



SOMRA

Intellectual Output 1

Executive Summary

Portugal



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The SOMRA project – Supporting meaningful Occupations for Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum seekers – offers an innovative approach to tackling climate change and refugee crises, by engaging refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (MRAs) in meaningful occupations that transform them into environment role models with a sustainable impact in their new and previous home.

To achieve this, the SOMRA project will facilitate:



Findings for the holistic study report were collected via desk and infield research – interviews with MRA groups, professionals working with MRAs and NGO (non-governmental organisations) representatives.

NGOs in Portugal

NGOs in Portugal the universe of NGOs comprises 27,985 associations and represents 45.7% of the entities that make up the Social Economy, employing 72.1% of the workforce that works in this sector.

On average, each organization has 6.3 workers, which represents a low value; given that the sector has a significant number of expansion units (e.g. mercies, foundations, etc.), this average means that there will be many units with 0-2 employees.

In Portugal there are several types of NGOs: associations, foundations, cooperatives, mutual societies "mutualidades" and charities "misericórdias", that are directly linked to the catholic church.

In Portugal we have: non-profit development cooperation organizations (NGOsD); non-profit environmental organizations (NGOsA); non-profit for people with disabilities organizations (NGOsPD). These NGOs can be local, regional, national or international.

Main NGO networks in Portugal

<p>BIOLIVING</p> <p>Environmental non-profit NGO whose motto is "Nature and Education for All".</p>	<p>GRUPO LOBO</p> <p>Created in 1985 with the goal to contribute to the conservation of the Iberian wolf and its habitat in Portugal.</p>	<p>LPN</p> <p>Nationwide Non-Governmental Environmental Organization (ONGA), founded in 1948, and is the oldest Association for the defence of the environment in the Iberian Peninsula.</p>
<p>OCEAN ALIVE</p> <p>Portugal's first co-operative dedicated to ocean protection</p>	<p>ZERO</p> <p>Intervention in Portuguese society through proactive participation in defending the values of sustainability.</p>	<p>QUERCUS</p> <p>Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and in the Defence of the Environment.</p>
<p>MARCA</p> <p>The promotion of actions in social, cultural, environmental preservation and enhancement of natural and built heritage.</p>	<p>PLANTAR UMA ÁRVORE</p> <p>Develops and implements volunteer programs, both short and long term, focusing on the recovery of ecologically degraded areas.</p>	<p>TERRAS DENTRO</p> <p>Created by the Parish Council, the Viana do Alentejo City Council and a group of citizens committed to the development of their land</p>

Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (MRAs) – Definitions

A person seeking asylum is who flees their home, arrives in another country, whichever way they can, makes themselves known to the authorities, and submits an asylum application, has a legal right to stay in the country while waiting for a decision.

A refugee: has proven that they would be at risk if returned to their home country, has had their claim for asylum accepted by the government, has permission to stay in Portugal either long term or indefinitely.

According SEF data indicate that 714,123 foreign citizens resided in the country at the end of last year (2021), 7.8% more than in 2020, when 662,095 lived.

Compared to previous years, the increase in the foreign population residing in Portugal has been verified since 2016, when 397,731 people lived in the country, having almost doubled in 2021.

Barriers for MRAs to set up an NGO



Language. MRAs that arrive to a new country often do not have good foreign language skills and can experience barriers in communication. Good language skills are not only crucial when trying to find employment, but also integrating into the community. In addition, some persons may be illiterate which

creates extra barriers and creates the need for additional support. It is quite common that migrants are put or put themselves in groups with people from the same country. This does not particularly help with integration and language learning, there must be mixing with people from other countries and effort from the migrants to want to do this. One to one mentorship can be extremely helpful.

In Portugal, most migrants do not speak Portuguese, but many have good or sufficient English skills decreasing barriers in communication.



Qualifications. In recent years, there has also been a significant increase in immigrants motivated by entrepreneurial and independent professional activities, suggesting that those who migrate to Portugal have higher qualifications compare to the Portuguese.

Mental and physical health. Inability to continue their old jobs can often frustrate and discourage refugees and asylums seekers, which can add to their trauma that they often have experienced in their home countries. Trauma needs a long-term support to heal. If they can heal their trauma, they will be able to overcome other barriers and needs such as social needs, language, and educational barriers.



Education. More one-to-one support is needed to help children and young people to achieve well during their educational journey, however, often a lack of resources available do not allow this.

Racism. Many migrants, refugees and asylum seekers will often experience racism, even if they have lived in a country for a while. The main challenge is the way the broader community thinks of and behaves towards migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. The mindset of a lot of people needs to change because everyone should have an opportunity and rights to food, warm place to sleep and respect, among others.

Right to work

Migrants and refugees are often able to access jobs and benefits like all citizens, however, especially with the labour market, this can be hindered by a lack of language and skills. In Portugal the asylum procedure is very single for both refugee status and subsidiary protection.

Asylum seekers – Before being granted the Temporary Residence Permit, it is not possible for an asylum seeker to have access to or exercise any professional activity, as well as to receive professional training. It is only after granting the Residence Permit that you are considered a foreigner in full conditions to reside in Portugal, at which time you can exercise a profession. After that, the migrant has the same rights, in the exercise of work, as nationals who work in the same place and under the same circumstances.

Volunteering

Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are allowed to volunteer. Volunteering can help gain confidence, learn new skills, and improve language and will help to integrate into the community. There are many volunteering opportunities as a lot of NGOs will usually need volunteers, including working with elderly, youth and children, environment and animals and sports and outdoor activities. To volunteer, unless a position requires certain skills, no criteria is usually required. NGOs will mostly want an individual who has a willingness to learn, a degree of professionalism and ability to follow instructions, respect and diligence, good time management and a personable manner. Concerning volunteering there are a few programs financed by the European Union such as European Solidarity Corps or Erasmus + that offer opportunities to all residents in the EU. Migrants as long as they have a valid visa and residency in one of the EU countries, can get involved with these volunteering activities. Most opportunities through the European Solidarity Corps are cross-border volunteering activities.

Conclusion

Although most needs and gaps may be similar between countries, there are also some differences. In addition, different individuals, or groups of individuals of MRAs will have different needs depending on their situation. Some of the main gaps and needs include successful integration into the society, racism from the community, language, lack in monetary aid and others.

Asylum seekers need more support and resources dedicated to them. This is the group that is the most restricted; not being able to work, being strictly monitored, low monetary aids can affect their mental,

physical, and social well-being. Often the asylum process can take years which means that they cannot fully feel like they are part of the society, as well as the uncertainty of their application for asylum.

One thing everyone can do is volunteer. Either by being part of local community activities or a bigger organisation. As well as aiding integration into the community, volunteering allows people to gain new skills and increase their confidence. In many cases, confidence is what people need to get started. There are many organisations that take up volunteers in the environmental, animal and working with elderly and youth sectors.

A major issue is the lack of information about how migrants can get involved in voluntary work for NGOs. Language barriers is one of the main factors. Migrants, refugees, or asylum seekers who want to get involved with an NGOs need to actively ask NGOs how they could get involved. This is because NGOs often do not specifically search for migrant volunteers but are happy when they want to get involved as they are a great asset to NGOs.

