthy integration of migrants [and refugees] in host communities and implies the mutual adaptation of migrants [and refugees] and the host society”.

Social cohesion, like integration, does not have a universally accepted definition, however it is usually associated with notions such as “solidarity”, “togetherness”, “tolerance”, and “harmonious co-existence”. DESA (2009, p. 3) mentions that social cohesion refers to the “elements that bring and hold people together in society”. The IOM (2019a, p. 200) provides a very thorough definition for this concept. That being said, social cohesion refers:

[T]o a social order in a specific society or community based on a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities; where the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued; those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Ultimately, the three main concepts mentioned here – integration, social inclusion, and social cohesion – are undoubtedly connected, as can be seen through Figure 11. For refugees especially, it becomes extremely important to be fully and properly inserted in societies that thrive to integrate and include them in the community and its daily life. As such, it is important to ensure that communities are united and cohesive, and that they respect and are aware of the opportunities that diversity brings, both economically and in other (un)related fields. Based on this, it must not be forgotten that, like the European Commission (2020a, pp. 3/4) explains, integration and inclusion “can and should be a win-win process, benefiting the entire society”.

Figure 11. Relationship between Social Integration, Inclusion, and Cohesion



Source: United Nations (2016, p. 21)

2.1.2 Integration Policies and Models

As indicated by Broadhead and Spencer (2020), integration is not one but a series of processes, meaning that the success of integration involves multiple domains. Accordingly, the same authors believe that it will involve the refugees' "participation in the labour market and social institutions (such as education), social interaction, changing attitudes and cultural practices and civic participation", and more. To encourage and stimulate the full participation of refugees in all key areas, it is therefore important for countries to consider the creation and application of proper and inclusive integration policies and measures.

In this regard, Patriarca (2018, p. 29) mentions that integration policies are not, by any means, a new concept. The author claims that "before the constant arrival of groups [of] migrants and refugees in the most recent years, many European states had already faced the question of how to best respond to the presence of non-European residents established on their territories". The European Commission (2011, p. 3) states that "integration policies should create favourable conditions for migrants' economic, social, cultural and political participation to realise the potential for migration". Moreover, the same source claims that "[e]ffective solutions to integration challenges must be found in each national and local context but as these challenges are common to many Member States, experiences could be shared".

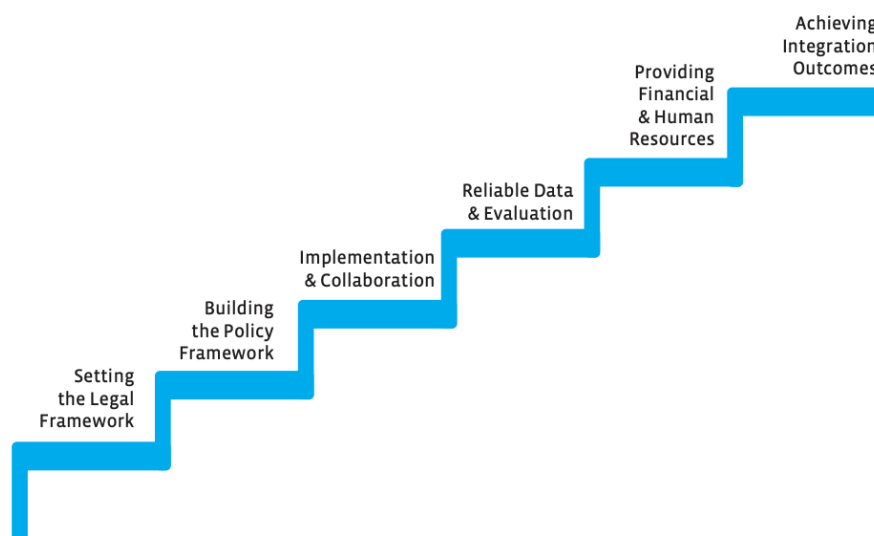
Strictly speaking, integration is a process that "starts on the ground and integration policies should be developed with a genuine 'bottom-up' approach, close to the local level" (European Commission, 2011, p. 4), meaning that it will be important and impactful for even cities and/or municipalities to have their own integration policies and measures for migrants and refugees. These integration policies should include, according to the European Commission (2011, p. 4), actions such as "support for language learning, introductory measures, access to employment, education and vocational training and the fight against discrimination, which all aim at increasing migrants [and refugees'] participation in society". Ultimately, the European Commission (2011, p. 6) believes that integration policies should:

Be designed to minimize isolation of beneficiaries of international protection and restrictions to their rights, and provide for effective language learning, access to accommodation, access to health care in health systems that provide integration

and culturally adapted health care promotion programmes. Access to vocational training and assistance in seeking employment should also be targeted.

Hajduković (2023, p. 1) contends that the process of integration may “demand special enabling measures to develop the ability of immigrants to achieve the same social and economic outcomes as natives, taking into account their characteristics”. For this reason, there has been special attention on part of the European Union to develop “common policies, approaches and tools on integration across Member States, which can [...] assist the integration of persons in need of international protection [as well as TCNs in general]” (UNHCR, 2007b, p. 2). This because, as indicated by the UNHCR (2007b, p. 2), “many integration challenges faced by refugees are similar to those faced by other third country nationals staying legally in the European Union”, and for this reason, integration policies for refugees “should, therefore, be mainstreamed in general integration plans drawn up for third country nationals generally”. According to Wolffhardt et al. (2019, p. 27), “[d]eveloping and putting in place a comprehensive integration framework that effectively supports beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) requires a multitude of efforts”. Therefore, these authors developed a guideline with six steps, which translates the different set of actions and instruments that governments need to take to ensure the creation of a proper national integration framework, that which can be seen in Figure 12.

Figure 12. *Stepstones of a Comprehensive Integration Policy*



Source: Wolffhardt et al. (2019, p. 28)

Justyna Segeš Frelak, previous Head of the Migration Policy Program at the Institute of Public Affairs, stated in 2017 that the integration of refugees would be one of the greatest challenges at the European level (NIEM, 2017). She claimed that it would be a challenge because:

[W]e haven't developed common European policy standards towards refugees. In addition, we face an ongoing lack of knowledge about which refugee integration legal instruments enable asylum seekers to effectively integrate into the European societies and which ones slow down the whole integration process.

Spindler (2016) reiterates the idea presented above by saying that one of the ongoing challenges for Europe “is to make available the support and services that refugees need to successfully integrate so that they contribute fully to society – bringing new skills, determination and a cultural richness, as they seek to re-establish their lives in their new homes”. This being said, and according to Van Wolleghem (2019, p. 219), the EU has paid special attention to this problematic, and has developed, especially over the past two decades, a “policy aimed at integrating migrants [and refugees] into their receiving societies”. Nevertheless, Yilmaz (2021, p. 1) still believes that the specific needs of BIPs tend to “receive less attention than needed in migrant integration policies of EU Member States”. As a matter of fact, the same author claims that, often, refugee integration “is subordinated to undifferentiated approaches to the integration of third-country nationals”.

Nevertheless, over the years, the EU has put a great deal of effort and has invested countless resources and energy to ensure that a proper integration framework is created to assist these vulnerable people into becoming a part of their host communities, and in turn, contribute to make Europe a more prosperous, cohesive, and inclusive society in the long run. As such, a variety of different action plans and pacts have been drafted to respond to the problematic of migration and integration (European Commission, 2016a, p. 2). The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 is the latest plan enforced and it is “an important opportunity for EU Member States to develop more comprehensive integration policies and strengthen the understanding of integration as an inclusive two-way process” (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 1). This Action Plan outlines the priorities, goals, and actions that facilitate the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees into their respective host communities. Unlike the 2016 Action Plan, “which only focused on third country nationals, the target of this new action plan covers both migrants and EU citizens with migration background” (Yilmaz, 2021, p. 1).

As indicated by the Council of Europe (2021, p. 1), the success of migrant and refugee integration policies “depends on their ability to achieve effective inclusion by promoting ownership and active engagement of state institutions, regional and local authorities, and civil society”. Accordingly, the European Commission (2011, p. 8) indicates that effective integration “can only be realized in partnership between the whole range of stakeholders such as the European institutions, Member States and national, regional and local actors”. As claimed by the OSCE (2018, p. 24), “[s]tates and institutions can apply a range of different policies to the societal diversity resulting from migration”. Whilst, in the past, it was expected for migrants to assimilate into their host communities, “with national institutions doing little to facilitate the relationships between migrants and receiving societies”, nowadays the “importance and benefits of policies that promote integration are (...) widely accepted” (OSCE, 2018, p. 24).

Many countries around the world either develop their own national models of integration policies and/or follow established ideologies and models previously recognized and acknowledged as being effective. Of course, these would have to be adjusted and modified to be able to properly respond and meet the specific needs and circumstances of the migrants and refugees in that country. As reported by Costa (2016, p. 33), depending on the measures adopted and the objectives to be achieved, integration policy can be translated into one of the following four models¹²: 1. Assimilation; 2. Segregation; 3. Multiculturalism; and 4. Interculturalism. Amongst the possible policy conduits for managing socio-cultural diversity, these four strategies are some of the most relevant ones in modern policy discourses worldwide. In a simple way, the strategies will either be characterized by the rejection/ignoring of cultural diversity (assimilation and segregation) or by the acceptance of cultural diversity (multiculturalism and interculturalism).

In this regard, the assimilation strategy can be depicted by its lack of consideration for cultural diversity, as the unique needs of a particular community can, and most likely will, be overlooked and/or ignored. In a very simple way, this ideology refers to the accommodation of only the minority cultures (migrants and refugees), and not the majority culture (host community) (Barrett, 2013, p. 24). Accordingly, for Batkhina et al.

¹² Although they are some of the most popular, these are not the only ideologies that have been created to explain the intergroup relation in a modern society with increasing diversity. In fact, Batkhina et al. (2022) mention the existence of two other ideologies, those being Colorblindness and Polyculturalism.

(2022, p. 370), assimilation is an ideology that “promotes the existence of one common cultural group in society, where ethnic minorities and migrants are expected to adopt the mainstream culture while rejecting their own”. Moreover, assimilation is, quoting the IOM (2019a, p. 12), a “one-directional policy approach to integration whereby an ethnic or social group – usually a minority – adopts the cultural practices of another – usually that of the majority ethnic or social group”. Integration policies formulated primarily on the principle of assimilation have been facing criticism for many years mainly due to “their one-sidedness and failure to incorporate important relevant policy areas such as social cohesion, transnationalism, diversity and tolerance” (IOM, 2019a, p. 12).

Segregation as a strategy for diversity management is a controversial issue, and countries must carefully consider the pros and cons of this approach. As Boileau et al. (2022, p. 457) mention, policymakers consider segregation an important obstacle to migrants and refugees’ acculturation in Western societies. Sadly, segregation of migrants and refugees remains a recurring practice even today, and it involves “the marginalization of migrants, their physical separation from the receiving society and the ignoring of their needs” (OSCE, 2018, p. 24). According to the same authors, this “policy” does not demand anything from migrants and refugees, “but also does not provide them with any support”. In a way, this model can be considered as a violation of human rights, as it denies the right to equality and human dignity. A fairly recent example of segregation, more particularly of racial segregation, was the Apartheid in South Africa from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, where the government implemented a policy that mandated different living and working spaces for white and non-white people, as well as minimal contact between them (Britannica, 2023). This segregation had a profound effect on the economy, education, and other aspects of life in South Africa, which can be felt even today (University of Washington, 2019).

Multiculturalism is a model of integration policies that welcomes the preservation, expression and sometimes even the celebration of cultural diversity. Rosado (1996, p. 2) provides a very thorough definition for this concept. According to the author, multiculturalism is:

A system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the organization or society.

Through this approach, migrants and refugees are encouraged to become full members of their host society, whilst retaining their cultural identities. However, this approach, like the assimilation approach, presumes that the majority culture remains largely intact, engaging little with the diversity around it (IOM, 2019a, p. 142). As indicated by Batkhina et al. (2022, p. 371), multiculturalism recognizes the differences between ethnic groups and promotes the maintenance of this diversity, recognizing the importance of group membership. This ideology is ultimately known by its recognition and acceptance of cultural diversity, that is, the “plurality of different groups”, and it acknowledges and values group memberships and the difference between said groups (Batkhina et al., 2022, p. 371). Moreover, the multiculturalist approach treats cultural differences as a basis feature of today’s world and encourages societies to promote and cherish all cultures that exist within (Mm, 2019, p. 28).

However, over the previous few years, even decades, there has been a growth in the backlash against this abovementioned integration model. In the beginning of the 2010s, three major criticisms were pointed out by European leaders at the time: Angela Merkel declared in October 2010 that multiculturalism had “utterly failed” within the European context; in February 2011, David Cameron claimed that this ideology was a “failed” policy of the past which had weakened collective identity and encouraged different cultures to live separate ways; and lastly, Nicolas Sarkozy, also in February 2011, said that this strategy for managing diversity was “a failure” because it had been more concerned with the identity of the immigrants and not enough with the identity of the receiving societies (Barrett, 2013, p. 21).

This being said, one of the newest ideologies and strategies that has been followed and which addresses the diversity caused by both voluntary and forced migration is that of Interculturalism. Mm (2019, p. 30) states that this model lies somewhere between the models of assimilation and multiculturalism. For Palmer (2009, p. 11), interculturalism “promotes policies and practices that encourage interaction, understanding and respect between different cultures and ethnic groups”. Moreover, Marques et al. (2019, p. 188) believe that it is a policy that ultimately promotes communication and interaction between culturally diverse groups. The Council of Europe (2021, p. 10) contends that intercultural integration is an interactive process based upon mutual willingness to adapt from both migrants and refugees and the receiving society. Given this, it can be said that this strategy shares a number of features with the ideology mentioned before, that of multiculturalism

(Barrett, 2013, p. 26). Intercultural policies are sympathetic and respectful towards ethno-cultural and religious minorities whilst also giving due importance to the norms, traditions, and values of the host society. Additionally, it is believed that it helps promote interaction and avoid the exclusion and discrimination between the minority and majority cultures (Mm, 2019, p. 30).

Over the past two decades especially, the Council of Europe has played a key role in the promotion of the intercultural integration model, given the lackluster and disappointing results that surged from multicultural integration policies and measures. For Barrett (2013, p. 25), the publication of the Council of Europe's 'White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living together as equals in unity' in 2008 particularly accelerated the movement of interculturalism within Europe. Moreover, in 2021, the Council also published a 'Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy at the National Level' which can be of profound help for countries to develop their own national model of intercultural integration (Council of Europe, 2021). As indicated by Marques et al. (2019, p. 188):

Currently, the development of policies of immigrant integration is marked by the criticism (and decline?) of multicultural policies accused of promoting segregation, stimulating ethnic conflicts and having difficulties in fostering community cohesion and trust (...); and by the rise of intercultural policies focused on contact and dialogue, and interpersonal relations between people from different backgrounds (...).

With the different actions undertaken by the EU and its Member States, it is possible to pose the idea that multicultural societies are slowly, but surely, transforming and becoming true intercultural societies. Loh (2021, p. 3) explains that "[a]s contemporary societies [around the world] experience increasing diversification, the relevance of multiculturalism is increasingly questioned". Moreover, Barrett (2013, p. 9) and Loh (2021, p. 6) believe that we are living in a post-multicultural era, where the approach of societal diversification – interculturalism – is steadily rising.

Multicultural societies and intercultural societies are two related but distinct concepts in the field of cultural studies. Whilst both involve different cultures coexisting within a single society, there are important differences between them. Considering this, and according to the Council of Europe (2016, p. 27), multicultural societies are those where "[d]ifferent cultures, national, ethnic, religious groups all [live] within the same

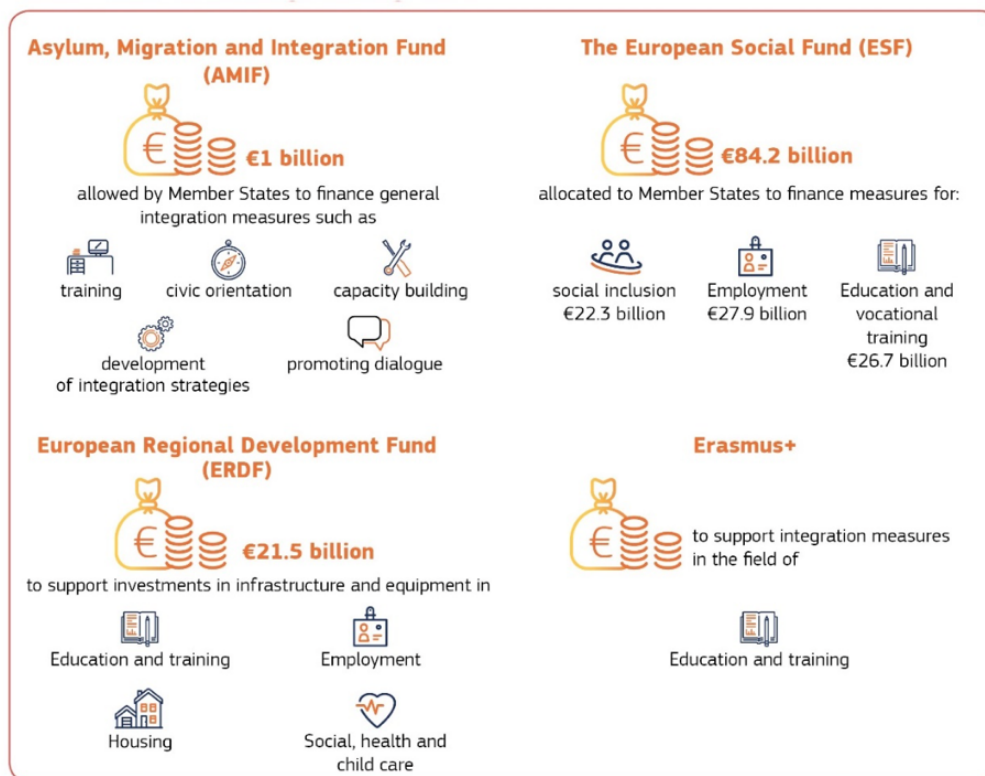
territory [but don't necessarily come] into contact with each other". The same author claims that, within these societies, "difference is often viewed negatively and forms major justification for discrimination". As a matter of fact, in multicultural societies, "[m]inorities may be tolerated passively, but not accepted or valued", and "[e]ven in cases where there are legal rights designed to stop discrimination, the law may not be enforced uniformly" (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 27). On the other hand, intercultural societies are marked with the "open relations of interaction, exchange and mutual recognition of their own and respective values and ways of life [of all different cultures, national, ethnic, and religious groups living within the same territory]". That is, in these societies there is a "process of active tolerance and maintenance of equitable relation where everyone has the same importance, where there are no superiors or inferiors, better or worse people [and much more]", unlike what happens in multicultural societies (Council of Europe, 2016, p. 27).

2.1.3 Good Practices and Measurement of Integration Policies

Refugee integration is a critical aspect of addressing the challenges posed by forced displacement and ensuring the successful inclusion of refugees into host societies. The EU has been at the forefront of efforts to develop and implement effective practices for refugee integration. It is important to clarify that, although it is not the “prerogative of the EU to determine integration strategies, the EU can provide a framework for monitoring, benchmarking and exchange of good practice, and create incentives through the European financial instruments” (European Commission, 2011, p. 3). That being said, national governments are primarily responsible for creating and implementing social policies, however the EU also plays a key role in supporting its Member States through funding, developing guidance and fostering relevant partnerships (European Commission, n.d.e).

As mentioned by the European Commission (2020a, p. 19), access to EU funding for integration and inclusion is facilitated for Member States and key integration stakeholders, including local and regional authorities. Figure 13 presents some of the most important EU funds for the integration of migrants and refugees and the key areas which they support. The European Commission (2020a, p. 18) explains that when it comes to the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will hopefully work in synergy with other EU funds and programmes, “including in particular Erasmus+, the Recovery and Resilience Facility, the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD) and InvestEU, in order to support social inclusion in an integrated manner” (European Commission, 2020a, p. 18).

Figure 13. Main EU Funds Contributing to Integration and Inclusion (2014-2020)



Source: European Commission (2020a, p. 18)

Migrants and refugees have been successfully integrated into many EU Member States through a range of good practices, as well as initiatives, policies, and programmes that were created for this purpose. In this regard, some key practices will be mentioned, mainly regarding the areas of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation (ex.: LINK IT project), preparing local communities and welcoming resettled refugees (ex.: the Portuguese Refugee Council), volunteering and mentoring activities (ex.: The Buddy Programme), and fostering access to the labour market (ex.: Breaking Barriers) (IOM, 2018). The IOM (2018, p. 2) mentions that the good practices that will be mentioned ahead are displayed by different NGOs, international organisations, and municipalities around Europe.

This being said, according to the IOM (2018, p. 2), LINK IT is a project aimed at strengthening the link between pre-departure and post-arrival integration support for resettled refugees from Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey that are resettled in Germany, Portugal, Romania, and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, for almost 30 years now, the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR) has been working on providing training to local

communities and local service providers to increase the quality of reception and integration practices within Portugal (IOM, 2018, p. 6). The Buddy Programme (*Buddytreffen*) is an event organised by the Caritas Friedland where refugees who arrived into Germany, under a humanitarian admission or resettlement programme, are invited to go to Friedland every time a new group of refugees arrives into the country. Through this event, the ‘new refugees’ can “ask all their questions concerning their new life in Germany in their mother tongue to their volunteer ‘buddy’”, and the buddy can talk all about their personal experiences and share knowledge (IOM, 2018, p. 7). Lastly, Breaking Barriers is a charity whose mission is to assist refugees in the United Kingdom to integrate through employment, education, and training (IOM, 2018, p. 9). These are just some examples of initiatives and programmes that were created with the intention of assisting with migrant and refugee integration. Now, more than ever, innovative projects and actions are being created that assist in this complex process of integration.

As already stated, over the years there has been a constant effort to ensure the proper integration policies for migrants and refugee worldwide. For this reason, different tools have been developed to try and gauge how effective and comprehensive integration policies around the globe have been. As indicated by Wolffhardt et al. (2019, p. 19), since 2010, “common EU indicators for migrant integration (the so-called “Zaragoza indicators”), have been used for comparing the situation of migrants [more particularly, of TCNs] and integration outcomes”. The two tools that will be mentioned here, and which are more focused on the integration policies of beneficiaries of international protection, are the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) and the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX).

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) is a project co-founded by the European Union through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The research for this project started in 2016 and it basically evaluates the national integration policies and measures in 14 EU countries¹³. According to Wolffhardt et al. (2019, p. 18), the NIEM aims to assess how comprehensively Member States respond to the needs and opportunities that BIPs bring to their new homes. The NIEM evaluates 13 main dimensions of the national policy frameworks of some EU countries, that is, the integration and inclusion policies for BIPs put in place by their host societies, in a scale

¹³ The 14 countries are Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden (Wolffhardt et al., 2019, p. 9).

from 0 to 100 (Wolffhardt et al., 2019). The NIEM indicators cover four major areas, and each of these areas comprises a specific set of indicators. These are:

Table 6. Dimensions Assessed by NIEM

Areas	Indicators
General Conditions	⇒ Impact of reception on integration; ⇒ Mainstreaming.
Legal Integration	⇒ Residency; ⇒ Family unity and reunification; ⇒ Access to citizenship.
Socio-Economic Integration	⇒ Housing; ⇒ Employment; ⇒ Vocational training and employment-related education; ⇒ Health; ⇒ Social security.
Socio-Cultural Integration	⇒ Education; ⇒ Language learning and social orientation; ⇒ Building bridges.

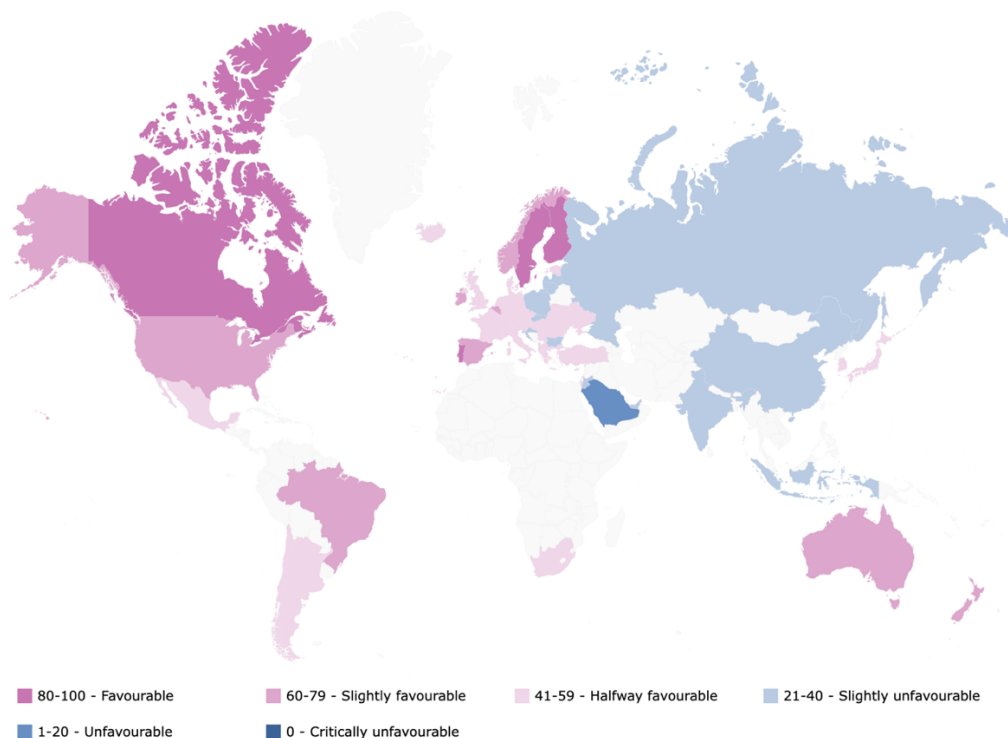
Source: Wolffhardt et al. (2019, pp. 24/25)

The Migrant Integration Policy Index, also known as the MIPEX, is one of most used and respected tools, both at the European and global scale, when it comes to the evaluation of integration policies. As such, the MIPEX is a tool which measures policies to integrate migrants (including refugees) across six continents, including, but not only, all EU Member States and most OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries. The latest edition (5th edition) of this project – Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020 – covered the period from 2014 to 2019 and evaluated a total of 52 countries worldwide. As indicated by Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 5), this tool helps to “evaluate and compare what governments are doing to promote the integration of migrants in all countries analysed”.

MIPEX measures eight areas of government’s integration policies, namely: 1. Access to Nationality; 2. Anti-discrimination; 3. Education; 4. Family Reunion; 5. Health; 6. Labour Market Mobility; 7. Long-term Residence; and 8. Political Participation (Solano & Huddleston, 2020a, p. 6). According to the authors, there are three dimensions that encompass all of the aforementioned areas of integration policies, and which can describe a country’s overall approach to integration (Solano & Huddleston, 2020a, p. 9). These three dimensions are the following:

1. Basic Rights: Can immigrants enjoy comparable rights as nationals? e.g., equal rights to work, training, health, and non-discrimination.
2. Equal Opportunities: Can immigrants receive support to enjoy comparable opportunities as nationals? e.g., targeted support in education, health, and political participation.
3. Secure future: Can immigrants settle long-term and feel secure about their future in the country? e.g., family reunification, permanent residence and access to nationality.

Figure 14. MIPEX’s 52 Country Evaluation



Source: Solano and Huddleston (2020b)

As is known, integration policies must be responsive to the specific needs of the local population and of the migrants and refugees that will be resettled there. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that individual countries must develop their own customised tools to ensure the effectiveness of their integration policies and measures. The tools mentioned above, the NIEM and the MIPEX, provide a great deal of help to countries by pinpointing their main fragilities. Having their own country-specific tools, however, allows countries to assess the vulnerabilities highlighted and determine how to resolve those problems that ultimately influence integration outcomes, as well as how to improve the effectiveness of their integration policies and measures.

2.2 Integration of Refugees: The Portuguese Context

The diversity of cultures within Portuguese borders has been on a steady rise for decades now. Although the 2021 Census showed that there was a 2.1% decrease in the total resident population in Portugal in comparison to 2011, it also revealed that, in these ten years, there was an increase of around 40% in the number of people of foreign nationality living in the country (Diário de Notícias, 2021; Pordata, n.d.). This being said, in 2021, people of foreign nationality represented roughly 5.2% of the total Portuguese population, equating to 542.165 foreigners¹⁴, whilst in 2011 that number was of 394.496 individuals. Out of these almost 550.000 people, around 17% were comprised in the age groups of 0 to 19 (93.315 individuals) (Pordata, n.d.).

In 2022, the number of people of foreign nationality residing within Portugal increased, once again, for the seventh consecutive year. According to SEF (2023, pp. 8/9), a total of 757.252 foreigners were living in Portugal in 2022, with Brazilian citizens being the main foreign resident community, representing 30.7% of the total. It is necessary, though, to emphasize the notion that, as seen in the previous chapter, the number of refugees within the Portuguese society is not that “significant”. That is, as of 2021, only approximately 0.026% of the Portuguese population were refugees and a further 0.015% corresponded to asylum applicants (European Parliament, n.d.).

Refugees and asylum seekers can arrive into Portugal through two distinct ways: i. under one of the European programmes designed for this purpose – the EU Resettlement Programme or the EU/UNHCR Relocation Programme; ii. by their own initiative, requesting asylum at the SEF or to the police upon arrival (these are commonly referred to as “spontaneous refugees”) (Oliveira et al., 2020). Their integration into the host society is a key aspect for the growth and development of the receiving country, in this case Portugal. Oliveira et al. (2020) reiterate this fact by revealing that “[n]ever before have immigrants [including refugees] contributed so much to the Social Security accounts”. However, their impact extends beyond economy. These individuals provide new perspectives, offer new ideas, which in turn can contribute to Portugal’s growth and development in many ways. Nevertheless, for this to happen, there must be a solid and

¹⁴ It is important to note that the numbers provided by the 2021 Census and those provided by the SEF do not coincide. As reported by SEF (2023, p. 8), the number of foreigners with a residence permit in the country, in 2021, was of 698.887, a significant increase in comparison to the 542.165 individuals highlighted by the 2021 Census.

comprehensive integration strategy as well as a follow-up and monitoring programme in place to ensure that these people are fully incorporated into the Portuguese society.

Marques et al. (2019, p. 192) state that the presence of different groups of immigrants transformed the Portuguese society in an increasingly diverse society and “brought about the necessity to face the integration of heterogeneous groups and to think about measures not only for the main cities of immigration concentration but also for other regions [where] sizeable [immigrant] communities are present”. However, like mentioned in the previous chapter, Portugal is a country that has historically received a small number of asylum seekers and refugees, although these numbers have been steadily growing over the past decades (Oliveira, 2021, p. 21; Santos, 2022). Given the reduced number of beneficiaries of international protection within the Portuguese society, the integration policies and measures provided by the High Commission for Migration (*Alto Comissariado para as Migrações* [ACM]) are not targeted specifically at asylum seekers and refugees, that is to say, these individuals are not the primary targets of these services (Matos, 2019, p. 15). Nevertheless, this restricted and vulnerable group of people is able to use and take advantage of these services virtually without any restrictions.

It is important to mention that the integration of all migrants (including refugees) is the responsibility of the aforementioned High Commission for Migration, or more commonly regarded, the ACM. According to Matos (2019, p. 15), in Portugal, all migrants benefit from a range of integration services, which are offered on-demand, by the ACM. When it comes specifically to refugees, Ordinance No. 203/2016, of July 25 declared that the ACM would be the primary institution, at a national level, responsible for the support of the complex and demanding process of reception, resettlement, relocation, and integration of refugees (European Commission, n.d.f; Diário da República, 2016). Additionally, Resolution of the Council of Ministers no. 103/2020 of November 23, established a single system of reception and integration of applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection, more commonly known as the Single Reception and Integration System Resolution (Carreirinho, 2021, p. 17; Diário da República, 2020). With this resolution, a Single Operation Group, composed by the ACM, the SEF, and the Institute for Social Security ([ISS], *Instituto da Segurança Social*), was created to accompany all applicants and beneficiaries of international protection to “guarantee greater effectiveness in the reception and integration [of these

people into the Portuguese society]” (Diário da República, 2020; República Portuguesa, 2020a).

Notwithstanding, from the point of view of Silva et al. (2018, p. 297), although “Portugal is an EU country whose government adopted a pro-refugee position”, the Portuguese “governments’ policies regarding the entry of and integration of refugees are still in an embryonic stage (...), so much so that the Portuguese citizens are hardly aware of the tendencies of such policies”. As a matter of fact, Sousa et al. (2021, p. 97) and Carreirinho (2021, p. 26) claim that, since 1974, Portugal has yet to develop a structured plan for the reception and integration of refugees. The creation of such a policy is undoubtedly essential and should be regarded as a top priority for the Portuguese government (Sousa et al., 2021, pp. 97-100; Carreirinho, 2021, p. 26), especially when considering the expected increased influx of, mostly, Ukrainian refugees in the coming years.

Conversely, Matos (2019, p. 15) asserts that, since 2016, “the ACM has made some changes to the offer of services to adapt them to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees”. In fact, the ACM (n.d.a) details that, in 2016, the services offered by this institution, particularly the National and Local Centres of Support to the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM – *Centro Nacional de Apoio à Integração de Migrantes* – and CLAIM – *Centros Locais de Apoio à Integração de Migrantes*), were reconfigured and adapted to ensure that refugees are provided the necessary services suited for their specific needs.

As such, it can be said that, in the last decades, there has been significant progress when it comes to the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Portugal. In fact, the Portuguese government emphasizes the notion that there has never before been such a favourable legislative framework to the integration of migrants and refugees (Governo de Portugal, 2019, p. 114). Nevertheless, further improvements are needed to meet the specific needs of these vulnerable groups of people. Consistently, Oliveira et al. (2020) believe that there is still a long way to go in Portugal when it comes to the reception and integration of refugees, and many of the national organisational, governmental, teaching, housing, and bureaucratic shortcomings must be fixed.

2.2.1 Portuguese Integration Strategy

Although there are still many issues to resolve in the country regarding the problematic of refugees and asylum seekers, it is nevertheless true that, for many years, Portugal has been considered a “champion of migrant integration” (IOM, 2022) and a “champion of the refugee cause” (UNHCR, 2021b). This is largely due to the country’s commitment to creating meaningful solutions for those who seek refuge, coupled with its willingness to support and protect the human rights of each individual, no matter their background and nationality. As indicated by the UNHCR (2021b), Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, even commended the country’s exemplary refugee policies and practices over the years, and expressed that:

We are impressed by Portugal’s engagement in responsibility-sharing mechanisms, including resettlement, relocation of unaccompanied children and other, bilateral arrangements, as well as its continued advocacy to find a permanent and predictable approach to solutions at the EU level.

It is important to remember that the process of welcoming and integrating refugees is far from easy and straightforward. Nevertheless, the continuous efforts on part of both public and private national organisations, with the assistance of European institutions, have made for the formulation and implementation of an adequate and comprehensive integration strategy and programme for these vulnerable people, one that has even become world-renown.

As indicated by República Portuguesa (2020b, p. 2) and by Marques et al. (2019), Portugal follows an intercultural model of diversity management, and has done so for almost two decades. That being said, Portugal published its first national Plan for Immigrant Integration (*Plano para a Integração de Imigrantes – PII*) in 2007. The first edition of the PII covered the period from 2007 to 2009 and was organised around 7 key principles and 5 transversal axes: 1. Legislation; 2. Service Provision; 3. Research; 4. Public Opinion; and 5. Empowerment of Communities (European Commission, n.d.f). In total, the first PII outlined 122 measures which covered “diverse vertical and transverse sectors [and which assumed] as main goal to bring to conclusion the complete integration of immigrants into [the] Portuguese society (...)” (*Alto Comissariado para a Imigração e Diálogo Intercultural* [ACIDI], 2007, p. 5).

According to the ACIDI (2010, p. 10), the evaluation of the I Plan for Immigrant Integration concluded that “its implementation rate was very high and that in many areas the objectives set were even exceeded (...)”. Given the success of the first PII, a decision was made to update the Plan in 2010 to remain applicable until 2013. As specified by the ACIDI (2010, pp. 10/11), the second edition of the PII counted with 90 measures distributed across 17 different areas of intervention. The European Commission (n.d.f) asserts that the II Plan for Immigrant Integration “increased the prominence of good relations between migrant communities and the majority population”.

Although both PII’s were considered a “success”, since 2015, the Portuguese integration policies for migrants and refugees are included in the Strategic Plan for Migration¹⁵ (*Plano Estratégico para as Migrações – PEM*), which in turn covers a 5-year period (European Commission, n.d.f). As explained by the ACM (2015, p. 6), the Strategic Plan for Migration 2015-2020 “aims at politically adjusting Portugal to a more complex and challenging migratory reality, in harmony with the strategy for promoting industry and employment growth, as well as the European Commission’s ‘Global Approach to Migration and Mobility’ priority”. Moreover, and quoting the European Commission (n.d.f), this Plan “puts emphasis on strengthening the quality of services provided to foreigners [and] foresees to respond to integration challenges in a transversal manner”.

The PEM was developed based on five priority political axes, those of which can be seen in Table 7. Though, it is important to mention that, as indicated by Stephane (2017, p. 47), only three of the five priority axes of the PEM – Axis I, Axis II, and Axis III – are important and relevant for the problematic of refugees. The ACM (2015, p. 5) claims that this Plan assumed as its key priority areas those of Culture, Language, Education and Employment, and Professional Qualification. Considering this, the PEM outlined a total of 106 measures distributed through the different axis, to be assessed by 201 indicators (European Commission, n.d.f).

¹⁵ https://www.acm.gov.pt/documents/10181/222357/PEM_ACM_final.pdf/9ffb3799-7389-4820-83ba-6dcfe22c13fb

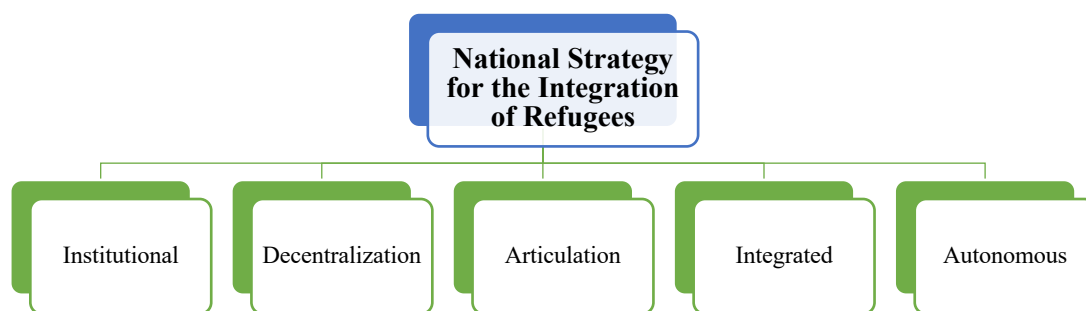
Table 7. Priority Axes of the Strategic Plan for Migration 2015-2020

Priority Axes	Description	Number of Measures
<p>Axis I – Immigrant integration policies</p>	<p>The goals of this axis aim to consolidate work integration, qualification and to combat discrimination of immigrants and ethnic groups in Portuguese society. They look to better mobilise their talent and abilities, appreciate the value of cultural and religious diversity, strengthen social mobility, decentralise integration policies and to improve coordination between employment policies and access to common citizenship.</p>	<p>50 measures (Measures 1 to 50)</p>
<p>Axis II – Policies to promote the integration of new nationals</p>	<p>The goals of this axis aim to reinforce the promotion of the integration and inclusion of new nationals, namely of descendants of immigrants and all those who obtained Portuguese nationality through actions in the spheres of education, professional training, transition into the labour market, civic and political participation, digital inclusion, entrepreneurship and qualification.</p>	<p>10 measures (Measures 51 to 60)</p>
<p>Axis III – Coordination policies of migration flows</p>	<p>The goals of this axis aim to the international promotion of Portugal as a migration destination, through national and international actions for identifying, attracting and settling migrants, contributing to a more appropriate and intelligent management of migration flows and to further attract and reinforce the circulation of talent and human capital.</p>	<p>23 measures (Measures 61 to 83)</p>
<p>Axis IV – Policies strengthening the migratory legality and quality of migration services</p>	<p>The goals of this axis aim to reinforce the capacity for transversal intervention in the execution of migration policy. This can be done through strengthening the network of partnerships with public and private entities, giving the framework and support to potential migrants, resorting to digital tools, flexibility in trying procedures and assuring a strengthened culture of quality and good practices in providing migration services.</p>	<p>9 measures (Measures 84 to 92)</p>
<p>Axle V – Policies to foster the monitoring and support of the return of national emigrant citizens</p>	<p>The goals of this axis aim at actions and programmes, in narrow coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which promote, accompany and support the return of emigrated Portuguese citizens abroad or the reinforcement of their ties to Portugal, contributing to the reversal of the migration movement of Portuguese citizens to other countries.</p>	<p>14 measures (Measures 93 to 106)</p>

Source: Adapted from ACM (2015, pp. 23/24)

In order to gain a deeper understanding of Portugal’s integration strategy, the *Grupo de Trabalho para a Agenda Europeia para as Migrações* (GTAEM, 2016, p. 5, as cited in Sousa et al., 2021, p. 42) introduced, in its “Manual de procedimentos para as entidades de acolhimento”, the notion that the national strategy for the full integration of refugees has five key principles, which are presented in Illustration 3. However, according to Sousa et al. (2021, p. 42), the authors mentioned above failed to properly clarify each of the principles.

Illustration 3. National Strategy for the Full Integration of Refugees in Portugal



Source: Adapted from GTAEM (2016, p. 5, as cited in Sousa et al., 2021, p. 42)

Given the lack of proper clarification on part of the GTAEM, the ACM later provided a brief description for the five principles on which the Portuguese reception and integration strategy were based upon. As such, the meaning of the five principles, according to the ACM (2016, p. 27), is the following:

- Institutional, by privileging reception by institutions, to the detriment of reception by individuals;
- Decentralized, by valuing the potential of hosting in medium and low-density territories, avoiding large concentrations of individuals;
- In [articulation], by mobilizing local consortiums of institutions that, together, ensure the various requirements necessary for the full integration of refugees;
- Integrated, considering all the items included in the reception form (accommodation, food, employment, education, health, Portuguese language);
- Autonomous, by presenting solutions that allow the gradual autonomy of refugees, namely accommodation solutions that are based on small-scale solutions¹⁶.

¹⁶ My translation. The original text can be found in the ACM report (2016, p. 27).

2.2.2 Key Players and Elements of the Portuguese Integration Strategy

Knowing the basis of the national integration strategy, it becomes imperative to regard the key players and elements that impact and make sure that this strategy is effective. As such, Matos (2019, pp. 20/21) gives a brief overview of the key actors in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Portugal. These are: the SEF; the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR), which is a NGO that represents the UNHCR in Portuguese territory; the ACM; the ISS; the Institute for Employment and Professional Training (*Instituto de Emprego e Formação Profissional* [IEFP]); the Refugee Support Platform (PAR); the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS); the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa* (SCML); and Local Hosting Identities which are spread throughout the country and “participate in the decentralized integration programme for asylum seekers under the EU schemes”.

That being said, and as was explained before, on a national level, the ACM is the primary institution responsible for the development of policies and strategies to help with the integration of migrants and refugees into the Portuguese society. However, local authorities, or the local hosting identities, “also play a key role in promoting and implementing integration policies” (European Commission, n.d.f). These local authorities “set up facilities, implement reception measures, finance micro projects and provide services such as education, housing, social support, legal assistance, job orientation, training, intercultural mediation, language courses, and more” (European Commission, n.d.f). Moreover, they are also responsible for launching “information or awareness-raising campaigns and take action to combat discrimination and segregation” (European Commission, n.d.f). As a matter of fact, and according to the European Commission (n.d.f), the local authorities had to create their own Municipal Plans for the Integration of Migrants by 2020. Given this, it is possible, through the ACM website¹⁷, to search and discover more about the different local integration plans and measures.

Although the institutions mentioned above are crucial for the process of integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the Portuguese society, there is one major player missing – the receiving society. As previously stated, the host community plays an essential role in the integration process of migrants and refugees. As a matter of fact, the IOM (2019b, p. 167) states that “[t]he extent to which migrants will in turn be

¹⁷ <https://www.acm.gov.pt/planos-municipais>

progressively included in their destination country also depends on the attitudes of receiving communities, including their openness to migration and migrants”. Given this, it necessary to gauge and understand the opinions of Portuguese citizens on the subject of refugees and refugee integration. This because, as was mentioned, the effectiveness and success of the integration strategy and measures can be influenced by the views and attitudes of the Portuguese society towards refugees.

Authors such as Cordeiro (2016), Lusa (2016), Baptista (2019), Sousa (2019), and Sousa (2022) believe that the Portuguese population exhibits a relative willingness to welcome and facilitate the integration of refugees and other BIPs, whilst at the same time being respectful of each individual’s unique culture and customs. As a matter of fact, Observatório das Migrações (n.d.b) mentions that, according to the European Social Survey (ESS)¹⁸, Portugal is the European country whose population shows the greatest openness to welcoming refugees. The same source alludes to the idea that, between 2015 and 2018, the majority of the Portuguese respondents of the Eurobarometer¹⁹ tended to agree with the statement that “Portugal should help refugees”. Moreover, recent years have witnessed a growing trend of agreement with the abovementioned statement in Portugal, with the country surpassing the (former) EU28 average, particularly in 2017 and 2018 (Observatório das Migrações, n.d.b).

Nevertheless, as claimed by Sousa et al. (2021, p. 91), there must be a greater awareness of the integration process and more information should be given to the general public, because “[s]ociety is aware of the problem, but not aware of how to tackle it effectively”. According to the European Commission (2021a, p. 3), a significant majority of respondents in Portugal, as indicated by the Special Eurobarometer 519²⁰, reported a lack of information on immigrant and integration-related matters. Specifically, 54% stated they were “not very well informed”, whilst 23% claimed to be “not at all informed”. Moreover, the European Commission (2021a, p. 1) revealed that 20% of the participants

¹⁸ The European Social Survey is a biennial cross-national survey established in 2001 which measures attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour patterns in over thirty countries. According to the European Social Survey (n.d.), Portugal is one of the fifteen countries that has participated in all editions of this survey.

¹⁹ The Eurobarometer is a collection of cross-country public opinion surveys conducted regularly on behalf of the various EU institutions since 1974. More particularly, the Special Eurobarometer surveys are “in-depth thematic studies relevant to the European institutions”, which assesses “topics such as climate change to social issues, cybersecurity issues or discrimination” (European Union, n.d.).

²⁰ As reported by the European Commission (2021a, p. 1), a total of 1.004 face-to-face interview sessions were conducted in Portugal, from 2 to 28 November 2021, for the Special Eurobarometer 519.

expressed complete agreement, and an additional 60% leaned towards agreement, on the notion that actively promoting immigrant integration is a necessary long-term investment for Portugal. However, in contrast, only 65% of the respondents believed that the Portuguese government “is doing enough to actively promote the integration of immigrants into our society” (European Commission, 2021a, p. 1). Nevertheless, and quoting Governo de Portugal (2019, p. 116), the Portuguese government has reaffirmed its commitment to ensure the creation of a welcoming and accepting society by:

Promoting programmes for the integration of refugees into Portuguese society, with the active participation of civil society and local authorities, through the creation of scholarships for the availability of reception, with the support of European funds and a budgetary programme to support the inclusion of refugees²¹.

According to Eurocid (n.d.), in Portugal, the elements of support for integration include assistance with housing, family support, access to Portuguese language courses, access to child and youth education, professional development, access to public health services, and sociocultural integration initiatives. The UNHCR (2019, p. 7) provides a brief overview and explanation of the key areas which influence the full integration of refugees in Portugal. The authors begin by referencing the Reception and Orientation of newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers into the country. During this phase, these individuals are closely followed by the SEF, the ACM, and the IOM, and are introduced to the institutions which will accompany them in their integration process in Portugal, some of which were mentioned before.

Refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection are also offered, at this stage, a Refugee Reception Kit, constructed by the ACM, which provides a variety of different documents to aid their introduction and integration into the Portuguese society (UNHCR, 2019, p. 7; ACM, n.d.b). These include: a Welcome Kit, where important information, including refugees’ rights, duties and obligations, and other useful material is translated into English, French, Tigrinya²², and Arabic (ACM, n.d.c); a booklet with

²¹ My translation. Original text: “Promover programas de integração de refugiados na sociedade portuguesa, com a participação ativa da sociedade civil e das autarquias locais, mediante a criação de bolsas de disponibilidade de acolhimento, com apoio de fundos europeus e de um programa orçamental de apoio à inclusão de refugiados” (Governo de Portugal, 2019, p. 116).

²² Language widely spoken in Eritrea, in the northern part of Ethiopia, as well as by many immigrant communities around the world (UCL, n.d.).

some of the most common and essential Portuguese expressions and sayings, translated into the same above-mentioned languages (ACM, n.d.d); and lastly, a small dictionary with relevant words pertaining to areas such as (i) Education, (ii) Places, (iii) Business, (iv) Transportation, (v) House and Furniture, (vi) Body and Clothing, (vii) Animals and Nature, (viii) Religion and Culture, (ix) Verbs, (x) Food and Kitchen (ACM, n.d.e), which may assist the refugees' daily-lives in the country. Moreover, this vulnerable group of people also has access to other relevant information which can assist their integration into the Portuguese society, more particularly, information pertaining to Music and Culture, History and Society, Programmes for Children and Learning and Speaking Portuguese (ACM, n.d.b).

When it comes to Housing, the UNHCR (2019, p. 7) states that “resettled refugees may stay either at a reception center for an initial period (and further be allocated to a house) or [at] a house”, being these distributed all over the country because, as was mentioned, one of the integration strategy principles is decentralization (Pereira, 2021, p. 9). Refugees can also receive immediate medical treatment and are directly introduced into the national health system (UNHCR, 2019, p. 7). Moreover, the UNHCR (2019, p. 7) also mentions the areas of Language and Vocational Training and of Employment. This being said, on the one hand, the authors claim that Language and Vocational Training are provided for refugees, and also claim that “[w]ithin the education system refugees of school age (6-18) are provided with Portuguese classes for non-native speakers as a way to support a more successful school integration”. On the other hand, the UNHCR (2019, p. 7) explains that refugees are “legally entitled to seek and undertake employment in Portugal”.

2.2.3 Funding and Measurement of Portugal's Integration Policies

As indicated by the European Commission (n.d.f), Portugal can apply to and utilize a variety of funding sources, both on a European and national level, for the purposes of improving its integration strategy and development of programmes for migrants and beneficiaries of international protection. The same source claims that “national public and private funds are made available for service providers and other stakeholders to carry out projects aiming for a better integration of the migrant [and refugee] population”.

The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) were two of the main European sources of funding for Portugal in the last decades. However, they are not the only European funds that Portugal can and has applied for. Others are: the Erasmus+ programme, which supports education, training, youth, and sport in Europe; the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the EU by correcting regional imbalances; the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which offers material assistance to the most vulnerable or in need; the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) which support the development of rural economies and communities where refugees may be inserted in; and many others (European Commission, n.d.f).

In the European Commission's website there is a breakdown of the money allocated from these European funds to Portugal in the period of 2014 to 2020. That being said, and as reported by the European Commission (n.d.f), under the AMIF, Portugal received a total of €75,860,651 in the 6-year period mentioned above. The same source indicates that:

National integration priorities for the [AMIF] fund aim at preventing the social exclusion of TCNs, facilitating and streamlining the interaction between TCNs, society and public administration, fostering the exercise of citizenship and civic participation, and deepening the empowerment of the descendants of TCN communities.

Additionally, through the ESF, the country received over €7.3 billion during the 2014-2020 period, with nearly €1.8 billion of the total amount being allocated and devoted to “operational plan Social Inclusion and Employment, which promotes social

inclusion and combats poverty and discrimination” (European Commission, n.d.f). When it comes to national funding, the European Commission (n.d.f) indicates that public funding can be obtained through the High Commission for Migration (ACM), the Foundation for Science and Technology (*Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* [FCT]), the Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR), the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa* (SCML), Universities and Research Units, and Municipalities. According to the same source, private funding is also available, with examples being the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Luso-American Development Foundation, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), and lastly the Catholic Work for Migration in Portugal.

Having given a general overview of the country’s integration policies and strategies, and some of the main sources of funding for these programmes, it is necessary to understand their effectiveness. As such, Portugal was one of the countries analysed by the MIPEX tool, which was previously explained. The country was one of the highest scoring countries analysed in the latest edition, receiving a total of 81 points in MIPEX’s 100-point scale²³, only being surpassed by Sweden (86 points) and Finland (85 points). The average when it comes to integration policies in the 52 countries examined through MIPEX was of only 49 points, meaning that the policies were, on average, only halfway favourable. The authors claim that “[c]ompared to all other developed countries, Portugal’s integration policies in 2019 were above average in all policy areas except migrant health” (Solano & Huddleston, 2020a, p. 200).

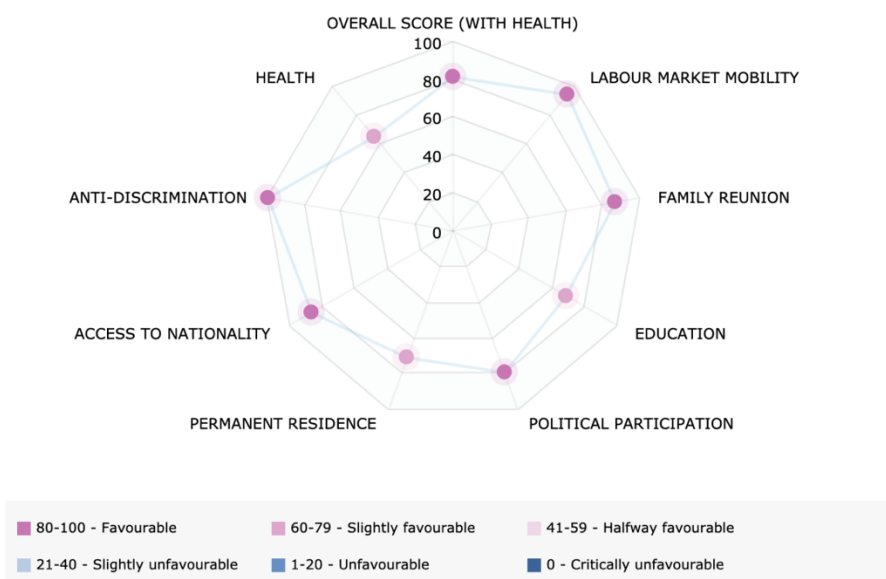
As mentioned above, Portugal claimed the third position in the Top 10 MIPEX countries. As such, and according to Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 52), “[i]n the Top Ten MIPEX countries, integration works well as a two-way process, as citizens and newcomers generally enjoy equal rights, opportunities and security”. Countries who are in the Top Ten tend to adopt a “comprehensive approach to integration [which] guarantees equal rights, opportunities and security for immigrants and citizens”. The authors assert that integration policies in these countries “generally encourage the public to see immigrants as their equals, neighbours and potential citizens” (Solano & Huddleston, 2020a, p. 10).

²³ According to Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 6), the maximum of 100 points is awarded to when policies meet the highest standards for equal treatment, between migrants and natives.

Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 200) mention that, over the years, the country’s integration policies have slightly improved “on all dimensions of equal rights, opportunities and security for immigrants”. Moreover, the same authors state that Portugal has started to address the slight areas of weakness highlighted in previous MIPEX editions, more particularly, those of migrant health and education. According to Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 200), the Portuguese health system “is improving access to healthcare and health information, while the education system is better supporting cultural diversity at school”. Given this, the effectiveness of Portugal’s integration policies is perfectly visible in Figure 15, which shows that, excluding two dimensions – Education (69%) and Health (65%), the country has an index of over 70% on all indicators examined.

Figure 15. Portugal's MIPEX Indicator Results (2019)

Portugal, 2019



Source: Solano and Huddleston (2020a, p. 199)

Despite Portugal’s “good” and “satisfactory” results on its structural integration indicators (Marques et al., 2019, p. 195), the country should strive for the continuous improvement of its integration policies. Given this, in 2022, a joint project between the European Union and the IOM was announced, to assist the ACM “in efforts to improve

the integration of migrants and refugees in [Portugal], including displaced persons from Ukraine” (IOM, 2022). The project, whose name is “Portugal: Enhancing Migration Integration Services”, was launched on 28 September 2022 and, according to the IOM (2022), will support the ACM in:

- [Developing] more effective information sharing, coordination and referral mechanisms between migrant integration services, other entities and organizations supporting migrants in the integration process;
- [Enhancing] ACM emergency team response and field support across the country for emergency situations involving migrants;
- [Assessing] and [improving] the newly established digital platforms that will help migrants and refugees use multiple channels to access State services, such as social security, healthcare and finances;
- [Reviewing] and [designing] ACM’s training plan on intercultural mediation to ensure its staff are well prepared to meet the needs of migrants.

With all these actions, it is therefore possible to assert that Portugal is taking the right steps to ensure that refugees are considered a priority and that their integration is facilitated. However, Marques et al. (2019, p. 195) mention that the Portuguese immigrant integration policies “could benefit from more individual or group level measures, and from measures that promote the expansion of intercultural practices”. Nevertheless, it can be said that, by providing support and resources to refugees in the form of, for example, language classes, job training, and access to healthcare, Portugal shows its commitment to helping refugees and creating a safe and welcoming environment for those who have suffered so much.

**CHAPTER III – UNITY ON THE FIELD: SPORT’S POTENTIAL FOR
REFUGEE INTEGRATION**

3.1 Sport for Refugee Integration

In an increasingly interconnected and diverse world, the integration of refugees into their host communities has emerged as a critical societal challenge. As mentioned in the previous chapter, and as emphasized by Abur (2016, p. 10), the “(re)settlement of people with refugee backgrounds in a new country is a complex and ongoing process that requires support from the host community, government and non-government agencies to address the different layers of settlement challenges”. This being said, over the years, countries around the world, including Portugal, have utilised different tools and instruments available to them to facilitate the integration process for both migrants and refugees. Amongst these valuable instruments, sport has emerged as a particularly powerful and effective means of fostering social integration, inclusion, and cohesion.

Michelini (2020, p. 132) argues that, for a long time, sport and physical activity have been associated with refugee discussions worldwide because of their alleged health-enhancing and integrative potentials. In fact, Chandler et al. (2007, p. 108) believe that sport, “as a potentially friendly and positive activity, can be used to integrate marginalised and excluded groups into the wider society”. Similarly, the European Commission (n.d.i) claims that, “not only is sport and physical activity a basis for personal, social and learning development, but it also motivates social inclusion and integration”. Filippo Grandi, the UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees, recognizes that “sport has the incredible power to bring hope, to heal and to help shape the future for those forced to flee. In our work with refugees we see daily what uplifting difference sports can make in their lives” (UNHCR, 2022e).

According to the IRTS (n.d.), sports have long since been recognized as a powerful vehicle for integration, “inclusion, relief, health promotion and human connection” for refugees. As a matter of fact, “agencies which support the settlement of refugees have increasingly recognized sport as a useful tool in assisting refugees to settle more effectively” (Morgan, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, Schwartzkopff (2022, p. 4) points out that:

Sport as a means of integrating refugees is a promising path that is being taken by many organisations and institutions, including sports clubs and sports initiatives, but also integration projects, refugee initiatives, migrant organisations, youth facilities, providers of after-school programmes, etc.

Nevertheless, Blanchard (2018, pp. 3/4) claims that “[u]p until recently, refugees and asylum-seekers, and even more so, the relationship between sport and settlement, has generally been written out of discussions surrounding sport for development (SFD)”. Likewise, Morgan (2018, p. 5) claims that “research on the role of sport in assisting refugee settlement has been limited”. However, according to Spaaij et al. (2019, p. 2), in recent years, “in parallel with political and policy concerns about forced migration, the attention for sport as a means or context for refugee wellbeing and settlement has been on the increase in research, policy and practice”. Even with such scarce information pertaining this particular subject, many countries and organisations worldwide have pushed for the use of sport as a means to facilitate the integration of refugees into their host societies.

Prior to diving deeper into this subject, it is important to clarify the notion of “sport”. As such, Taylor et al. (2015, p. 12) describe sport as a “broad and vague term that includes a wide range of activities”. Ma (2020) defines sport as “an activity involving physical exertion, skill, and competition”. For Angba (2022, p. 1), sport is “any form of activity (physical) which is engaged competitively in accordance with sets of instructions or regulations that guides it”. Additionally, Abur (2016, p. 11) views sport as “an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes for entertainment and winning reasons”.

According to the Australian Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (2016), sport is a “human activity involving physical exertion and skill as the primary focus of the activity, with elements of competition where rules and patterns of behaviour governing the activity exist formally through organisations (...)”. A more detailed and comprehensive definition of sport can be found in the 1992 European Sports Charter (ESC) (Council of Europe, 2001). This being said, Article 2(1) of the European Sports Charter, defines sport as:

[A]ll forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

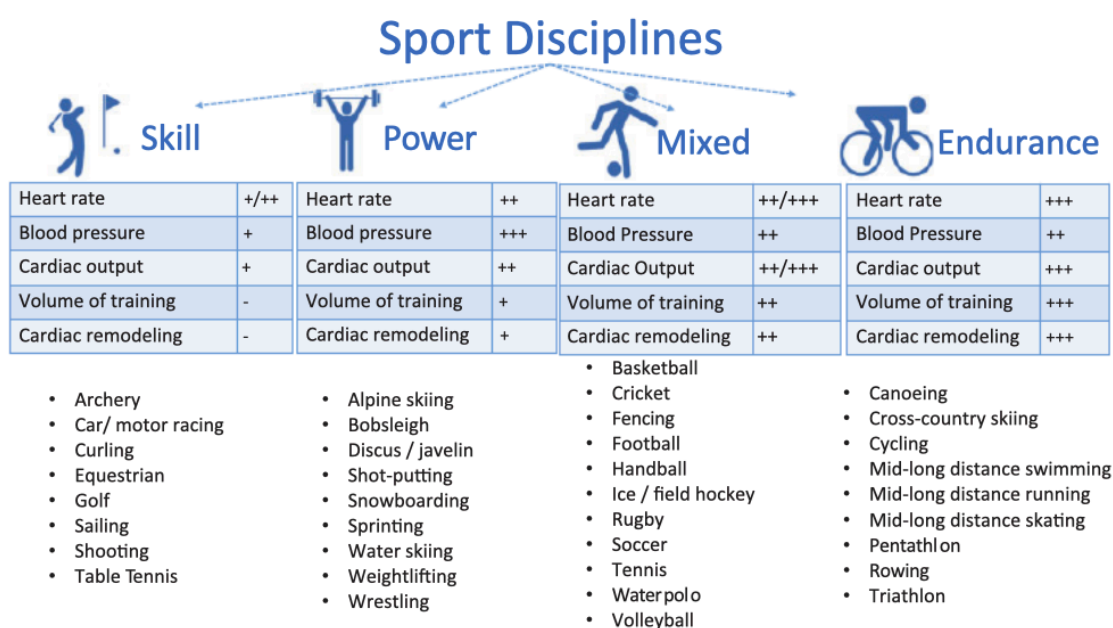
For Peynot et al. (2011, p. 15) and Harknett (2013, p. 3), sport is a “rule-oriented and organized physical activity, competitive or not, and practised in a controlled setting”. Likewise, Chandler et al. (2007, p. 205) argue that sport can generally be described and

characterised as a “structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic, physical activity”. Angba (2022, p. 2) notes that sport is “regulated by certain instructions or customs so as to ascertain fair competition, and allows for accordant pronouncement of the party emerging as the winner”. According to Malm et al. (2019, p. 11), sport’s main purposes are “to promote physical activity and improve motor skills for health and performance and psychosocial development”. The same authors also claim that, whilst participating in sports, participants also “gain a chance to be part of a community, develop new social circles, and create social norms and attitudes”.

Like mentioned by the WHO (2011, p. 15), sport is often mistakenly used as a synonym for physical activity, but this is not the case. Physical activity, unlike sport, can be defined as “any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that results in energy expenditure above resting level” (CDC, n.d.). Moreover, according to Harknett (2013, p. 3), physical activity refers to “all body movements produced by muscle contractions and which increase energy output. This includes all movements in daily life that are performed during working hours as well as leisure times”. This means that, whilst physical activity encompasses all situations that place the body in movement, sport only covers some of these situations (Peynot et al., 2011, p. 15). Thus, it can be said that physical activity is a much broader concept than sport, and as such, taking the words of Harknett (2013, p. 3), sport can be considered as a mere sub-set of physical activity, since “it covers only certain physical activities which are regulated and codified in various ways”. Sport Accord (2011, as cited in Angba, 2022, p. 2) proposes that, for a physical activity to be referred to as a sport, “it must be somewhat competitive, it must not be dangerous to the participating living creature, and must not be largely dependent on [the] ‘luck’ element”.

According to Liponski (2003), there are as many as 8,000 indigenous sports and sporting games in the world, which hail from different countries, nations, reigns, and cultures around the Globe. Furthermore, Levinson and Christensen (1999, p. xvii) mention that many of the sports played in ancient times are still played today, of course with some changes. Figure 16 shows only some of the most well-known and practiced sport disciplines worldwide.

Figure 16. Examples of Sport Disciplines



Source: Niebauer et al. (2018, p. 5)

As perfectly portrayed by Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General, “[s]port has become a world language, a common denominator that breaks down all the walls, all the barriers” (United Nations, 2011). Similarly, the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan also claimed that “sport is a universal language. At its best it can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status” (United Nations, 2004). This is an opinion further reiterated by Sebastian Coe, renowned Olympian, who, like Annan and Ban, believes that “[s]port is a universal language, building more bridges between people than anything else I can think of” (UNFICYP, 2016).

As a matter of fact, Chandler et al. (2007, p. vii) claim that sport is everywhere, and its global presence is undeniable. Sport allows for the creation of a shared language, shared passions, whilst, at the same time, highlighting people’s aspirations and values, ways of interacting with one another, and individual’s appreciation of competition, achievement, and adventure (Levinson & Christensen, 1999, p. xv). From children playing with a ball on the street, either kicking it or throwing it, to the Super Bowl or even the UEFA Champions League Final, sport captivates us all, and that is something felt worldwide. Nevertheless, Elling et al. (2001, p. 420) mention that “social integration within and through the social practice of sport is a complex practice, which is often

ambiguous and paradoxical in nature”. Moreover, Hoberman (2011), Dowling (2019, p. 6), and Bortello et al. (2021, p. 576) assert that a large part of the sociological community agrees that a univocal positive view of the effects of sport is distorted and romanticised. Consistently, Moyo (2018, p. 11) claims that sport can be seen “both in a positive light as well as a divisive one in integrating an individual or group of people into a new society”.

Nonetheless, Levinson and Christensen (1999, p. xv) note that sport is a “vital aspect of the human experience, an endeavor that, perhaps more than anything else, connects people worldwide”. The same authors also mention that sports, such as basketball and football, are “more universally known, and loved, than any religion or food or political system”. As such, it can be said that sport is one of society’s most vital institutions as it has the power to bring people and nations together (Levinson & Christensen, 1999, p. xv). According to the Council of Europe (n.d.a), Adams and Robinson (2017, p. 345), and Gemar (2019, p. II), sports are a very important element in almost all cultures. Gemar (2019, p. 2) goes as far as claiming that sport is in fact one of the most pervasive cultural products in society. For Abur (2016, p. 12), sport is regarded as “universal to all cultures regardless of socioeconomic and political boundaries”.

Undoubtedly, sport can act as a go-between when linking two or more cultures in the discussion about interculturalism. Gasparini (2010, p. 9) believes that sport possesses a potential for interculturalism, because, ultimately, it has contributed, throughout history, to the blending of cultures. Moreover, the author claims that sport, as a whole, “is also perceived by the citizens of Europe as a possible avenue for furthering dialogue among the various cultures living side by side in Europe” (Gasparini, 2010, p. 11). Frast (n.d., pp. 44/45) and IRTS (2018, p. 11) further claim that sport is a solution and an avenue for creating and fostering intercultural contact, dialogue, and learning, as well as mutual acceptance and understanding within the European society. Although Landry (2006, p. 8) considers sport as an intercultural bridge, that is, as a vehicle through which different cultures may experience a sense of togetherness, Frossard (2010, p. 5) claims that sport, in itself, does not necessarily foster tolerance. Sport is merely a complementary (and somewhat low-cost) tool that countries could utilize in tandem with other instruments to ensure the proper integration of refugees into their host communities.

Notwithstanding, it can be said that sports have evolved into much more than mere physical activity; they are now an “outlet” for people to cope with their daily stress and struggles. Although sports alone cannot address all the challenges refugees face during

their integration process, they undoubtedly contribute to creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment. Lapchick (2018) eloquently captures the potential impact of sport in the lives of refugees with the following statement: “[s]port continues to be one of the few rays of light making many refugees feel welcome in environments that can be very unwelcoming”. Accordingly, the UNHCR (2008) recognizes that sport can play a “particularly important and healing role, helping to address health as well as social and development needs” of refugees. Moreover, it can be said that sports provide a platform where refugees and members of the host community can interact and collaborate, breaking down barriers and stereotypes raised by diversity (Di Palma et al., 2019). The UNHCR (2022f) also notes that sport can empower refugee communities and help them forge closer ties with the communities that host them. The International Olympic Committee (IOC, 2023) proclaims that as “displaced people begin to settle in their host countries, many find their way to local sports clubs and sports facilities, which can serve as an entry point to other mental and psychosocial support services they may need”.

As stated by the UNHCR (2008), children and youth are amongst the most vulnerable victims of displacement but are often the most neglected. Given this, Murray (2013) mentions that sport and games can “provide displaced young people with a sense of normality when they are living in very unfamiliar surroundings”. The UNHCR (2022f) recognizes that sport activities can “help to normalize young lives disrupted by conflict and forced displacement. They offer opportunities for better inclusion and protection to help young people heal, develop and grow”. Furthermore, McDonald et al. (2019, p. 936) mention that football and other sports “have been shown to appeal to refugees and asylum seekers, especially young males, as a form of recreation and as a setting where they can potentially experience a sense of social inclusion and belonging in countries of resettlement (...), as well as in refugee camps”. Spaaij (2015, p. 304) complements this idea by stating that “[p]laying or watching sport is something that many young people (...) do as a way of occupying time themselves and socialising with each other”.

Taking the words of Michelini (2020, p. 144), “sport experiences can soften boundaries between hosting communities and refugees”. The Refugee Council of Australia (2010, p. 10) claims that participating in sport has important social impacts, that is, “it assists in building social cohesion and in reducing isolation, antisocial behaviour and crime”. The same source mentions that the benefits of sport have particular relevance for refugee communities. Abur (2016, p. 10) further explains that sport is “one of the

strategies or activities which can assist newly-arrived refugees to overcome settlement challenges including social isolation”. The same author believes that sport “has many positive attributes in uniting people in diverse communities”, something inherent and intrinsic in modern society (Abur, 2016, p. 13). The following table (Table 8) summarizes some of the main advantages and disadvantages of using sport as a tool for social integration and inclusion. It should be noted that, despite the growing number of studies investigating the use of sport as a tool for refugee integration, there remains insufficient comprehensive data to definitely assess its actual effectiveness in achieving this goal.

Table 8. Advantages and Disadvantages of Using Sport for Social Integration and Inclusion

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Sport can foster different positive values that can help to bring a group closer together, such as teamwork and fair play. Being part of a team, playing together in the same team, can forge a strong sense of shared identity in a group. ◇ Sport provides a range of options for modifying activities to meet different needs. ◇ Participation in sport builds confidence, not only in people’s ability to play the sport, but also in other aspects of life. This includes an increased confidence in social interaction and forming friendships/relationships. ◇ Engaging in regular physical activity can improve mental health and physical fitness, which can help in addressing isolation. ◇ Sport can help to breakdown stereotypes, helping to make a statement about who can do/is supposed to do what. ◇ Projects using sport and physical activity for social integration can help people to access sports that would not be accessible otherwise (for example, because they are too expensive). ◇ Sport and physical activity have a strong cultural appeal across different ages, nationalities, ethnicities, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ People can have a negative perception of sport, and of what getting involved in sporting activities might mean. For example, homophobia in sports and exclusion based on gender can give sport a negative perception. ◇ Sporting activities can be expensive to deliver, for example, by hiring venues and providing equipment. ◇ There can also be costs for participants that act as a barrier for taking part in sport, such as purchasing equipment (and feeling pressure to have the same equipment as one’s peers). ◇ The competitive nature of sport can lead to inequalities in a group if not managed effectively, for example, if participants are judged by other members of the group based on their ability. This can lead to cliques and divisiveness. ◇ The gendered nature of sport, which traditionally includes segregated men’s and women’s teams, gears and changing facilities, does not foster accessibility and inclusion. ◇ Cultural stereotyping is an issue, because people can feel uncomfortable in spaces they do not traditionally inhabit, particularly if they are visible minorities.

Source: inFocus (2019, p. 2)

As is well-documented, sport has been shown to yield a wide array of benefits and positive impacts in people's lives. However, whilst authors such as Merkel (2013), Taylor et al. (2015), Malm et al. (2019) and Lochinbekovic (2021) acknowledge the positive impacts of sport, they also highlight its potential negative effects on individuals' lives. Quoting Malm et al. (2019, p. 1), sport is a "double-edged sword regarding effects on health". This perspective suggests that, akin to various aspects of life, sport possesses the potential to both positively and negatively influence individuals' well-being.

Given this, Morgan (2018, p. 10) believes that "[e]ngaging in physical activity such as sport has numerous health benefits, both physical (such as improving fitness and decreasing the risk of chronic diseases) and mental (such as building self-esteem and counteracting stress and depression)". Similarly, Merkel (2013, p. 152) notes that the benefits of sports participation are numerous and span multiple domains, including physical, physiological, and social development. Olliff (2008, p. 54) reinforces this idea by asserting that participating in sports yields benefits that can span from personal to sociocultural and economic advantages for all those involved, as well as for society as a whole. Consistently, for Coalter (2005, p. 4) sport participation can improve "the quality of life of individuals and communities, promote social inclusion, improve health, counter anti-social behaviour, raise individual self-esteem and confidence, and widen horizons". Elling et al. (2001, p. 429) believe that practicing sports can also "confirm and/or construct part of people's social identity or image". Furthermore, the Refugee Council of Australia (2010, p. 10) also notes that sport participation has important social impacts, as it "assists in building social cohesion and in reducing isolation, antisocial behaviour and crime".

The WHO (2011, p. 15) claims that "engaging in sport is one of the ways of being physically active and the sports movement has a great influence on the level of health-enhancing physical activity in the general population". Moreover, the same source states that "[i]t has been shown that individuals who do sport are more likely to meet the recommendations for physical activity related to health than those who are not active in sport". In terms of physical advantages derived from active participation in sports, these can encompass a spectrum that extends to "improving fitness and decreasing the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, high blood pressure, obesity, osteoporosis and some cancers" (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010, p. 10). Merkel (2013, p. 152) also highlights that participation in sports "fosters vigorous physical

activity and energy expenditure”. The President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition (PCSFN) Council Board notes that participating in sport is associated with increased physical activity levels, improved cardiovascular fitness, decreased body fat percentage, and increased overall quality of life (PCSFN Council Board, 2020, p. 1).

On the other hand, participating in sport can also lead to psychological benefits such as “building self-esteem, increasing mental alertness and counteracting stress and depression” (Refugee Council of Australia, 2010, p. 10). Moreover, the PCSFN Council Board (2020, p. 1) claims that participating in sports is associated with:

Lower rates of anxiety and depression; [l]ower amounts of stress; [h]igh self-esteem and confidence; [r]educed risk of suicide; [l]ess substance abuse and fewer risky behaviors; [i]ncreased cognitive performance; [i]ncreased creativity; [g]reater enjoyment of all forms of physical activity; [i]mproved psychological and emotional well-being for individuals with disabilities; [and] [i]ncreased life satisfaction.

As outlined by Chandler et al. (2007, p. 36), sport is recognized for its positive benefits for youth. In fact, the WHO (2018, p. 5) emphasizes the significance of sport and physical activity, especially in safeguarding and enhancing the mental and physical well-being of children. Elling et al. (2001, p. 419) claim that, for young people, sport may be an important vehicle to “learn specific skills, keep them from criminal activities, and meet the right people to create more off-court opportunities”. Similarly, Chandler et al. (2007, p. 36) contend that sport can “provide enjoyment and promote physical fitness; it can result in improved posture and a healthier lifestyle; and it can help develop hand-eye coordination and motor skills”. Furthermore, sport can serve as a platform for children and young individuals to grasp concepts like “sportsmanship, teamwork, responsibility, commitment and self-discipline”, whilst also playing a substantial role in nurturing character development (Chandler et al., 2007, p. 36). The PCSFN Council Board (2020, p. 2) asserts that sports have far-reaching benefits for children and youth, hopefully influencing their academic performance and future careers positively. This being said, the same source highlights the fact that, for youth, sport participation can be associated with:

Improving teamwork, social skills, and social responsibility; [i]mproved life skills (e.g., goal setting, time management, work ethic, empathy, negotiation); [i]ncreased empowerment, personal responsibility, and self-control; [i]mproved educational and occupational skills (e.g., determination, perseverance, grit,

resilience, critical thinking); [h]igher level of academic achievement; [and] [g]reater leadership qualities.

However, in contrast, Dowling (2019, p. 6) argues that sport, and particularly organised sport, harbours a dark side, which can be mainly characterised by its potential to serve as a platform for “repression, sexism, racism, homophobia, xenophobia and values such as ‘winning at all costs’”. Moreover, Elling et al. (2001, p. 419) shed light on the potential drawbacks of sport participation amongst young people, as it “may put all their energy and time into sport and little on education, thus limiting their social integration into areas outside sport”. Additionally, Chandler et al. (2007, p. 36) acknowledge the presence of issues linked, particularly, to children’s sport, emphasizing “the adults associated with it, the pushy parents and the coach who seeks victory rather than fun and participation”. Figure 17 further illustrates some of the positive and negative impacts of sports, and particularly, youth sports.

Figure 17. Positive and Negative Impacts of (Youth) Sport

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increased physical activity ○ Enhanced fitness ○ Lifelong physical, emotional, and health benefits ○ Decreased risk of obesity ○ Minimizes development of chronic disease ○ Improves health ○ Improves motor skills • Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decrease depression ○ Decrease suicidal thoughts ○ Decrease high risk health behaviors ○ Increases positive behavior in teens ○ Develops fundamental motor skills ○ Improves self-concept/self-worth • Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhances social skills ○ Provides life lessons ○ Improves positive social behaviors ○ Enhances time management skills ○ Improves academic achievement ○ Helps to develop passion and goal setting ○ Improves character 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Injuries ○ Untrained coaches ○ Inconsistent safety precautions ○ Lack of sports science influencing policy and practices • Psychological <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase stress to be an elite player ○ High rates of attrition ○ Too competitive ○ Inappropriate expectations to achieving scholarships/professional career • Social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inconsistent funding to insure proper safety equipment, venues, and equal participation ○ Expense ○ Inequality across groups (socioeconomic, ethnic, geographic, gender)

Source: Merkel (2013, p. 155)

As noted by the Refugee Council of Australia (2010, p. 10), the benefits of sport have particular relevance for refugee communities. As was explained before, the refugee experience is inherently traumatic, as people are forced to flee their homes, leave their

whole lives behind, looking for protection and safety in other places. As such, sport can provide a “sense of purpose and direction for young people recovering from traumas of the refugee experience or the impact of racism” (Dykes & Olliff, 2007, p. 1, as cited in Cerna, 2019, p. 32). According to Spaaij et al. (2019, p. 10), sport is often perceived in the context of mental and physical health benefits for refugees, encompassing aspects like “fitness, general wellbeing, self-efficacy, and reduced stress”. Furthermore, it can serve as means for refugees to establish “structure, routine and [regain a sense of control]” in their lives (Spaaij et al., 2019, p. 10). Block and Gibbs (2017, p. 91) note that sports participation can “confer a range of physical and psychological benefits and, for refugee and migrant youth, may even act as a critical mediator for achieving positive settlement and engaging meaningfully in [their host] society”. Moreover, sports provide a platform where refugees and members of the host community can interact and collaborate, breaking down barriers and stereotypes. Through shared experiences on the field or court, individuals from different background can build connections and develop a sense of belonging.

For Olliff (2008, p. 55), “sport and recreation is a practical and accessible entry point for addressing the needs of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds”. In fact, the author notes that, for young refugees, the participation in sport and recreation activities have a range of positive attributes. Specifically, sports can act as a trust-building platform, aiding in the settlement process and providing transitional assistance to those requiring support. They can also offer a chance for capacity-building, act as a therapeutic outlet, and serve as an initial step for broader community involvement. Furthermore, sports can act as a diversion tactic by helping certain youth avoid risk-taking behaviours and, in contrast, giving them a sense of belonging. These activities may yield favourable social and psychological outcomes, promoting overall health and well-being, whilst also serving as a means to foster community understanding (Olliff, 2008, pp. 54-56).

Cerna (2019, p. 32) alludes to the notion that “[s]porting environments can offer equal opportunities and promote racial equality among those involved, allowing refugees and immigrants to maintain their cultural identity while integrating into the host country society”. However, Elling et al. (2001, as cited in Micheline, 2020, pp. 144/145) believe that, in the specific case of migrants and refugees, sport can, unfortunately, reinforce stereotypes and prejudice and even trigger aggression and violence. Likewise, Spaaij (2015, p. 304) contends that sport is not necessarily inclusive, as it may also be used to

differentiate and exclude, and it may also “potentially lead newcomers or minorities to feel alienated or marginalised”. Notwithstanding, it is through the power of sport that refugees can find a common ground, build relationships, and contribute to the social fabric of their new communities. For this reason, whilst it is essential to address the challenges and potential negative aspects of sport, its positive impact of sport on fostering inclusivity, breaking down barriers, and promoting cohesion cannot be overstated.

3.2 Refugee Integration Through Sport in Europe

The European Olympic Committees (2018) have acknowledged that inclusiveness and integration have always been the driving forces of Europe, and that sport is the ideal conduit to foster and embody these values. Consistently, the European Commission (n.d.h) and Katsarova and Halleux (2019, p. 1) recognize that sport plays an integral part on the lives of millions of Europeans, thereby constituting a fundamental aspect of the European identity. The European Commission (n.d.h) further asserts that sport nurtures community cohesion, enhances social inclusion and contributes to an enriched sense of the European identity.

Grounded in the premises that “sport brings people together” and “sport can be a prevalent aspect of building a fairer, more inclusive and more vibrant society and economy”, the European Commission and the European Union work closely with the EU Member States, as well as with global sport organisations and enterprises, to effectively manage and harness the potential of the sport sector (European Commission, n.d.h). The fact is, sport and physical activity promote values such as tolerance, solidarity, inclusiveness, and many other core principles upheld by both sports and the European Union (European Commission, n.d.i). Moreover, and as emphasized by the European Commission (n.d.i), “marginalised and underprivileged groups such as migrants and people at risk of discrimination for example, have the opportunity to interact and integrate with other social groups through sport”.

Taking the words of Hartmann-Tews (2006, p. 110), the EU “has been active in promoting participation in sport and its educational and social values for [close to 50 years now]”. This being said, the European Sport for All Charter, which was ratified in 1975, was the first sports policy initiative of the European Union. The charter underwent revisions and updates in 1992, 2001, and 2021, leading to its transformation into the European Sports Charter (ESC) (Council of Europe, 2022, p. 6). The ESC is the “Council of Europe standard which lays down the basic principles for national sports policies, allowing governments to provide their citizens with opportunities to practice sport under well-defined conditions” (Council of Europe, n.d.b). Additionally, the same source claims that it also “inspires policy makers and provides guidance to member states on how to perfect their existing sport legislations or other policies and to develop a comprehensive framework for sport”.

Article 10(1) of the Revised ESC emphasizes the recognition of sport access for all as a fundamental right. As per the aforementioned article, “[a]ll human beings have an inalienable right to access to sport in a safe environment, both inside and outside school settings, which is essential for their personal development and instrumental in the exercise of the rights to health, education, culture and participation in the life of the community”. Article 10(2) further elucidates that “[n]o discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, language, religion, gender or sexual orientation, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status, shall be permitted in the access to sports facilities or to sports activities” (Council of Europe, 2022, p. 22).

Katsarova and Halleux (2019, p. 2) and Renard and Iskra (2023, p. 1), however, recognize that sport is a field in which the EU’s responsibility is relatively new, having only been acquired with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2009. Prior to this, the European Union did not possess direct responsibility for the sport sector. As a result, it lacked the capacity to conduct and/or finance a specific EU policy in this area, and it was also unable to develop cooperation with international bodies in the field of sport (Katsarova & Halleux, 2019, pp. 1/2). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that “EU competence in sports is limited and only allows the EU to support, coordinate or complement sports policy measures taken by national governments” (Katsarova & Halleux, 2019, p. 1). Moreover, Katsarova and Halleux (2019, p. 1) also claim that the European Union has “opted to act via ‘soft’ policy tools, such as guidelines, recommendations and – most importantly – funding, to support its sport related objectives”.

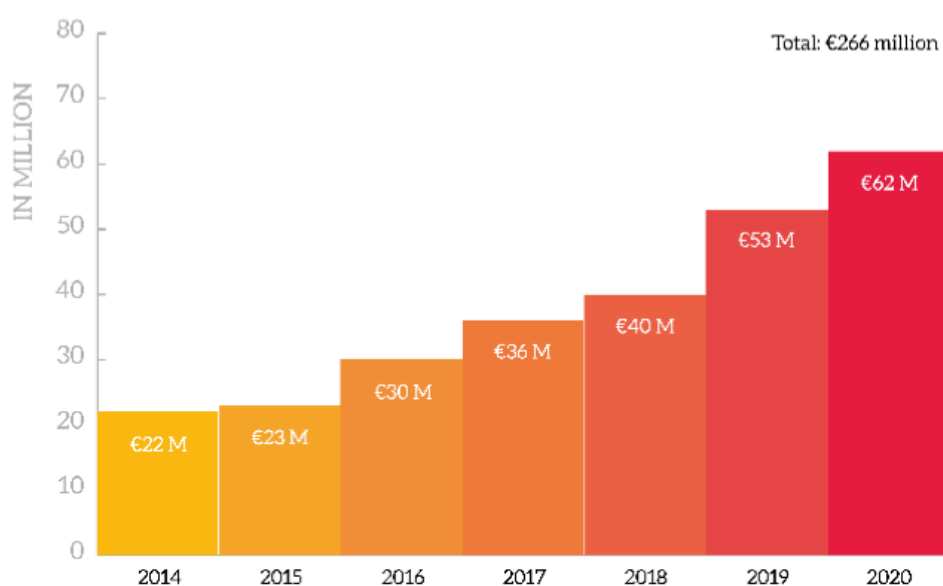
Renard and Iskra (2023, p. 1) highlight the fact that, although the EU lacked legal competence in the realm of sport prior to 2009, the European Commission “laid the foundations of an EU policy for sport with the 2007 White Paper on Sport and the Pierre de Coubertin action plan”. Within the White Paper on Sport, the Commission of the European Communities (2007, p. 7) affirms that sport represents “one of the areas of human activity that most concern and bring together the citizens of the European Union”. Furthermore, recognizing its extensive reach, the Commission of the European Communities (2007, pp. 7/8) acknowledges that sport can play various roles within the European society, including: a health-promotion role; an educational role; a social role; a recreational role; and a cultural role.

The European Commission's 'White Paper on Sport' (2007) and the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009) paved the way for the development of the 'EU Work Plan for Sport'. According to Renard and Iskra (2023, p. 3), this is "one of the most important EU documents on sports policy. It focuses on the Union's key activities in the field and acts as a guidance instrument for the promotion of cooperation between EU institutions, Member States and sports stakeholders". The Council of European Ministers of Sport adopted the inaugural Work Plan for Sport in 2011, which extended until 2014. The latest Work Plan for Sport, marking the fourth in its series, was adopted on 1 December 2020, and was slated to span from 2021 through 2024 (Renard & Iskra, 2023, p. 3). As highlighted by Marica (2020), the key priority of the 'Work Plan on Sport 2021-2024' is the "promotion of participation in sport and health-enhancing physical activity".

Ha and Lyras (2013, p. 122) observe that over the decade, the UNHCR has increasingly "recognised the potential power of sport to influence beneficial change in a society". Demonstrating its commitment, the UNHCR's Division of External Affairs unveiled a landmark Sports Strategy titled "More than a Game", to be executed between 2022 and 2026. This strategy outlines the UNHCR's "ambition to expand the use of sport and strengthen engagement with the sport ecosystem to benefit displaced and stateless people globally" (UNHCR, 2022g, p. 8).

Numerous initiatives and programmes that employ sport for promoting the social integration and inclusion of refugees across Europe receive backing from the Erasmus+ programme (main source of EU funding in the field of sport), as well as from Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions (PPPAs) (European Commission, n.d.j). Renard and Iskra (2023, p. 4) elucidate that "[s]port is an integral part of Erasmus+, the programme for EU action in the field of education, training, youth and sport. The current programme for 2021-2027 allocates 1.9% of its overall budget to sport". Importantly, it is worth highlighting that a "specific budget line was established for the first time under the first Erasmus+ programme (2014-2020) to support projects and networks relating to sport" (Renard & Iskra, 2023, p. 1). As evidenced in Figure 18, the financial assistance extended by the European Union to the sport industry and related sport projects has exhibited a consistent growth trajectory.

Figure 18. EU Financial Support for Sport (2014-2020)



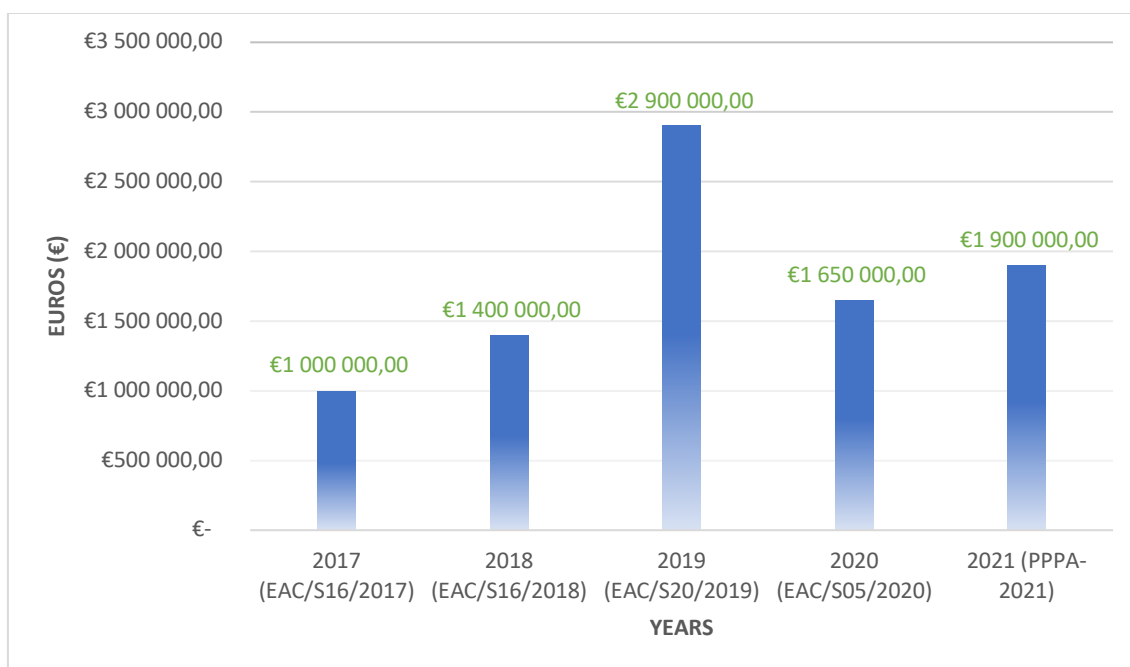
Source: Katsarova and Halleux (2019, p. 5)

In 2017, the European Commission initiated a call for projects titled “Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees”. This call aimed to provide primary support to local European sport projects focused on refugee integration. Furthermore, as detailed by the European Commission (2017, p. 2), the envisioned outcomes extended beyond concrete actions aiming at integrating refugees through sport, and also encompassed the following objectives:

- Promoting the direct engagement of refugees and host communities in the project.
- Designing a project which can be disseminated, and in this sense, promoting a Europe-wide approach, increasing the potential for European host communities to successfully engage [with] and integrate refugees through sport.

Illustration 4 shows the progression of the total budget allocated for co-financing projects under this annual call for proposals. It should be highlighted that the “EU grant is limited to a maximum co-financing rate of 80% of eligible costs” (European Commission, 2020b, p. 2).

Illustration 4. Erasmus+ Funding - Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees (2017-2021)



Source: Adapted from European Commission (2017, p. 3; 2018, p. 4; 2019, p. 3; 2020b, p. 2; 2021b, p. 7)

Throughout Europe, a diverse array of projects and programmes have harnessed and leveraged the power of sport to facilitate the integration and inclusion of refugees into their host societies. Three projects worth highlighting in the European context are the *Integration durch Sport* (IdS) programme and the Sport Inclusion Network’s (SPIN) projects – ‘Sport Welcomes Refugees – Social inclusion of newly arrived migrants in and through sport’ (2017-2018), as well as the project ‘SPIN Refugees’ (2020-2022).

The *Integration durch Sport* (Integration through Sport - IdS) programme is one of the longest-standing endeavours created that utilise sports for refugee integration. Established in 1989 by the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), this programme receives sponsorship and funding from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building, and Community, along with support from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) of Germany. As specified by the BAMF (2021, p. 2), the key objectives of the IdS project encompass three core aspects: 1. integration into sport; 2. integration through sport; and 3. support to the intercultural opening of sports.

The programme presents a diverse array of sports activities (ranging from football to skating and beyond) designed to engage individuals across all age groups (BAMF, 2021, p. 5; Council of Europe, n.d.c). The Council of Europe (n.d.c) noted the

multifaceted aims of this project, including: promoting social diversity; educating and transmitting values through sport; practicing a physical activity for physical/mental health; developing intercultural relations and/or intercultural competency; and promoting access to volunteering in sport. According to the BAMF (2021, p. 3), the IdS programme “supports the participation of people with a migration background in organised sports through tailor-made offering and imparts key skills and values that are vitally important in all aspects of society”. As highlighted by the Council of Europe (n.d.c), this initiative “supports clubs, federations and volunteers financially, offers advice, qualification seminars and helps to build important networks”.

The Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN) was established in 2010 by a coalition of NGOs and sport organisations from seven EU countries, and its primary objective was to address inclusivity challenges within the realm of sports. According to the SPIN (n.d.a), although it began as an individual initiative, it eventually evolved into a key European actor on social inclusion through sport. One of the SPIN’s noteworthy endeavours, the ‘Sport Welcomes Refugees – Social inclusion of newly arrived migrants in and through sport’ project, was implemented in 2017 and spanned a duration of two years (from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018). This project engaged organisations and initiatives in seven EU countries, namely Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, and Portugal (Schwenzer, 2018, p. 5; Council of Europe, n.d.d). According to Schwenzer (2018, p. 5), the project was co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme, and its main objective was to “enhance the social inclusion and participation of newly arrived migrants and refugees at different levels of sport through trainings, awareness-raising, and capacity-building for sport stakeholders”. The Council of Europe (n.d.d) posited that this project enabled participants to develop intercultural relations and/or intercultural competency, develop competences for active citizenship, and promote access to volunteering in sport.

More recently, the Sport Inclusion Network launched a project named ‘Sport Inclusion of Refugees across Europe’, commonly referred to as the ‘SPIN Refugees’ project, and it spanned a duration of 36 months (from January 2020 to December 2022). The lead organisation in charge of this project was the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC), and it unfolded through transnational partnerships in nine EU countries, including Portugal, where the Portuguese Players Union – *Sindicato dos Jogadores Profissionais de Futebol* (SJPF) was involved (SPIN, n.d.b).

As indicated by the SPIN (n.d.b), this project was co-funded by the European Commission via the 2019 European Commission’s call for projects centred on the theme “Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees”. The overall objective of the ‘SPIN Refugees’ project was to “enhance the social inclusion and participation of asylum-seekers and refugees on the local sport level through training, education and capacity-building of local sport stakeholders” (SPIN, n.d.c). The project’s operational framework was structured around four distinct, yet interconnected, workstreams, which are outlined in Figure 19. However, it is of the utmost importance to acknowledge that many of the European projects and initiatives pertaining to the theme of “Sport as a tool for integration and social inclusion of refugees” exhibit a lack of clarity when it comes to evaluating their effectiveness and measuring their actual impact. This aspect holds significant importance for informing the development of future endeavours in this domain.

Figure 19. Workstreams of the 'SPIN Refugees' project

Workstream 1: Identifying Good Practices in the EU

- 1.1. Mapping Study: European Programmes and Projects for Inclusion of Refugees
- 1.2. Case Studies of Good Practice Examples

Workstream 2: Sport Inclusion Training for Coaches and Staff

- 2.1. Development of a European Training Programme
- 2.2. National Training Sessions

Workstream 3: Involvement and Capacity Building of Refugees

- [3.1. Getting Refugees Involved in Coaching and Volunteering](#)
- [3.2. Inclusion Ambassadors – Refugees as Role Models](#)

Workstream 4: Promoting Active Sports Participation of Refugees

- 4.1. Connecting Local Sport Clubs with Refugees
- 4.2. SPIN Refugees Workshop in Ireland

Source: SPIN (n.d.b)

3.3 Refugee Integration Through Sport: The Portuguese Perspective

As highlighted in the first chapter and reinforced by João Paulo Rebelo, former Secretary of State of Youth and Sport, in the past decades, Portugal has consistently “expressed its willingness to welcome migrants and refugees to the highest European institutions” (SJPF, 2019, p. 5). As a matter of fact, Portugal has (unfortunately) witnessed a steady increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers within its borders since the beginning of the 2010s. This trend culminated in 2022, with the country recording its highest-ever number of refugees, reaching 59.777 individuals²⁴, a situation largely attributed to the Ukrainian War (UNHCR, n.d.d). In light of this situation, it becomes imperative for the government and both public and private institutions to ensure that these individuals are properly cared for and are receiving the necessary assistance, in order to facilitate their integration into the Portuguese society.

Fernando Gomes, the current President of the Portuguese Football Federation, recognizes that Portugal is a country “that has been able to host, in an exemplary way, different generations of migrants [and refugees] and historically it is a country with a strong connection to foreign communities (...)” (SJPF, 2019, p. 9). This favourable situation is the result of Portugal’s proactive stance in adopting a “pro-refugee position” (Silva et al., 2018, p. 297). The Portuguese government has tried its best to establish a conducive legislative framework that prioritizes the integration and inclusion of refugees (Governo de Portugal, 2019, p. 114); however, much work remains to be done in this regard. Nevertheless, specific measures are, supposedly, being developed and implemented to facilitate the demanding process of integration, particularly by the ACM (Matos, 2019, p. 15).

It is crucial to acknowledge that, as elaborated in the previous chapter, there remains much work to be done to provide refugees with the necessary tools and services tailored to their unique needs. In fact, a comprehensive and targeted plan for refugee integration in Portugal is still missing (Sousa et al., 2021, p. 97; Carreirinho, 2021, p. 26). This plan should encompass a range of support measures and strategies to ensure the successful integration and inclusion of refugees into the Portuguese society.

²⁴ Data retrieved on 30 August 2023 from the UNHCR’s website (UNHCR, n.d.d.).

In spite of that, in recent years, Portugal has increasingly recognized the potential of sports as an agent and a powerful tool for promoting the integration and social inclusion of refugees into its society. As mentioned before, sports provide a unique platform that transcends language barriers and cultural differences, facilitating social interaction, nurturing a sense of belonging, offering opportunities for skill development and empowerment, and much more, for all individuals involved. According to Machado (2018), sport exerts a “magical attraction” on people. The same author believes that sport “is a universal language based on respect for rules and equal participation. (...) It strengthens friendships, creating stronger bonds, and challenges excellence to give our best in the game, in life, in building a better and more peaceful world”²⁵.

Cláudia Pereira, former Secretary of State for Integration and Migration, emphasizes that “[s]port is one of the ‘main tools’ for the achievement of ‘full integration’ on part of the migrant communities in Portugal²⁶ (...)” (República Portuguesa, 2021; Agência Lusa, 2021). Moreover, according to the same sources, the former Secretary of State also notes that “[s]port is a strategic measure to have a richer, more balanced and cohesive society and is an essential tool to empower the leaders of tomorrow.²⁷ (...)”. In the opinion of João Paulo Rebelo, “[t]here is no better vehicle [than sport] to promote, together, the values of social inclusion, collective thinking, unity, friendship, solidarity, amongst many other values of an ethical nature, and not only, essential for a civilised and healthy life in society²⁸” (Sindicato dos Jogadores, 2018).

This sentiment is echoed by the current Portuguese Prime Minister, António Costa, who believes that sport has the capacity and the ability to foster integration and inclusion. He also views it as an engine and a catalyst for knowledge, innovation, and

²⁵ My translation. Original text: “É uma linguagem universal baseada no respeito pelas regras e igualdade de participação. (...) Fortalece a amizade, criando elos mais fortes, e desafia a excelência para darmos o nosso melhor no jogo, na vida, na construção de um mundo melhor e mais pacífico” (Machado M. , 2018).

²⁶ My translation. Original text: “[O] desporto é uma das «principais ferramentas» para consumir a «plena integração» das comunidades imigrantes em Portugal” (República Portuguesa, 2018).

²⁷ My translation. Original text: “[O] desporto é uma medida estratégica para ter uma sociedade mais rica, equilibrada e coesa e um instrumento essencial para capacitar os líderes de amanhã” (Agência Lusa, 2021).

²⁸ My translation. Original text: “Não existe, atualmente, melhor veículo para promover, conjuntamente, os valores da inclusão social, do pensamento coletivo da união, da amizade, da solidariedade, entre muitos outros valores de natureza ética, e não só, essenciais para uma vida civilizada e saudável em sociedade” (Sindicato dos Jogadores, 2018).

economic development (República Portuguesa, 2018). Machado (2018) further reinforces this perspective by stating that:

In this highly complex humanitarian scenario [of the Global Refugee Crisis], we believe in the social value of sport as a tool with a significant impact in combating the numerous forms of social, political, cultural and economic exclusion that characterise the landscape of conflicts and tensions in the global world. Sport, and particularly Olympism, have a legacy of solidarity and respect that is increasingly vital when it comes to promoting social cohesion and fostering connections between different members of the community²⁹.

Fernando Gomes further asserts that football, with its status as the world's most popular sport (Coelho, 2004, p. 119; Coelho & Tiesler, 2007, p. 578), and also often referred to as the “king sport” (Coelho, 2004, p. 119), is “the perfect environment [for people to interact and connect, and for a sense of integration and inclusion to grow], since [it] does not distinguish social and economic status, origins or family contexts, [and it is an arena where] all the players are equal and deserve an opportunity” (SJPF, 2019, p. 9). Numerous European and Portuguese programmes and initiatives that employ sport as a means to enhance the integration and inclusion of refugees in society primarily focus on the use of football as their main sport of choice. However, it is essential to acknowledge that, whilst football plays a pivotal role in ensuring the proper integration and inclusion of refugees into their host communities, many other sports can also contribute significantly to refugee integration. In fact, a diverse range of sports can engage individuals and facilitate their migration journey overall, but especially their integration process. This, in turn, may hopefully lead to a more inclusive and harmonious (host) society.

Given the significant increase in the number of refugees settling within national borders, it is now crucial for the Portuguese government, alongside various public and private organisations and institutions, to prioritize the safety and integration of these individuals in the community. As previously explained, sport can be a powerful tool for refugee integration. However, it becomes even more effective when combined with a

²⁹ My translation. Original text: “É neste cenário humanitário de enorme complexidade que acreditamos no valor social do desporto, como uma ferramenta com elevado impacto no combate às inúmeras formas de exclusão social, política, cultural e económica que marcam o panorama de conflitos e tensões do mundo global. O desporto e, em particular, o olimpismo têm o legado de solidariedade e respeito que é cada vez mais vital quando se trata de promover a coesão social e criar laços entre os diferentes membros da comunidade” (Machado M. , 2018).

comprehensive range of support services tailored for the unique needs of these individuals. These services may encompass education, housing, legal assistance, employment opportunities, and much more. By providing such a holistic approach, we can, hopefully, significantly enhance the process of refugee integration and their overall well-being.

Pedro Calado, former High Commissioner for Migration of the ACM, and Tito Campos e Matos, Vice-President of the CPR, claim that “[e]ven if sports are not the priority for these people (migrants, refugees or asylum seekers)[, they are] a fantastic tool, that can really help with integration” (SJPF, 2019, pp. 14/15). This is an opinion reiterated by Jonathan Fadugba, Head of Communications at FARE Network³⁰, who claims that even though sport is not the most important, it can be an essential tool to deal with cultural diversity, as the most “important thing for [these] people [(migrants and refugees)] is to create bonds with the host country” (SJFP, 2019, p. 24). Ana Ribeiro, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at the Portuguese Professional Football League, notes that “[c]reating a balance between host culture and refugee culture is a great challenge. In sports organisations there are several ideas that can be worked in a better way” (SJFP, 2019, p. 20). At the end of the day, according to Jonathan Fadugba, “sportive activities are a really fine tool to provide these persons an opportunity to get acceptance and to create a bond with the communities [in] which they arrived” (SJFP, 2019, p. 24).

As mentioned before, Cláudia Pereira emphasizes the effectiveness of sports as a mechanism for integration, going as far as saying that “basketball and football pitches are often the only places where people of different nationalities [and backgrounds] meet [and interact]” (Agência Lusa, 2021). Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, believes that, more than ever, “[s]port not only brings people together, but it can provide hope and opportunities, [as well as] rally individuals behind the refugee cause. (...)” (Lusa, 2022). Furthermore, Cláudia Pereira contends that “everyday practices of non-formal education, such as sport, are vital and help children to develop social skills” (República Portuguesa, 2018).

Ultimately, Portugal possesses a remarkable opportunity to collaborate with various stakeholders, including public and private institutions and organisations, to

³⁰ FARE Network is an “umbrella organization that brings together individuals, informal groups and organisations’ drive to combat inequality in football and use (...) sport as a means for social change” (SJFP, 2019, p. 23).

harness and leverage something as deeply ingrained and prominent in the Portuguese culture as sports to support and facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into society. Furthermore, it is crucial to allocate special attention and formulate dedicated programmes and initiatives towards that purpose, with a primary emphasis on young refugees who often endure the greatest hardships and obstacles throughout their entire migration journey.

3.3.1 Portuguese Sport Culture and Investment in the Sport Sector

Portugal is frequently praised for its rich and vibrant football culture, which plays a pivotal role in the country's cultural identity, fostering a profound connection between the sport's enthusiasts and the country's identity (Jornal do Centro, 2023). Without a doubt, football is unquestionably Portugal's most cherished and widely followed and watched sport, as can be seen through Figure 20.

This profound love for football has a substantial influence in shaping the identity, traditions, and ways of life of the Portuguese people. Remarkably, amongst all sports, football takes the lead in molding Portugal's collective identity, transcending generations and serving as a unifying force that brings and binds communities together. This is an opinion shared by Paulo César, a sports councillor of the Odivelas municipality, who believes that sports can play a very important role in the community (SJPF, 2019, p. 17).

Figure 20. Most Popular Sport Per Country



Source: McCarthy (2017)

The deep-rooted passion that the Portuguese people hold for football is evident in several ways, notably: the countless spectators who fill stadiums to watch football matches; the number of individuals who are paying club members; and the subscribers to sports channels like Sport TV and Eleven Sports, which provide live coverage of football

and other sport events. Indeed, during the 2022/2023 season, the three largest football clubs in Portugal, namely SL Benfica, FC Porto, and Sporting CP, boasted remarkable average stadium attendance figures across the 17 ‘home’ games of the season. Specifically, in that season, SL Benfica had an average of 57.108 spectators per game, FC Porto drew an average of 41.380 fans, and Sporting CP maintained an average attendance of 29.292 spectators per match (Liga Portugal, n.d.). These impressive numbers underscore the unwavering support and enthusiasm of their fan bases.

As previously mentioned, the number of paying club members serves as a significant indicator of people’s devotion to a club. In 2016, the top three Portuguese football clubs mentioned earlier secured positions on the list of the top 10 clubs worldwide with the highest number of paying members. SL Benfica ranked third with 157.000 members, Sporting CP followed closely in the 5th position with 136.389 (5th place), and FC Porto held the 10th position with a total of 110.000 paying members (Mais Futebol, 2016). However, as reported by Statista (2023), based on data available as of September 2021, only two Portuguese clubs managed to maintain their presence amongst the top ten football clubs worldwide with the largest number of paying members: SL Benfica with 290.000 members and Sporting CP with 177.000 members.

Furthermore, in Portugal, leading sports operators like Sport TV and Eleven Sports have witnessed a significant surge in the number of paying subscribers. As highlighted by Carregueiro (2019), in 2019, Eleven Sports passed the threshold of 100.000 subscribers in Portugal, thereby enabling the operator to reach an audience of more than 250.000 individuals. Whilst Sport TV did not publicly disclose its precise subscriber figures, as reported by Lusa (2018), the operator achieved an unprecedented milestone in June 2018 by adding a total of 21.000 net direct subscribers to its services, marking an all-time record in its 20-year history.

Consistently, the rapid advancements in technology have led to a revolutionary transformation in how we access information. In Portugal, platforms such as social media and different apps have played a pivotal role in granting recognition and prominence to sports beyond football. That is, whilst football undeniably retains a central position within the country’s sporting culture, the digital age has significantly enhanced the visibility and significance of a wide array of other sports. A prime illustration of this phenomenon is the FC Porto TV app, which offers people the opportunity to access archived programmes, as well as watch live and/or recorded games, and view their highlights, from a multitude

of sports disciplines, including football (across various divisions), but also handball, basketball, snooker, cycling, roller hockey, and volleyball.

Whilst it is undeniable that sports play a significant role in Portugal's daily life and culture (Jornal Tornado, 2021), the condition of the Portuguese sport culture has often faced criticism. According to Brandão (2023), a sport culture should ideally be well-rounded, diverse, and nurtured by the enthusiasm of those who engage in, admire, and support the various sports disciplines and the main sports institutions. Several authors, including Folha (2022), Gomes (2022), Brandão (2023), Costa (2023), Cunha (2023), and Nuno Silva (2023) argue that Portugal lacks a genuine and authentic sport culture, with Cunha (2023) even describing it as "miserable". Folha (2022) also notes that Portugal does not possess a genuine sport culture but rather one centred on winning or one that can be seen as a club-centred culture (Gomes, 2022).

Norberto Mourão, Portuguese para-canoeist, goes as far as saying that the Portuguese sport culture suffers from being centred solely and exclusively on football (Silva N. D., 2023). This perspective is also shared by Coelho and Tiesler (2007, p. 578), who assert that "football is omnipresent in the Portuguese public (and private) sphere" and holds a hegemonic place within the Portuguese culture. Despite the nation's recognition for supporting and elevating internationally acclaimed athletes like Rosa Mota, Néilson Évora, Telma Monteiro, Ricardo Pichardo, Patrícia Mamona, and many others, there is an ongoing argument that the emphasis and predominant focus on football has restricted and impeded the diversification of the sports culture in Portugal.

However, Brandão (2023) highlights a positive shift in recent years, indicating that the Portuguese sports culture is becoming more attuned, not only to other various sports disciplines beyond football, but also to women's and youth sports. In fact, as noted by Folha (2022) and Brandão (2023), there is a pressing need to re-evaluate and rethink the state of the sports culture in Portugal. As a matter of fact, Folha (2022) emphasizes the importance of actively fostering and nurturing it. Costa (2023) also argues that the absence of a strong sport culture in Portugal is often cited as a root cause of subpar outcomes, both in sports performance and in encouraging widespread sports participation.

Nevertheless, the situation remains challenging as investment in the sports sector continues to fluctuate and dwindle from year to year. António Silva (2023) highlights this issue by comparing Portugal's sports funding to the European average, revealing that it

ranks amongst the lowest levels of public investment in Europe. In Portugal, there is a meagre expenditure of only €40 per inhabitant, whereas the European average stands at a significantly higher €113 per inhabitant. Furthermore, the same author notes that the budget allocated to the Portuguese sport sector constitutes a mere 0.04% of the total spending, in contrast with the EU’s average of 1% of public spending dedicated to similar recreational, sporting, and community services (Silva A. J., 2023).

The Portuguese Institute of Sport and Youth (*Instituto Português do Desporto e Juventude* [IPDJ]) is one of the main sources of financing for the Portuguese sports sector. The IPDJ serves as the national public body responsible for supporting the definition, execution, and evaluation of public policies of sport and youth in the country. Its primary objectives encompass: the implementation of integrated and decentralized policies for the areas of sport and youth; the promotion and generalization of physical activity and sport in the country; providing support to associations, volunteering, and “promoting volunteering, leisure activities, non-formal education, information and the geographic mobility of young people in Portugal and abroad”; amongst others (InSport, n.d.).

This being said, in 2021, the IPDJ allocated a total of €41 million to Portuguese sports federations, marking a 3% decrease compared to the previous year. This represented the second lowest investment on part of the IPDJ to the sports federations over the past five years (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística* [INE], 2023, p. 32). Figure 21 presents the funding provided by the IPDJ to sports federations over the beforementioned five-year period.

Figure 21. IPDJ Funding to Sports Federations (2017-2021)

Unidade Unit	2021	2020 Rv	2019 Rv	2018 Rv	2017	Financing of Portuguese Institute of Sports and Youth I.P. to the sports federations by projects/programmes
€1000	40 981	42 269	45 045	44 160	38 039	Total
€1000	19 631	21 513	20 436	20 281	19 709	Support to sport activities
€1000	15 683	17 145	18 941	17 561	14 153	High competition sport
€1000	3 508	2 001	3 197	3 912	2 320	International sports events
€1000	693	681	689	733	595	Human Resources Training
€1000	1 467	929	1 782	1 673	1 263	Others

Source: INE (2023, p. 32)

On the other hand, and as highlighted by the INE (2023), the municipalities also play a role in funding national sports activities. However, similarly to the IPDJ, the funds allocated by municipalities for sports activities have been declining annually. In 2021, these allocations reached their lowest point since 2017, accounting for only 3.3% of the total municipal expenditure (INE, 2023, p. 32). Out of the €323.3 million spent by the Portuguese municipalities, 41.2% went towards the construction and maintenance of infrastructures, 27.8% supported sports activities, 24.1% were directed to sports associations, and the remaining 6.9% were allocated to other non-specified activities (INE, 2023, p. 33). Additionally, the INE (2023, p. 33) notes that the Portuguese municipalities, in 2021, on average, spent €31,2 per inhabitant nationwide. The highest expenditure, at €60 per inhabitant, was in the Algarve region, whilst the lowest, at €12,8 per inhabitant, was in the Autonomous Region of Madeira.

Figure 22. Municipalities Funding on Sport Activities (2017-2021)

Unidade Unit	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	Local government - Municipalities
€1000	323 347	301 008	320 287	290 718	296 265	Total expenditure in sports activities
						of which
€1000	233 105	226 648	257 337	230 993	216 902	Current expenditure
€1000	90 242	74 361	62 949	59 725	79 363	Capital expenditure
€	31,2	29,2	31,1	27,8	28,8	Total expenditure per inhabitant in sports activities
%	3,3	3,4	3,7	3,5	3,7	Total expenditure in sports activities in the expenditure of municipalities

Source: INE (2023, p. 32)

Nonetheless, there is a notable absence of transparency and clear information by the Portuguese government and municipalities regarding the distribution of funds for migrant and refugee related sports activities. Consequently, assessing the level of support for these initiatives is quite challenging. Despite this ambiguity, it is evident that numerous sport programmes and initiatives have been established and developed within the country, all with the primary goal of aiding migrants and refugees in their process of integration and inclusion into the Portuguese society.

3.3.2 Exploring the Interaction between Refugees and Sport in Portugal

As mentioned earlier, there is limited information available about the connection between refugees and sports in Portugal. However, in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of sports programmes and activities designed especially for migrants and refugees in the country. Portuguese sports clubs and organisations have a valuable opportunity to leverage their resources to support refugee integration. In fact, by developing and implementing programmes tailored to the needs of refugees, they can potentially secure European and/or national funding. Additionally, these initiatives can contribute to making refugees feel more comfortable and empowered in their new surroundings. These activities may also attract more individuals to join the clubs, which could lead to positive financial outcomes and increased visibility of the clubs' activities.

One of the available funding options for sport clubs and organisations is the “Sports for All” national programme (*Programa Nacional de Desporto para Todos* [PNDpT]). The PNDpT aims to support public or private non-profit organisations dedicated to promoting and developing sports practice in Portugal (IPDJ, 2023a). Furthermore, the funds from this programme are intended for sport projects that encourage and promote “sport for all and informal, recreational, intergenerational, non-competitive, and non-federated practice” (República Portuguesa, 2023). In 2023, the IPDJ allocated a total of €1.45 million to the PNDpT programme, representing a decrease of €200.000 compared to the previous year (a total of €1.65 million in 2022) (República Portuguesa, 2022b; República Portuguesa, 2023). As reported by Agência Lusa (2022) and confirmed by the IPDJ (2023b), between its inception in 2014 and 2022, the programme has distributed over €20 million to approximately 1.700 national association and club projects. Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that the PNDpT is not, by any means, the sole funding option available and accessible for Portuguese sport clubs and other organisations seeking to harness the potential of sports for refugee integration. As previously mentioned, on a European scale, the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Erasmus+ programme are just two of the numerous funding opportunities available to these stakeholders (European Commission, n.d.f).

In Portugal, various projects, programmes, and activities have been developed in the realm of sport to promote the integration of migrants and refugees into the local society (Folgado, 2022, p. 52). For instance, the “Storytellers” initiative, conducted by the *Santa Casa da Misericórdia de Lisboa* in collaboration with the *Ginásio Clube*

Português, aimed to promote the integration of sixty young refugees through sports in its third edition in 2021 (Nunes, 2021). Additionally, a series of activities were organised over a three-day period as part of a collaborative project between Positive Benefits – Impact Innovation Association and the CPR in 2021. These activities encompassed a variety of sports such as tree climbing, football, floorball, muay thai, canoeing, and mini-golf, and had as their primary objective to assist and facilitate the integration and inclusion process of seventeen young refugees into the Portuguese society (CPR, 2021).

However, within the context of national initiatives, two notable projects merit special attention and commendation: the “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” project and the Welcome Sports Club (WSC) project. According to Valongo (2022), the former operates on a national level, whilst the latter is primarily focused on the Lisbon area. Although these two initiatives are not the sole projects with refugees as their primary target audience, they stand amongst the most impactful and far-reaching endeavours, within the country, particularly the first project.

3.3.2.1 “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro”

The “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” (Live Sport – Embrace the Future) project was envisioned and is executed by the Portuguese Olympic Committee (*Comité Olímpico de Portugal* [COP]). This initiative, as highlighted by Beyond Sport (n.d.), “uses sport as a means of paving the way to a new life for refugees settled in Portugal, through a wide variety of sports activities and projects to interact and exchange experiences with local communities”. According to the COP (n.d.), the three fundamental Olympic values of Respect, Friendship and Excellence stand at the core of this project. In a broader context, the programme “strengthens the role of sport as a key driver for the social inclusion of refugees into the Portuguese community” (European Commission, 2023).

In late 2015, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) approved the COP’s application for an extraordinary support programme for refugees (COP, 2017, p. 55). The purpose of this special programme is to facilitate and promote the integration of migrants and refugees in Portugal through several key measures, including: a) incorporating sport in national integration programmes; b) facilitating and easing access to sport activities; c) ensuring the inclusion of these individuals in the federated sports system; and d) supplying sports-related goods and services to a myriad of institutions.

The implementation of this project commenced in February 2016 (COP, 2017, p. 55), and in the opinion of the European Commission (2023), is viewed as “a pivotal tool for the reception, social inclusion and integration of refugees, while also providing them with career opportunities in the sport sector”. As emphasized by the COP (2017, p. 55), the “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” project seeks to promote sport as a valuable instrument amongst programmes designed for the social cohesion and refugee integration. This is achieved through collaborations with governmental and non-governmental organisations involved and dedicated to this mission and with competences and expertise in this field. Consequently, the COP has formed partnerships and cooperation agreements with organisations such as the ACM, the IPDJ, the CPR, the PAR, and others who are actively involved in the reception and integration of refugees into the Portuguese community. Additionally, the COP has also partnered with more than 30 Portuguese municipalities, local and national sport clubs and gyms, sports federations, and other stakeholders directly engaged in refugee integration in the country (Council of Europe, n.d.e; COP, 2017, pp. 55/56; Beyond Sport, n.d.; COP, n.d.).

As per information from the COP (n.d.), this project has a three-fold aim: “promote cohesion and social inclusion of refugees through sport; provide opportunities for practicing sport and building sporting careers; and strengthen advocacy and awareness of sport as a tool for social empowerment”³¹. Likewise, the Council of Europe (n.d.e) outlines the core objectives of this project, which include: developing competences for active citizenship; promoting social diversity; educating and transmitting values through sport; practicing a physical activity for physical and mental health; developing intercultural relations and/or intercultural competency; and promoting access to volunteering in sport.

Whilst it is challenging to determine the exact number of individuals this programme has assisted, the COP (n.d.) and the Council of Europe (n.d.e) assert that, over its eight-year existence, it has been instrumental in aiding the integration of more than 1.500 refugees across various age groups into the Portuguese society. As per reports from both the COP (2020, p. 111) and the European Commission (2020c, p. 44), between 2016 and 2019, this project supported approximately 500 refugees and asylum seekers, of which 52.9% were under 18 years old and 27.6% were female, by providing them with personalized welcome backpacks with sport equipment.

Furthermore, as emphasized by the COP (n.d.), this initiative has made a significant contribution by providing various types of sports equipment to Portuguese welcoming and reception centres or any other affiliated institutions. It has also played a pivotal role in supporting those who express an interest in competitive sports, guiding them towards active participation. This programme has successfully integrated approximately 65% of the total refugees arriving in Portugal into sports activities within local communities spread across the country. To gain a clearer understanding of the project, Figure 23 offers a visual representation of the chronological progression of this project, shedding light on some of its key activities and programme outcomes.

³¹ My translation. Original text: “[P]romover a coesão e a inclusão social dos refugiados através do desporto; dar oportunidades para a prática desportiva e construção de carreiras desportivas; e fortalecer a defesa e conscientização em torno do desporto como uma ferramenta para o empoderamento social” (COP, n.d.).

Figure 23. Key Activities and Outcomes of the "Viver o Desporto - Abraçar o Futuro" Project



Source: COP (n.d.)

The “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” Project received financial support from various sources, as reported by the COP (n.d.). In 2016, funding was secured from the International Olympic Committee through the Olympic Solidarity (OS) programme. Unfortunately, specific details regarding the exact amount allocated to the COP’s project are not available in the information provided. However, according to the Olympic Solidarity 2015 Annual Report, a total of \$110.000 was allocated to Portugal in that year. Out of this allocation, \$50.000 was designed for “activities aimed at promoting good governance in national sports structures”, whilst the remaining \$60.000 was allocated to a “special fund for refugees”³² (Olympic Solidarity, 2016). Thus, it can be reasonably inferred that these \$60.000 formed the basis for the creation and development of the “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” project.

Furthermore, in 2018, the COP applied for financing from the European Union (COP, 2019, p. 82), and this application was fortunately accepted. Consequently, in 2019, the European Commission provided vital financial support to the project, amounting a total of €60.000 (EAC-2018-0557) (COP, 2020, p. 111; European Commission, 2020c, p. 44). This additional funding injection from the European Commission undoubtedly

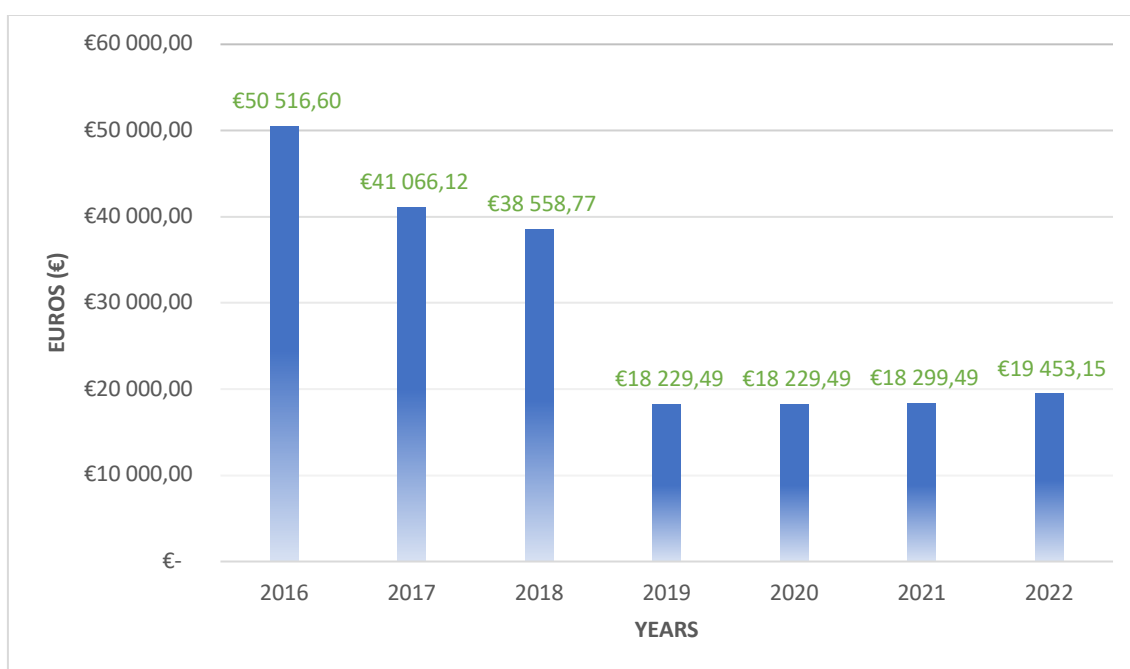
³² <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Olympic-Solidarity/2015-report/SpecialFund-FinancialSupport-2015.pdf>

boosted the initiative's capacity to effectively pursue and achieve its goals and make a meaningful positive impact.

It is worth noting that, as documented in the COP's annual reports, the project has persevered and continued its work despite facing challenges related to limited support and recognition, especially from the Portuguese government (COP, 2021, p. 82). This being said, to sustain its operations and fulfill its mission, the COP has relied on a combination of funding sources. These include the COP's own revenues, support from various partners, as well as the crucial financial backing provided by the IOC/OS and the European Commission. Hence, this diverse funding base has allowed the project to "maintain" its momentum and try and make meaningful contributions to its target communities. Regrettably though, according to the COP (2023, p. 4), the continuous development of this project has been contingent on external funding. Consequently, in the year 2022, certain aspects of the "Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro" project did not take place as planned and/or were postponed until 2023 due to financial constraints.

Nevertheless, Illustration 6 offers insights into the annual progression of the project's additional expenditures. The amounts presented in this illustration correspond to the category of "Other Current Liabilities" related to the project, as displayed in the COP's annual balance sheets. Through them, it becomes evident that, during the initial three years of the project, a substantial amount of "extra" expenditure was incurred within the programme's scope. However, from 2019 to 2022, there was a noticeable deceleration in this unexpected expenditure, to the point where it almost came to a halt. In a sense, this data can suggest that the project experienced its highest participation levels during its initial three years, whilst the subsequent four years exhibited stagnation, indicating a significantly lower number of refugees engaging with the project. The CoVid-19 pandemic, which began in 2019, undoubtedly had a disruptive impact on various aspects of society, including sports and integration programmes, and may have contributed to the observed slowdown in project engagement and available funding, which constrained the project's ability to attract and sustain the interest of participants.

Illustration 5. (Extra) Expenditure “Viver o Desporto - Abraçar o Futuro” Project (2016-2022)



Source: COP (2017, p. 112; 2018, p. 103; 2019, p. 147; 2020, p. 186; 2021, p. 141; 2022, p. 142)

Since 2017, the project has actively pursued national and international recognition through various award competitions, with two instances particularly noteworthy. This being said, in 2018, the COP submitted an application, but did not secure the victory, for the ‘Sport for Peace and Social Justice Award’, organised by Beyond Sport (COP, 2018, p. 59; Beyond Sport, n.d.). Then, in 2022, it was distinguished as one of the three finalists, alongside another Portuguese project (Youth Line Portugal), in the #BeInclusive EU Sport Awards. Whilst the project did not emerge as the winner in either of these award competitions, these endeavours significantly raised the project’s international profile. That is, they drew attention, not only to the project itself, but also to its remarkable results and outstanding achievements (European Commission, 2023).

In fact, the project’s impact can be perfectly illustrated by the inclusion of two refugees who have benefited from this programme, Dorian Keletela (sprinter) and Farid Walizadeh (boxer), into the Olympic Refugee Team (COP, 2022, pp. 85/56). The first athlete competed in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games and the second is currently preparing for the Paris 2024 Games. This remarkable achievement was acknowledged by the European Commission (2023), who states that “for the first time in the history of World

Athletics, a refugee athlete [Dorian Keletela] competed in the European and in the World Championships, attributing the work of the [COP] to this achievement”.

Remarkably, the European Commission (2023) believes that, in the future, the COP “will continue leading by example to show how sport can tackle all forms of discrimination and deliver a better future to those who hope to start a new life away from home”. Moreover, the same source claims that the COP has consistently “been an example of good practice among other related organisations, leading to more and more activities offered to refugees”. Indeed, the COP (n.d.) emphasizes that the international recognition of this project as an example of good practice has not only elevated the profile of the COP but has also enhanced the standing of Portugal on the global stage. Consequently, this recognition has also paved the way for collaborations with esteemed international organisations such as the UNHCR, the UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and the Olympic Refugee Foundation (ORF) in the pursuit of their shared objectives in this field.

Notably, the COP (2020, p. 113) highlights that the national and international acclaim of this project was reflected in the UNHCR’s invitation for the COP to take part in the First Global Refugee Forum and to showcase the “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” project as an example of good practice at the ‘Special Light Session – Sport Refugee’, which took place at the UN headquarters in Geneva in 2019. Ultimately, this recognition serves as a powerful testament of the project’s far-reaching impact and its potential to lead the way in addressing refugee challenges through sport, thus serving as an inspiration for innovative solutions in this field.

3.3.2.2 Welcome Sports Club

The Welcome Sports Club (WSC) is a project that was established in 2020 through a partnership between two Portuguese NGOs, Positive Benefits and Social Innovation Sports. As per information provided on the WSC's website, this project proposes to harness the power of sport as a tool for the integration and empowerment of refugees, with a specific emphasis on unaccompanied refugee youth, within the Portuguese society (Welcome Sports Club, n.d.). The project's mission is to “[p]romote the integration of refugees, asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection – particularly the younger ones, including unaccompanied minors – through their social inclusion, full development, and the promotion of intercultural dialogue”³³ (Positive Benefits, n.d.). The same source further outlines the three specific objectives for this project, which are:

Specific Objective 1 – Contribute to the better integration of refugees by empowering them through the promotion of their comprehensive development and active citizenship (i.e., civic, social, and sports skills), whilst simultaneously involving the civil society.

Specific Objective 2 – Promote decent employment inclusion for beneficiaries of working age, especially the younger ones, encompassing both waged labour and entrepreneurship.

Specific Objective 3 – Raise awareness amongst the civil society in general regarding the issues faced by refugees, asylum-seekers, and beneficiaries of international protection, sharing best practices and promoting a culture of welcoming and integrating this vulnerable population within the national territory³⁴.

As indicated by Positive Benefits (n.d.) and Welcome Sports Club (n.d.), the project is led by a team comprising of five members: Nuno Frazão, Sara Barroca, Martim Lomelino, Ricardo Carvalho, and Mafalda Sarmiento. It is noteworthy to mention that the continuity and ongoing success of this project rely heavily on the collaboration and close partnerships with numerous organisations, as well as on external funding. As noted by Welcome Sports Club (n.d.), Social Innovation Sports (n.d.a), and by the Secretaria Geral do Ministério da Administração Interna (SGMAI, 2020), this project received funding, in

³³ My translation. Original text: “Promover a integração de refugiados, requerentes de asilo e beneficiários de proteção internacional – em particular dos mais jovens, incluindo menores não acompanhados – mediante a sua inclusão social, desenvolvimento integral e promoção do diálogo intercultural” (Positive Benefits, n.d.).

³⁴ My translation. The original text can be found in the Positive Benefits' (n.d.) website.

2020, from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In total, this funding amounted to €113.819,05 for the creation and development of the WSC project (PT/2020/FAMI/631) (SGMAI, 2020; SGMAI, 2022).

Moreover, as emphasized by Positive Benefits (2023), the WSC is an “inclusive project that engages various types of partners that complement each other in a value chain”. Figure 24 illustrates the three types of partners involved in the project’s development. Given this, facilitating partners are the ones who “supported the project implementation with institutional or knowledge aid”. The corporate partners, on the other hand, “supported with development of professional skills, training on job experiences and employment opportunities”. Lastly, the social partners “that worked on a day by day journey combined and complemented all the support that the beneficiaries need and mostly [focused] on the development of personal skills” (Positive Benefits, 2023). As mentioned before, certain project partners like the IPDJ, the COP, the CPR, and others, hold a significant reputation and influence in the domain of refugee reception and integration into the Portuguese society. It is crucial to acknowledge that the creation and advancement of this initiative would, most likely, not have been possible, nor would it have achieved its high expectations, without the indispensable contributions of these partners.

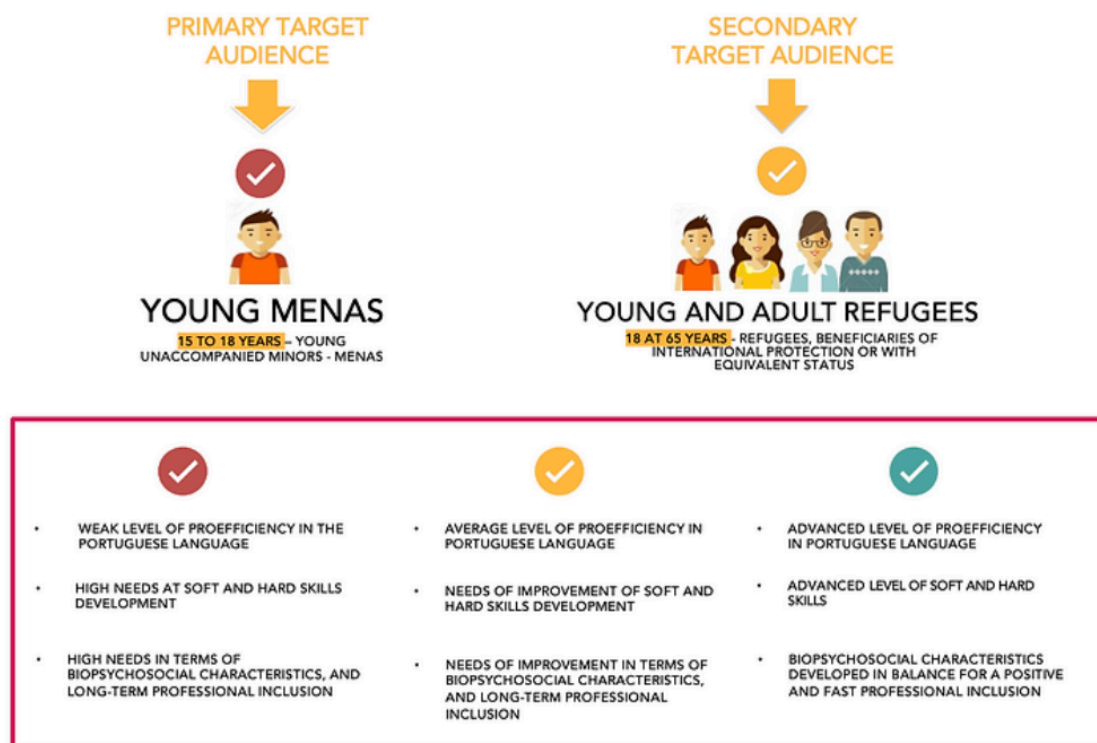
Figure 24. WSC Project Partners



Source: Positive Benefits (2023)

One of the crucial steps in any project’s general development is the identification of the target audience. Clearly identifying target audiences enables companies to create tailored products and/or services that will hopefully “perfectly” address the needs and expectations of these individuals (Evans, 2013). In the case of the WSC project, the primary target audience consists of young refugees aged 15 to 18, with a particular focus on unaccompanied minor refugees. Additionally, the secondary target audience includes refugees and other BIPs between the ages of 18 and 65 (Positive Benefits, 2023). Figure 25 provides an overview of the target audiences of the Welcome Sports Club initiative and outlines the characteristics of these specific target groups.

Figure 25. WSC's Target Audience



Source: Positive Benefits (2023)

The activities within the WSC project revolve around two primary components. The first component involves promoting the integration of refugees, BIPs, and unaccompanied minors into the Portuguese society. The second component is centred on organizing and conducting information/awareness/training sessions. These sessions are designed to provide accessible information and support to the abovementioned

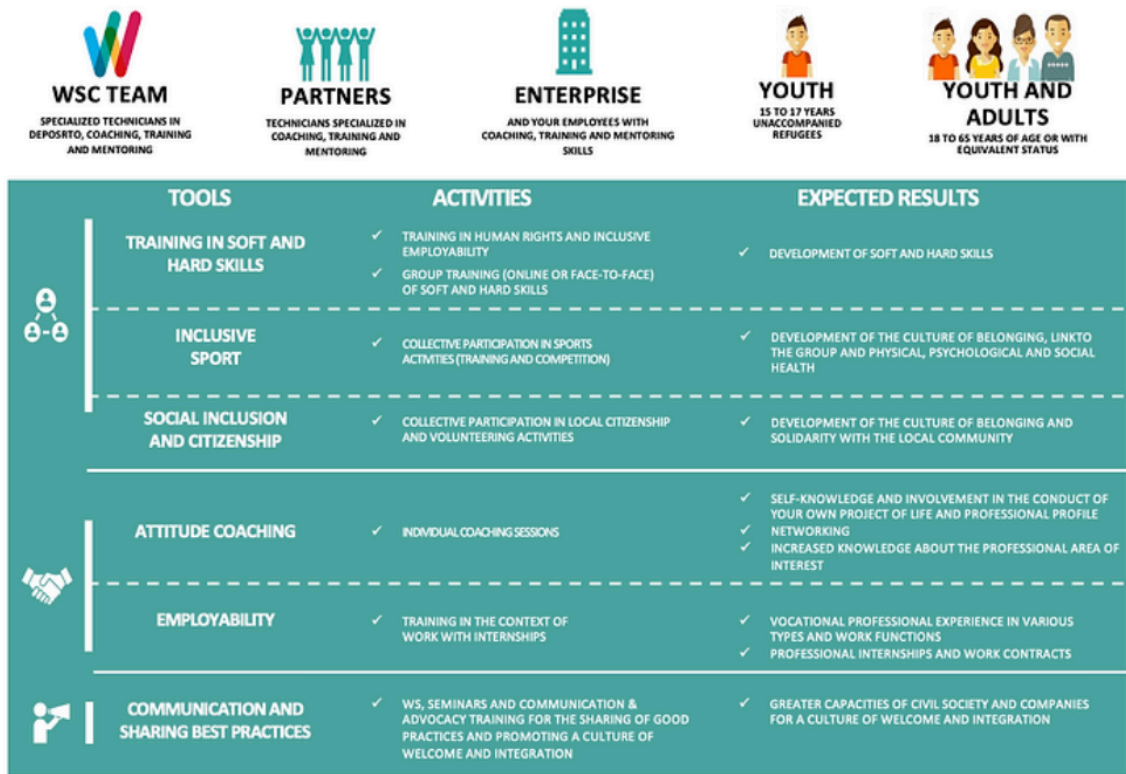
individuals, as they navigate their integration process into their host society, in this case, into the Portuguese society³⁵ (Positive Benefits, n.d.).

As stated by the Welcome Sports Club (n.d.), the project aims to achieve several objectives through a diverse range of activities. These include: organizing sports activities with a social impact; promoting training and courses in social and professional skills; encourage actions of active citizenship; providing coaching and mentoring sessions; support refugees in accessing and connecting with the Portuguese labour market; assisting in the creation of their businesses, and facilitating contact with companies; amongst others (Welcome Sports Club, n.d.; Social Innovation Sports, n.d.a). Furthermore, according to the SGMAI (2020), this project also encompasses actions related to information dissemination, awareness-raising, employability promotion, and the initiation of Portuguese language instruction.

Figure 26 presents a visualization of the primary goals (referred to as “tools” in the figure) that the project aims to accomplish. It also outlines the activities that were envisioned and planned to attain these objectives, alongside the expected outcomes of these activities. Furthermore, Figure 27 provides a timeline detailing the expected implementation of the activities illustrated in Figure 26, spanning over a period of more than 24 months since the project’s inception.

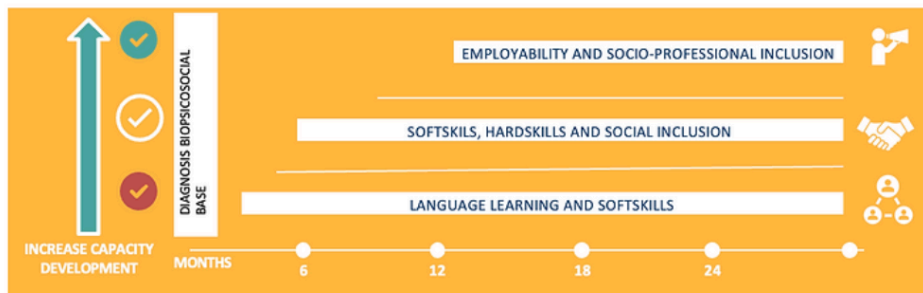
³⁵ More information about these two components, as well as a list of the key topics that were expected to be covered within each component, can be found on the Positive Benefits’ website (Positive Benefits, n.d.).

Figure 26. Goals, Activities and Expected Results of the WSC Project



Source: Positive Benefits (2023)

Figure 27. WSC's Activities Implementation Timeline



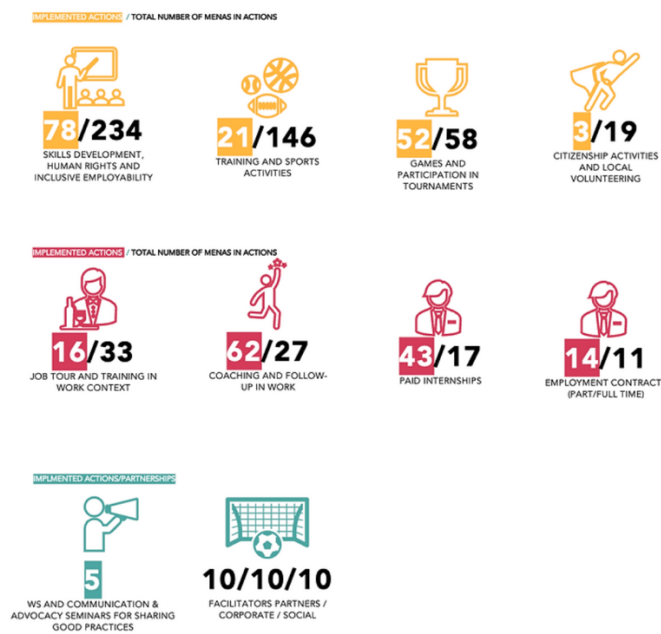
Source: Positive Benefits (2023)

According to Positive Benefits (2023), the project’s activities have consistently aligned with its three specific objectives, those of which were clarified previously. This being said, in the initial phase in 2020, “the project was structured and developed the first contacts with the beneficiaries”. Subsequently, in the second phase that commenced in early 2021, “and with the [CoVid-19] pandemic incident, the project was adapted in order

to start the sporting activities (objective 1)”. Finally, at the start of 2022, “it was possible to test and scale the skills development and employability component (objective 2), and implement the communication activities (objective 3)”.

Most of the WSC’s activities used sport as a tool for the integration of refugees and have a variety of, hopefully, lasting positive impacts on these individuals, such as: i. providing a sense of community; ii. improving physical and mental health; iii. facilitating learning of new languages; iv. developing of important life skills; and v. providing job opportunities and developing employability (Positive Benefits, 2023). As mentioned earlier, the primary target audience for this project are unaccompanied minor refugees. Consequently, the project’s results have been evaluated based on the participation of these young people in each action envisioned and developed. This being said, the results of the WSC project are presented in Figure 28³⁶. Whilst some actions exceeded expectations in terms of participation, others have either met or fallen below the anticipated levels. Therefore, it is advisable to reconsider and further develop the actions with lower participation rates to attract more partakers in the future.

Figure 28. WSC Project Outcomes



Source: Positive Benefits (2023)

³⁶ The actions highlighted in yellow correspond to goals related to “Training”, those in pink are associated with objectives related to “Socio-Professional Inclusion”, and the ones in blue are linked to “Communication and Sharing Best Practices” (Positive Benefits, 2023).

Overall, this project has achieved significant milestones. Notably, it led to the establishment of the Welcome Sports Club men’s football team, as depicted in Figure 29, which is exclusively composed of refugees and was initiated in 2020. Moreover, in 2022, the project played a pivotal role in creating a women’s refugee football team, comprised of approximately twenty young Afghans (Figure 30). According to Social Innovation Sports (n.d.b), both these football teams are part of the Welcome Football Club project, which was subsequently created through the WSC project. Moreover, the project led to the establishment of the WSC futsal team and the Welcome Cricket Club. Furthermore, it also helped organize and conduct awareness-raising campaigns addressing refugee issues, such as the Welcome Cup, an inclusive inter-companies football tournament, which celebrated its second edition on 24 June 2023 (Social Innovation Sports, n.d.b).

Figure 29. WSC Men's Football Team



Source: Social Innovation Sports (n.d.b)

Figure 30. WSC Women's Football Team



Source: Social Innovation Sports (n.d.b)

3.4 The Future of Sport for Refugee Integration

As the number of refugees and other BIPs continues to grow at an alarming and seemingly unending rate worldwide, the topic of integration has also ascended to the forefront of global concerns. Sport has emerged as a seemingly “simple” yet effective means of engaging with refugees and aiding in their integration into host communities. Indeed, in recent years, the role of sport in facilitating the integration of refugees has garnered substantial attention as a powerful and transformative tool. The two Portuguese initiatives mentioned earlier, the “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” and the Welcome Sports Club, stand as prime examples of how sport can be harnessed for refugee integration, showcasing the positive impacts it can have.

As mentioned previously, sports possess the remarkable ability to bring together people from diverse cultures whilst at the same time enhancing their physical health and psychosocial well-being. Notably, sports can play a pivotal role in uplifting, empowering, and fostering unity between refugees and their host communities, especially for young refugees (UNHCR, 2022e). Schwartzkopff (2022, p. 4) highlights that engagement in sports offers a plethora of benefits for the social integration and well-being of refugees. Consistently, participation in any form of sports will, hopefully, lead to the: development of new connections and friendships; access to networks and information; acquisition of new social and sports skills; practice of language skills; promotion of non-verbal understanding; fostering of a sense of belonging; amongst many more benefits (Taylor et al., 2015; Malm, Jakobsson, & Isaksson, 2019; Angba, 2022).

Whilst the current landscape exhibits promising initiatives and programmes, the future of using sport for refugee integration holds even greater potential. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that employing sport for refugee integration comes with its own set of challenges that must be addressed and overcome through collaborative efforts between governmental bodies, NGOs, and the private sector. Varpuu Taarna, Senior Specialist at the Finnish Institution of Economic Affairs and Employment (SJPF, 2019, p. 16), emphasizes that:

(...) [T]he great challenge lies in [articulating] a strategy and [ensuring] that a group of countries with diversified political, economic and social realities can, through sports or other instruments, guarantee that these people are integrated and treated with dignity.

Building upon the insights shared by Taarna (SJPF, 2019, p. 16), it is important to acknowledge that refugee integration is undoubtedly a multifaceted process that encompasses many dimensions, particularly the social, economic, and cultural aspects. In this context, sport offers a unique platform for addressing these dimensions simultaneously. However, as mentioned previously, some challenges persist on this regard. Olliff (2008, p. 56) rightly explains that:

While there are many benefits of sport and recreation in terms of settlement, sport and recreation should not be seen as a “cure-all”. Sport and recreation programs can only ever facilitate positive outcomes for refugee young people in the context of a society that addresses the other barriers to their full participation and integration.

Overcoming hurdles like securing adequate funding, ensuring accessibility to all, and being culturally sensitive is essential for the effective implementation of sports-based integration initiatives. In addition to these key considerations, Olliff (2008) identified several significant barriers to the creation and sustainable development of such initiatives for refugees, which are presented in Table 9. Furthermore, Schwenger (2017, pp. 5-9) highlights additional obstacles in harnessing sport for refugee integration. These include a wide range of issues, such as: language barriers; difficulties and lack of contact and access to refugee homes; reaching and engaging with refugee women and girls; the legal situations of refugees; anti-migration sentiment on part of the host society; the refugees’ circumstances; lack of resources, transport and equipment; managing different experiences and expectations; doubts regarding the positive impact of sports; respect for uniform rules; and the overall traumatic experiences of refugees.

Table 9. Barriers for Sports-Based Integration Initiatives

Structural Barriers	Mediating Barriers	Personal Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Unsustained once-off programmes. ◇ Lack of inclusive and accessible programmes for refugee and newly arrived young people. ◇ Inconsistent referral of young people into sport and recreation programmes by settlement services. ◇ Barriers between targeted and mainstream sport and recreation options. ◇ Access to transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Lack of inclusive practices in existing sport and recreation providers. ◇ Resettlement experience. ◇ Parent / guardian support. ◇ Culture of sport in the host society. ◇ Racism and discrimination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Lack of time, other commitments. ◇ Financial constraints. ◇ Not knowing the rules.

Source: Olliff (2008, pp. 57-59)

Furthermore, as noted by Valenzuela (n.d.), many sport clubs, instructors, and coaches are ill-prepared for the inclusion of individuals with migrant background into their activities, leading to various challenges. The same author points out that many local sport clubs are “unfamiliar with the regulations connected to different types of legal residence status migrants hold, such as insurance coverage, permission to travel within the country or entitlement to financial aid”. These clubs also sometimes encountered difficulties in conveying “their values and rules across to new members but also to adapt the social norms immigrants bring with them” (Valenzuela, n.d.).

In recent years, the proliferation of initiatives and projects using sports for refugee integration has allowed for the recognition of existing shortcomings in this field, pinpointed necessary changes to overcome these challenges, and helped as many refugees as possible. Looking ahead, the future of sport for refugee integration is likely to witness other innovative strategies and collaborations. To make this future a reality, it is important for local governments, NGOs, and sporting bodies to work more closely in order to develop targeted projects that address the specific needs of refugee populations. The creation of dedicated sports facilities and the organization of inclusive tournaments, amongst other approaches, are potential avenues for enhancing integration efforts.

3.4.1 E-Integration for Refugees

In the ever-evolving landscape of the contemporary world, digital access and connectivity have become the cornerstones of our daily existence. Over the past few decades, the extensive influence of technology has left an undeniable mark on our lives, permeating every facet of culture, society, and business, from education to healthcare, and extending far beyond. Internet and digital technologies have fundamentally transformed the way we interact with the world, making it an indispensable part of our daily lives and routines. People's relationship with technology has shifted dramatically over the past decades. Mobile phones, for example, were once devices primarily used for making calls. Today, they have evolved into versatile and multifunctional tools that open the doors to a world of possibilities. They now serve as gateways to unlimited knowledge, communication, and productivity. As Ramesh (2017, p. 106) fittingly pointed out, “[t]echnology has changed the way we as humans live (...)”; it has become an intrinsic part of the modern world.

The impact of technology resonates across various industries. Ramesh (2017), for example, explores the advantages and disadvantages of technology in fields such as business, education, society, agriculture, and banking. However, technology's influence extends ever further; it permeates nearly every aspect of our lives. Focusing more particularly on the realm of education, “the adoption of digital technology has resulted in many changes in education and learning (...)” (UNESCO, 2023, p. v). These changes encompass a wide variety of opportunities, from online courses, lectures, and curated content to entire degree programmes (UNHCR, 2018b, p. 44).

This shift in educational methods might be especially impactful for young refugees who may encounter challenges when learning the language of their new host society. Frequently, they may find it challenging to keep up with native citizens (Benton & Glennie, 2016, pp. 14/15), which can manifest as difficulties in retaining lesson content, limited participation in class, exclusion from class dynamics and, ultimately, the necessity to repeat the school year. As language learners, these refugees stand to benefit from supplementary online lectures, helping them grasp the language more quickly, in an easier, more direct, and personalised way. Benton and Glennie (2016, p. 15) emphasize that “new educational technologies could be a huge help”, with the “flipped classroom” model being one illustrative approach. This model allows teachers to make videos

available for learners, enabling them to watch and learn at their own pace, thus providing crucial support for these young individuals.

The relationship between technology and sports has deep historical roots. Though, Oosthuizen and Hunter (2023) emphasize that “[s]ports technology has drastically advanced the sports entertainment industry over the past decade and only has an upward trajectory from here”. Considering the widespread impact of technological advancements across various fields and industries, it is expected that technology will play a significant role in sports-related refugee integration efforts in the coming years. The use of digital technologies to aid refugees in their acculturation process into their new societies, can be designated, for example, as “e-integration”.

Undoubtedly, technological progress offers new avenues for innovative projects aimed at shaping the future of sports for refugee integration (Zholdoshalieva et al., 2022, p. 6). Digital platforms are expected to play a pivotal role in facilitating remote participation, allowing refugees to engage in sports activities regardless of their geographical location (AbuJarour et al., 2019, p. 876). Furthermore, virtual training sessions, e-sports tournaments, and online sport communities may provide valuable opportunities for interaction and skill-building.

In a relatively recent development, digital technologies, video games and e-sports tournaments have found their way into addressing the refugee issue. Alencar (2023) highlights that digital technologies can help “recent arrivals navigate bureaucracies, orient themselves, and become familiar with local information landscapes in their new host community”. Furthermore, Marcotte et al. (2023) argue that games, beyond being sources of fun and leisure, “can also improve learning, boost mental health, support social and economic inclusion, and generate livelihood opportunities”. As aptly noted by Gary Stahl, former UNICEF Director of Private Funding and Partnerships (Tidey, 2020):

Games and gaming are an outlet for children and young people with otherwise limited integration and play options in a COVID world. (...) Games can be a social equalizer, allowing children and adolescents of diverse backgrounds to focus on what makes them similar, rather than different. Games create a fun and comfortable environment to start learning acceptance.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that access to digital technologies and video games, which are nowadays the most consummated cultural good in the world (UEFA

Foundation for Children, 2020), “can be constrained by affordability, language, and literacy barriers, many of which are particularly acute among newly arrived refugees” (Alencar, 2023). Nevertheless, Erika Pérez, Associate Innovation Officer for the UNHCR Americas, remarks that “[d]igital leisure activities can become additional gateways for refugee and migrant integration (...). Digital leisure, including games, chat and apps can be powerful pathways to facilitate integration into their host communities and rebuild their lives” (UNHCR, 2022h, p. 17). In fact, video games and different gaming apps, known for their interactive and inclusive nature, have the potential to profoundly impact the lives and integration of refugees, particularly young individuals.

Whilst specific video games and projects targeting refugee integration are relatively scarce, two notable examples stand out. The first is a collaboration between the UEFA Foundation for Children and Libraries Without Borders, which organised the first e-sports tournament in 2020 at the Syrian Refugee Camp of Zaatari in Jordan. This project was centred on social cohesion and entertainment, offering young refugees an “escape from their daily lives and their hard living conditions”. Through video games, refugees found an outlet to escape, create stories, and boost their imagination and creativity, with defeats serving as motivation to persevere (UEFA Foundation for Children, 2020).

The second example features a video game envisioned by Andri Gerber, Professor of Urban History in Zurich, aimed at helping young Ukrainian refugees integrate and cope with grief in Zurich. This innovative project, approved as part of the 2022 innovation programme of the Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions, would allow refugee children to “playfully explore the city of Zurich in a virtual way and at the same time establish local references to their home city”. That is, “in a 3D model, characteristic buildings of Zurich are modelled (...) and can be replaced by corresponding buildings from Ukrainian cities” (ZHAW, 2022). This creative endeavour aspires to provide these young Ukrainian refugees with a sense of home, facilitate their familiarity with their new city, and promote their integration into the local community.

Harnessing the potential of digital technologies and video games for refugee integration unquestionably constitutes a ground-breaking and innovative approach that holds great promise for societies and governments worldwide. However, it is essential that governments and relevant stakeholders, who are directly engaged with refugee populations, take proactive steps to ensure that these individuals have equitable access to digital technologies and video games. By doing so, they can substantially strengthen the

prospects for successful and effective refugee integration. This access to technology not only fosters inclusion but also paves the way for enhanced participation and engagement, ultimately facilitating the integration process and promoting the well-being of refugees in their host communities.

Sport clubs and project developers can play a pivotal role by, for example, organising virtual language exchange sessions. These sessions would enable young refugees to share their native language and customs with members of the host community whilst simultaneously learning the local language and culture. Additionally, creating online forums and/or social media groups would facilitate meaningful exchanges between refugees and locals, enabling them to share relevant cultural aspects, including traditional sports or games from their respective countries, as well as their personal journeys, challenges, and achievements, thereby hopefully contributing significantly to integration.

Sport clubs, that have within them young refugees, can also set aside regular dedicated days each month for gaming sessions destined to all club goers, whether on computers or consoles. This approach would optimistically promote values such as sportsmanship, tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity. Furthermore, hosting regular e-sports tournaments, either on club premises or at neutral locations, like local schools, can bring together young local and refugee gamers. This would foster a sense of belonging and teamwork whilst promoting intercultural dialogue and interactions amongst all participants. It would offer young refugees a platform to showcase their talents, demonstrating that despite the challenges they had faced, they share common interests with their peers. Establishing an online mentorship programme where experienced gamers or athletes can mentor and coach young refugees interested in e-sports or traditional sports could also prove to be a valuable endeavour. This programme would enable these young individuals to connect with role models they admire, potentially providing enhanced motivation for both sides involved, i.e., benefiting both the refugees and the athletes and players involved.

To further foster connections and break down barriers, it could be interesting to organise online sports challenges on a regular basis, either individually or in groups. These challenges could culminate in the recognition of a winner at the end of each week, encouraging either friendly competition or cooperation between refugees and members of the host community. Additionally, these challenges could incorporate other artistic expressions like music, dance, performance, and/or visual arts, thus creating collaborative

online projects that unite communities. Like previously mentioned, this blending of sports and other cultural activities could expectantly enhance the effectiveness of sports-based integration programmes.

Another impactful approach that leverages digital technologies and sport activities for refugee integration would be involving young refugees in the creation of video games that tell their life stories and migration experiences³⁷. This collaborative effort would bring together local game developers and young refugees, with the latter directly participating in crafting characters and storylines drawn from their own experiences. These video games, when played by others, could foster empathy and understanding, bridging the gap between different groups of gamers and their specific backgrounds. Nevertheless, it is essential to note that these suggestions are just initial ideas that sport clubs and project developers can use as starting points for their sports-related integration projects. Consistently, each project should adapt and customize these ideas to best suit its specific context, target audience, and goals for optimal outcomes.

³⁷ This idea is based around the story of Jack Gutmann, a Syrian refugee who found his way to Austria. Originally named Abdullah, Jack's journey became the central theme of the Path Out game, developed in collaboration with Causa Creation. In this video game, players have the opportunity to experience and "replicate Jack's surreptitious trek from Syria, sometimes in the hands of people smugglers" (Schöffl, 2022).

3.4.2 The Future of Sports-Based Integration Projects

In line with the beforementioned integration efforts, Olliff (2008, p. 59) and Schwenzer (2017, pp. 10-17) provide valuable recommendations for sport clubs, instructors/coaches, and project developers involved in sports-based refugee integration projects. The following recommendations may be essential for planning, executing, and evaluating such initiatives, and can be equally applicable for both online and offline sports-based integration programmes. One key recommendation is to establish sustainable sport and recreation programmes. This can be achieved through: “the creation of a dedicated funding stream; [the implementation of] a small grants scheme that supports young people’s participation; and the recognition and resourcing of sport and recreation within settlement services” (Olliff, 2008, p. 59). To effectively implement these recommendations, governments worldwide should offer adequate support and recognition to projects that utilise sport as a means of embracing and facilitating the integration of refugees and other BIPs into the host society.

Importantly, those tasked with envisioning and developing sports-based integration projects face critical decisions regarding the timeframe for their programmes. This decision holds significant importance, particularly concerning securing funding for those initiatives. The choice of a short-term, medium-term, or long-term project relies on available resources and the preferences of the refugees willing to participate. Ultimately, striking a balance between the duration of sports-based integration projects and the evolving needs and circumstances of refugees is pivotal. The flexibility to adapt to changing situations whilst maximizing the benefits of these programmes remains a key consideration for project planners.

As emphasized by Schwenzer (2017, p. 14), it is of the utmost importance that project planners clarify, from the very beginning, what the project can realistically achieve and what it cannot. This clarity serves as a crucial reference point for refugees, allowing them to assess their suitability for the programme and align their expectations with the project’s goals and capabilities. Furthermore, Olliff (2008, p. 59) emphasizes the significance of improving access to sport and recreation facilities in local areas. According to the author, equitable access to these facilities can be ensured by holding local government leisure services accountable and exploring options to make school facilities accessible to local communities beyond regular hours. Promoting an inclusive

sports sector involves “embedding inclusive practices in state sporting associations[,] and piloting a mentoring initiative at the local club level” (Olliff, 2008, p. 59).

Another crucial aspect highlighted by Olliff (2008, p. 59) is the need to foster better linkages between the sport, recreation, settlement, and community sectors. This can be achieved through an inter-departmental meeting of key stakeholders. Similarly, Ha and Lyras (2013, p. 134) emphasize the importance of enriching sport programmes designed for refugee integration with other cultural activities, such as arts, music, poetry, and theatre, to create a more holistic approach that can enhance the effectiveness of those initiatives. Moreover, as previously explained, sport activities should also be complemented by a wide range of support and social services tailored to the unique needs of newly arrived refugees, including education, legal support, employment opportunities, and more, to ensure a well-rounded approach to integration (Schwenzer, 2017, p. 17).

For refugees, having some knowledge about the society they are about to become a part of is highly important. Therefore, in addition to the usual information kits provided to refugees upon their arrival in a new country, like the Welcome Kit offered by SEF in Portugal, the admission process for refugees into a sports club or programme should include an orientation on the rules and values of sport, of the club and/or project, of the national sports system, and of the broader host society (Schwenzer, 2017, p. 17). As Schwenzer (2017, p. 17) points out, this introduction can be conducted by the project organisers or through workshops in collaboration with external partners. Undoubtedly, such an introduction would not only be highly beneficial for refugees but would also hopefully facilitate the final phase of their migration process.

Moreover, extending these informational briefings to the general public can serve as a powerful tool for raising awareness about the challenges refugees encounter. This, in turn, can contribute to reducing racism and discrimination within the receiving community whilst fostering the development of intercultural awareness and competence. These workshops have the potential to create a safe and inclusive environment where refugees can better acquaint themselves with the host society. They may also foster a sense of belonging and connection between refugees and the local community, ultimately facilitating the integration process and ideally leading to a more harmonious coexistence, all whilst promoting social cohesion.

In addition to these efforts, Olliff (2008, p. 59) suggests a variety of other strategies aimed at facilitating the social inclusion and integration of newly arrived refugee communities. These strategies encompass the support of bicultural workers in sports-based integration projects and the implementation of community development approaches. Furthermore, they involve the launch of health literacy initiatives targeting newly arrived families and the encouragement of supportive parental roles. Likewise, Ha and Lyras (2013, p. 134) claim that it is particularly impactful to employ bilingual and/or bicultural instructors and/or coaches in sports-based refugee integration programmes. Besides this, it is also imperative to translate outreach materials as a way of effectively engaging with and recruiting refugee youth. For this reason, Schwenzer (2017, p. 17) highlights the necessity of close collaboration with translators and cultural mediators, as a way to provide information on the sport activities and also to “help overcome intercultural misunderstandings and difficulties in communication”.

When it comes specifically to young refugees, Merkel (2013, p. 157) presents a series of proposed changes that are crucial for achieving positive outcomes in youth sports. To illustrate these changes, Figure 31 outlines modifications the author suggests in three key areas: a. society; b. parents; and c. coaches. It is important to note that many of Merkel’s (2013) proposed changes may hold particular significance during the early stages of sports-based integration projects. These changes may serve as a foundation for creating an environment conducive to successful integration and youth development.

Figure 31. Future of Youth Sports: Proposed Changes for Positive Results

Society	Parents	Coaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of coaches • Enforce sports safety • Increase funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safety education for coaches ○ Improved policies and procedures ○ Increased participation by underserved groups – Greater availability of facilities and fields – Proper safety equipment • Rules and regulations guided by science • Pre-participation physicals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive parenting through appropriate praise and emphasis on fun more than winning • Focus on goals of skill acquisition • Positive reinforcement before, during and after games and practices • Promote desired behaviors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sportsmanship ○ Punctuality ○ Preparedness (eg, proper clothing, equipment, hydration) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize fun • De-emphasize winning • Positive praise of team and individuals • Greater emphasis on physical activity than skill mastery • Obtain education on youth athlete coaching • Provide age appropriate instruction • Gain knowledge of sport and rules • Gain basic knowledge of strength, conditioning, nutrition and sports safety principles • Injury recognition/first aid, including heat illness and concussion

Source: Merkel (2013, p. 157)

In line with this, Ha and Lyras (2013, pp. 134/135) stress the importance of developing and implementing programmes that honour and embrace the individual differences of refugees, particularly young refugees. These authors argue that, for these projects to succeed and minimize acculturation stresses, sport clubs and project developers must establish and nurture an inclusive and collaborative environment that facilitates intercultural interactions. As Ha and Lyras (2013, p. 135) point out, creating intercultural and inclusive teams within sports-based integration programmes is a critical step towards fostering a sense of cohesion, inclusion, and inter-group tolerance.

Schwenzer (2017, p. 13) highlights the crucial role of sports instructors and coaches in building trust and establishing personal connections with refugees. This involves developing a deep understanding of the challenges refugees face and setting realist expectations for their participation. A simple yet meaningful gesture is learning a few words and phrases in the language of the refugees involved in the project. This not only shows an interest in understanding their counterparts and their unique situations but also encourages greater engagement in the activities. Additionally, instructors and coaches should exhibit patience and persistence, recognizing the refugees' circumstances whilst insisting on their compliance with key rules (Schwenzer, 2017, pp. 13/14).

The success of sports-based integration activities also rests on their ability to engage with a diverse range of refugees. It is crucial to recognize that dress codes may vary due to religious beliefs. Therefore, offering segregated sessions exclusively for women and children with female instructors can be especially significant to ensure inclusivity. Additionally, providing transportation or arranging escorts from their homes to the activity location and back may prove essential for these participants (Schwenzer, 2017, p.15). These considerations could substantially increase participation rates and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the projects.

Taking into account the desires and ideas of refugees during the development of new programmes and/or activities is of the utmost importance. Consulting with them during the ideation phase is crucial, as it ensures alignment with the preferences and interests of the target audience, which can ultimately lead to broader community engagement (Schwenzer, 2017, p. 16). Furthermore, actively involving refugees and nurturing their individual initiative and commitment, whilst encouraging them to take on responsibilities early in the process, can significantly contribute to their empowerment (Schwenzer, 2017, p. 14). This empowerment can ultimately lead to refugees becoming

instructors themselves, assuming greater roles and responsibilities, and enhancing their self-esteem (Schwenzer, 2017, p. 17). By doing this, they become able to pass on their insights and knowledge to future generations of refugees whilst also actively shaping the direction of these integration projects.

It is essential to emphasize that the recommendations provided here should only be viewed as mere general guidelines and they encompass just a fraction of a broader number of factors to be considered. Each sports-based integration project is distinct, just as the refugees participating in them are unique individuals. Therefore, whilst these recommendations offer valuable insights, they should be adapted and tailored to suit the specific circumstances and needs of each project and its refugee participants. With this in mind, flexibility and a personalised approach are key when implementing these suggestions in the real world.

As the number of refugees continues to rise, and the issue of refugee integration gains prominence on a global scale, it becomes imperative for those in direct contact with these vulnerable individuals to have access to up-to-date information on these issues. Sharing the results of sports-based integration projects with the general public is essential for evaluating the feasibility of such initiatives and determining the need for further action. For this reason, Olliff (2008, p. 59) emphasizes the importance of conducting further research on the impact of sports into the settlement of refugees, especially young refugees. According to the author, these research efforts can yield valuable insights into the effectiveness of sports-based integration projects.

In conclusion, the future of sport for refugee integration holds immense promise. Through innovative strategies, technological advancements, and a commitment to empowerment, sports can continue to serve as a catalyst for fostering social inclusion, building bridges, and shaping the narratives of refugees' lives. As we move forward, the intersection of sport and refugee integration will undoubtedly chart new paths towards a more inclusive and harmonious future.

This dissertation sought to provide a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted nature of the Global Refugee Crisis, with a specific focus on the changing dynamics of the refugee population within Portuguese borders. By delving deep into the complexities of this global crisis, it aimed to unravel the intricacies of the integration process, all with the overarching goal of uncovering the potential of sport as a transformative catalyst for the successful integration of refugees into host societies.

The Global Refugee Crisis remains a pressing and enduring challenge that transcends borders, demanding a collective response from nations, communities, and individuals. Ongoing conflicts worldwide have contributed to the continuous and seemingly endless growth of the global refugee population. These individuals face the harsh reality of having limited prospects for a safe return to their home countries or countries of habitual residence. This situation emphasizes the crucial significance of enabling their integration, whether into their initial host nation or a third country.

Crucially, better communication between international organisations like the UNHCR, UNICEF, and the European Parliament and national governments is essential. This would ensure more accurate and consistent data regarding the number of refugees and asylum seekers within national borders, which, as observed in the case of Portugal, can sometimes vary significantly between different institutions.

Whilst many countries adopt pro-refugee stances, they often lack the comprehensive strategies required for the successful integration of refugees into local communities, as exemplified in the Portuguese context. The mechanisms for receiving and integrating refugees need to be optimised and now, more than ever, it is imperative for national governments to develop and implement plans for the reception and integration of refugees into the host society. These plans should remain open to adjustments based on feedback from refugees and other relevant sources as well as on the results obtained.

Recognizing that the integration process is a reciprocal endeavour, involving changes for both refugees and native citizens, it becomes crucial for governments and local authorities to actively engage the local community in the planning and executing process of refugee integration strategies. This proactive approach would hopefully ensure a smoother acculturation process for refugees by enabling their immediate engagement with the host society and its culture.

Sport offers a promising avenue to bridge the gap and connect refugees and host communities. Notably, the Portuguese projects, “Viver o Desporto – Abraçar o Futuro” and Welcome Sports Club, stand out as compelling examples of this potential. Both these initiatives have achieved positive outcomes since their inception, effectively demonstrating the benefits of such sports-related projects. Their success has undoubtedly paved the way for the development of similar initiatives aimed at enhancing refugee integration. As these projects continue to thrive, they inspire the expansion and diversification of sports-based programmes to empower and support more refugees in their integration journey.

Consistently, the escalating numbers of forcibly displaced persons and refugees call for a significant expansion of sports-based integration projects. With a growing recognition of the profound impact of sports on refugee integration, there is a compelling need to foster more initiatives of this nature. This imperative extends to Portugal as well. Whilst the nation has hosted a relatively small number of refugees in recent years, the surge in the global refugee population underscores the necessity for a broader array of sporting initiatives, beyond the realm of football. As such, the time has arrived for governments, NGOs, and any other relevant organisation to embrace this unique opportunity and actively contribute and participate in facilitating a more seamless integration process for refugees, with a special emphasis on young refugees. By harnessing the potential of sports, it is possible to cultivate intercultural understanding, promote social cohesion, and foster a sense of belonging for both refugees and their host communities.

However, for this vision to materialize, there must be a heightened focus and recognition from governments and other relevant stakeholders regarding the benefits of sport for the well-being of refugees and as a mechanism for their integration. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize the importance of projects that leverage sports for the refugees’ smoother integration into host societies. These measures would undoubtedly play a pivotal role in creating a more inclusive, interconnected, and harmonious world for refugees and their surrounding societies. Moreover, and in order to translate these aspirations into tangible projects, it is essential to ensure both monetary and non-monetary incentives. As we consider the future of sports-based integration projects, including e-sports, there lies an inherent need for an expanding and diversified portfolio of sports offerings, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility for all refugees. The

development of robust support mechanisms, including financial and non-financial incentives, will be pivotal in nurturing and scaling these initiatives.

Many sports-based integration projects have a noticeable gap in their long-term capacity for supporting refugees. Once these individuals transition out of the programmes, they often lose access to essential services and resources, such as psychologists and support networks, that would help them cope with the traumas of their refugee journeys. Recognizing this, it is imperative for these projects to extend beyond the playing field. That is, beyond fostering athletic talents and social inclusion, these projects should also prioritize the comprehensive long-term well-being of refugees, particularly young refugees. This includes ensuring that they have access to essential services such as healthcare, education, employment opportunities, and much more. By facilitating a holistic approach to integration that encompasses physical, emotional, and educational aspects, sports-based initiatives should be able to create a more enduring and supportive environment for refugees. As these programmes evolve, their capacity to nurture not only athletic talents but also personal growth and well-being will be pivotal in fostering a sense of belonging within refugees' new communities.

For those responsible for envisioning and implementing sports-based integration projects for refugees, a crucial consideration is achieving a harmonious blend of sport activities with a spectrum of social and cultural engagement. This diverse approach will enable refugees to gain a deeper understanding of their new society and culture, fostering a more enriched experience. Moreover, it will serve as a means of striking a balance between the refugees' cultural roots and the culture of their host community. This equilibrium is fundamental to promoting a sense of belonging and cohesion within the broader community, fostering a mutually beneficial cultural exchange.

Ultimately, the reality of refugees is in a constant state of change. The digital advancements witnessed in recent decades, along with all the ongoing changes that are shaping the future of sports, have the potential to redefine and further improve the landscape of sports-based integration projects. Nevertheless, the primary goal remains unwavering: offering support to these vulnerable individuals, fostering their well-being, and enabling a seamless transition into their new homes and new societies. Ensuring cohesive societies centres on achieving effective integration and, in this quest, sports stand as a powerful ally.

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