



# Protect

The Right to International  
Protection

Case study reports on selected CSOs' attitudes and  
activities



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# Case study reports on selected CSOs' attitudes and activities

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## 1. Executive Summary

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are a vital part of the system of international protection. This report presents a number of case studies from three European states to highlight the range, nature and significance of this work, as well as drawing a number of policy implications for all those working in this field. The six case studies – from Greece, Italy and the UK – provide a window onto a number of key lessons for policymakers and those seeking to understand the organisational landscape of protection. In particular, they highlight the varied ways in which CSOs understand the question of international protection and its impact on their work: by contrasting groups working on helping anyone in need and those working explicitly on refugees it is possible to note differences in priorities and in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of frameworks for action. While CSOs provide some very significant direct aid to their target groups, as well as engaging in a range of activities directed to shaping public and political debate, there is a common thread of fluctuating and uncertain funding, which has a direct bearing on their ability to perform work. This potentially compromises the valuable contribution that CSOs have to make, not least as means for refugees and migrants to have a voice in the national and international debates about them. The report also highlights the on-going difficulties of translating the Global Compacts on Migration and on Refugees into meaningful action: the visibility and salience of these remains rather low among our case studies, mostly because of the weak implementation efforts of governmental bodies.

## 2. Introduction

The increasing importance of refugee policy for the European Union (EU) over the past decade has been very clear, from the beaches of the Mediterranean to the urban centres that have become home for so many fleeing persecution and deprivation in their home countries. While this has resulted in a significant growth in EU- and state-level policy responses, it has also been striking how important Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have been, both as providers of direct aid and as participants in the public and political debate. However, these groups are relatively poorly understood in comparison to public policy or public opinion. This report provides some redress to this, by showing the range and variety of CSO activity and how it relates to our understanding of this area of policy, drawing on a wider and more systematic cross-national survey of these groups. In so doing, it aims to raise awareness of the attitudes, actions and potential of CSOs, not only as agents on the ground but also as key participants in the wider global debate around international protection, as embodied in the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and its counterpart, the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).

This work forms part of the wider activity of the PROTECT project, led by the University of Bergen, which seeks to understand the underlying dynamics of international protection and

identify ways that this can be made more effective.<sup>1</sup> Central to this is a model of fundamental cleavages in attitudes towards protection that differentiates between four main groups (Sicakkan, 2021). *Nativists* focus exclusively on the protection of existing members of their national community and see no role – or even need – for international protection, since obligations stop at the metaphorical water’s edge. *Nation-statists* are potentially more open to notions of universal human rights and/or the protection of refugees, but still place primacy on their own state’s freedom to operationalise those as they see best: international protection is at most an idea, rather than a set of obligatory requirements. A third group, *regionalists*, are willing to work beyond national borders to create local systems of governance, often reflecting an understanding of the limits of what any one state can achieve: in part this is about sincere concern for human rights but is also a vehicle of *realpolitik*. Even the final group – *globalists* – with their desire for an internationalised and globalised system of protection are not always driven by a reification of human rights as an inescapable and fundamental duty for all (although that view is also present): it can also be a function of a failure of alternative policies to manage particular situations, such as massive inflows of refugees.

This basic model informs much of the analysis in this report, as applied to CSOs. As we have elaborated elsewhere, these groups represent a critical part of the operationalisation of the concept of international protection, given their high degree of flexibility in both organisational and practical terms (Usherwood, 2021). CSOs are not bound by the constitutional obligations that shape governmental bodies and so act as a means of translating latent preferences and intentions within civil society into material action. If state bodies are products of - and agents in perpetuating - the social compromises needed to govern, then CSOs operate in the spaces around these bodies as (relatively) specialised and narrow expressions of the different voices that form society. That narrowness of outlook is coupled to the possibility of highly specialised actions and a relative lack of need to consider the interests of those beyond the immediate constituency to generate a landscape of organised individuals that marries their bottom-up interests with the incentives generated by the formal political system.

These broad frameworks are important in making sense of that landscape, as they direct us to consider not only what groups do, but also the reasons that inform their actions, since the way that they choose to understand the material situation will affect their prioritisation of actions. The case presented here – from Greece, Italy and the UK – capture this in action and highlight the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the broad range of CSO engagement in this field.

The report first presents the key questions that we have to ask of CSOs, in terms of their understanding of the issue of international protection, the nature of what they do and their relationship up to the international legal frameworks in which the GCM/GCR sit. The six cases – The British Red Cross, Emergency, CESVI, METAdrasi, the Greek Council for Refugees and Care4Calais - are then presented along those lines, before a comparative analysis draws out a number of key points. Finally, some policy implications are drawn, directing attention towards both the potential and the challenges of being such a responsive and contingent part of the system of protection.

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### 3. CSOs and the protection regime

As Ferris rightly points out, Civil Society Organisations have played an increasing role in the international system of refugee protection since the end of the Cold War (Ferris, 2003; Garkisch et al., 2017; Lester, 2005). The post-1945 architecture of the United Nations and the moral imperatives created by the experience of a global conflict had set up a regime in which states were prepared to make considerable efforts to address the needs of refugees and migrants more generally. However, the collapse of communism and the weakening of incentives to manage the global system simultaneously reduced the willingness of developed states to maintain their earlier commitments under the Fundamental Charter of Human Rights or the UN Convention on Refugees and increased the scale, frequency and severity of adverse events in source countries, producing significant new numbers of refugees and migrants (Coddington, 2018; O'Sullivan and Stevens, 2017). CSOs, which had long played a role in providing direct aid in many locations, found themselves drawn ever more into more structural participation in the international regime itself. This shift has been reflected in the broadening relationship between CSOs and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the international level and increasing attention by the CSO community to briefing, lobbying and campaigning of governments.

While Pries *et al* considered the 2015 “refugee crisis” in Europe to be the moment that CSOs most critically emerged as central actors in refugee protection as a result of their expansion and reinvention, then this should not obscure the weight of the preceding period (Pries, 2019). For instance, the humanitarian intervention of CSOs in the aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis in Greece and the Greek island of Lesbos was so intense that, according to Howden and Fotiadis, “it became the most expensive humanitarian response in history (...) when measured by the cost per beneficiary” (Howden and Fotiadis, 2017). During 2015, more than 100 International SCOs arrived, semi-settled and operated on Lesbos, in order to assist the Greek state in the migration and border management (Skleparis and Armakolas, 2016). In particular, the main instruments that underpin the protection regime – the Charter and the Convention – remained the same, even as the growing competence of the European Union in matters of border control, asylum and relocation spoke of the continuing interest of states.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, this does not negate the observation of Cantat and Feischmidt that the drawing in of CSOs to fill the gaps left by states does mean more potential for the fragmentation of protection, with its associated risks of marginalisation and exclusion of already vulnerable individuals and groups (Cantat and Feischmidt, 2019). Moreover, the increasing politicisation of migration in the period since 2015 has also extended into the CSO community, making it more difficult to claim to be disinterested humanitarian actors, even as they become more essential partners for public authorities (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen, 2019; Larruina et al., 2019).

These tensions have not been resolved by the emergence of the Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migration. Even prior to their signing, it was evident that CSOs needed to be closely involved in giving effect to the Compacts, especially in implementation, even though they had not been well-represented in the formulation process (Appleby, 2017; Arnold-

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<sup>2</sup> On the EU's role, see Fernández-Rojo, 2021; Léonard and Kaunert, 2020; Mungianu, 2016.

Fernández, 2019). The subsequent experience has broadly confirmed this position, as states continue to pursue national strategies that either intentionally or unintentionally fail to realise the potential of collaboration with CSOs (Kinchin, 2021; Wurtz and Wilkinson, 2020; Domicelj and Gottardo, 2019). In an era when language about responsibility- and burden-sharing is central to debate on international protection, whether in the Compacts or the EU's 2020 New Pact on Migration and Asylum, the need to have a better appreciation of the irreplaceable work of CSOs has never been greater. Existing literature on CSOs of the kind that has been presented in this section has tended to focus primarily on events such as the 2015 crisis or thematic questions such as their potential or actual involvement in the Global Compacts. By contrast, this present report and the wider package of work by PROTECT on CSOs provides a novel perspective of understanding their cross-national organisation and activity on the basis of underlying motivations and interests, rather than starting from exogenous factors. Through the cases presented here, we start to demonstrate the importance of CSOs as embodiments of popular interests, as much as substantial contributors to international protection.

#### **4. Conceptual framework**

The analysis in this report is based on the theoretical framework outlined above, but what does this mean in more practical terms? At its broadest level, it means starting from attitudes and understandings before looking at actions. This comes the combination of the cleavages in conceptualisation of the need or obligation to provide protection to others and the high flexibility of organisational forms that CSOs can take. In contrast to state bodies, CSOs' form follows their function much more immediately and closely, absent the constitutional and institutional obligations that they former work within.

While this may seem to be self-evident, it is useful to note that this is not solely a matter of remarking that CSOs do what they want (within their resource base), but perhaps more importantly that they can chose how they see the world around them. There are no fixed definitions of social issues and problems, only those frames that individuals and groups chose to create. As such, even if we can differentiate basic attitudes towards protection on the four-way division already discussed, there is no obligation for anyone or any organisation to define itself in exactly those terms. Again, while this is an issue for all research, it is perhaps more pressing a matter when looking at CSOs, given that they are literally expressions of emergent understandings within civil society and so exhibit whatever particular worldview that underpins that.

The consequence of this is that the starting point for any analysis of CSOs has to be an understanding of their **worldview**. The wider PROTECT survey from which these cases are drawn has highlighted a key difference in self-conceptualisations between those CSOs that see their remit as working specifically on refugee and migrant-related issues and those that instead have an objective to work on some issue that applies in some way to refugees and migrants, but not exclusively or necessarily completely. Central in the latter group are bodies that understand themselves as humanitarian actors, either in the wider sense of the term or more narrowly concentrated on one aspect, such as healthcare, education or protection of at-risk sections of society (e.g. the young, religious minorities or LGBT individuals). No CSO seeks to provide all things to all people, so the boundaries of remits and of definitions is consequential

and it is important to keep in mind when we consider the range of CSOs that might potentially seek to act on, or for, refugees and migrants in relation to protection.

With this starting point in mind, it is possible to return to the **cleavage framework** to place the group within it. The framework provides a language to describe groups, based on their presentation and their actions, that can be translated out to the more general social and political context that CSOs operate in. This classification operates at two distinct levels. Firstly, there is the underlying understanding of protection that provides a relatively stable for attributing a group to one of the four types: the question of protection is bound up with the more foundational understanding of one's obligations to others, where a difference of opinion is not readily reconcilable, especially in a body that emerges organically from individuals finding common cause. However, if that basic understanding is relatively easy to identify, then there is a more problematic layer of discourse, where CSOs may seek to adapt frames of language that speak to those who have a different position within the cleavage structure. In our six cases, each is essentially a globalist or regionalist group at the underlying level, but examples of more nation-statist language can be found in several places, echoing and working with shape of the local debate about refugees and migration. At a time when political debate on these subjects has become more contentious and fractious, the scope for CSOs to present their views and priorities with a degree of flexibility is of growing material consequence.

From the starting point of attitudes and understandings, it is possible to shift our attention to the **activities** of CSOs: groups exist not only because they identify an issue or problem, but also because they identify something that can be done in relation to it. This 'something' falls into two distinct parts: actions *on* refugees and migrants, and actions *about* them.

One consequence of the cleavage approach is that preferences will shape activity in particular ways. In the most general terms, globalist and regionalist CSOs will be much more likely to undertake work directly with migrants and refugees than nativists. Globalists and regionalists will have a particular focus on helping those in vulnerable positions, in line with their moral or legal obligations (respectively) towards refugees and migrants: the strength of such obligations will be relatively unaffected by events such as Covid. On the other side, nation-statist groups will be somewhat differentiated from nativists, given the non-exclusive notion of community that the former hold, with its attendant sense of charity. These theoretical anticipations are backed up with the initial findings of the wider survey underpinning this report, with no cases of nativist groups working directly with refugees or migrants.

Work for refugees and migrants can take many different forms. These range from the provision of essentials – rescue operations, food, shelter, healthcare and direct financial support – through activities that can improve the quality of life (e.g. family reunion, education, childcare, training or integration into host communities) into managing practicalities such as securing asylum or accessing welfare systems. The precise combination and extent of work in any of these areas clearly relates back to the initial conceptualisation that the group has of itself and its mission: some are very narrow and focused, while others try to cover a wide range of elements as part of a holistic appreciation of the continuing and changing needs of a refugee or migrant through the course of their relocation.

As much as work about refugees and migrants can also be varied, this might be expected to reflect more endogenous factors. Such work can be understood as trying to change the conditions within which refugees and migrants find themselves, the logical complement to

working to change those individuals themselves. This can involve lobbying or legal actions to change public policy, briefings and training to shape public opinion and debate indirectly through key stakeholders such as the media or officials, or campaigns to target publics more directly. Each of these elements is dependent primarily on the situation that confronts the CSO as it is more a participant in a collective process than a (relatively) free agent to do as it will. Shifts in political preferences and priorities are likely to drive changes in CSO activity in this area, if only to protect its scope for maintaining its direct support activities.

The final area that this report explores is the relationship between CSOs and the emerging context of the two **Global Compacts**, on migration and on refugees. The Compacts represent a potentially important stage in the development of a new international consensus around these issues, with scope to produce significant effects on the ground. However, a key concern of PROTECT's work has been to explore whether this potential has been realised at all: notwithstanding the significant disruption by the Covid pandemic to much provision since 2020, there are many signs that systemic engagement remains lacking. Studying CSOs offers an opportunity to understand this issue better, given their specialised nature and their operations on the ground with precisely those whose interests the Compacts seek to address. With this in mind, our survey and these cases try to understand the level of engagement with such organisations, both in the phase of formulating the Compacts and in its subsequent implementation, where they might be well-placed to comment on the degree to which they have reshaped national contexts and policies. As a global-level initiative, the operation of the Compacts – as seen by CSOs – can also tell us something useful about the connection of top-down and bottom-up elements in the field of international protection: to what extent do abstracted commitments between states translate into the lived experience of migrants and refugees?

Taken together, these elements provide a grounded framework for analysing CSOs in a way to that improves our understanding of how they connect into the general realm of international protection, while also allowing us to make more comparative observations about why they exist and how they chose to act on the world around them.

## **5. Case studies**

This report draws on a cross-national survey of Civil Societies Organisations being conducted by PROTECT. That survey will provide a more systematic analysis of the range of CSO activity across a number of European states and at the international level and will report during 2022-3: this current analysis offers a more limited and immediate insight into the approach and activity of some CSOs typical of that wider community: each was selected from the wider survey, combining survey responses with additional research by the authors. The six cases presented here in order of decreasing size cover a mixture of the key elements that shape CSO work in the realm of international protection.

### **5.1 Selection criteria**

The highly flexible nature of CSOs makes any selection difficult, but it is still possible to identify a number of key dimensions that need to be covered. Firstly, the intrinsic movement of people as refugees and/or migrants from one place to another means that it is useful to consider the differences in their situation while under way and when they reach a place of



destination. With this in mind, we draw our cases from Greece, Italy and the UK, since these present three different mixes of transit and reception: Greece is primarily a transit state, albeit with a growing element of reception, a transit that Italy has been rather more advanced on, while the UK remains principally a reception state that has had to acknowledge the growing importance of transit issues in recent years.

Secondly, CSOs vary greatly in scale of their operation, so it is useful to compare a range of groups from some of the largest to much smaller ones, in order to explore the extent to which this affects activities. While more substantial organisations might be able to conduct a wider or deeper range of activities, that also comes with greater institutional demands, in terms of personnel and resourcing, which in turn carries implications for secure streams of funding. Indeed, our selection aims to highlight the diverse ways in which CSOs cope with balancing these demands.

Finally, our selection captures one of the key distinctions from our wider survey, namely the differences between those CSOs that frame their work as being in service of all those in need – of which refugees and migrants are a part – and those that see themselves as working more exactly on refugee- or migration-related activity. While all our cases can be understood as being globalist in their attitudes towards refugees and migrants, seeing them as in need of protection on humanitarian and moral grounds, the conceptualisation of who is the targeted population differs. By bringing together these cases, we highlight the impact this has on the way in which the different groups work.

## **5.2 Case 1: British Red Cross (UK)**

The British Red Cross is one of the longest-standing and largest humanitarian organisations in the UK, part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Foundation. Founded in 1870, it currently employs approximately 4,000 staff – of whom 170 work on international services in the UK and overseas - supported by a further 14,000 volunteers, forming roughly 1% of the IRCRCF's global network of 14 million volunteers.

Annual income is about £300m (€350m) per year, from a diverse set of sources: some 40% from donations, 30% from grants (much from the UK's Department for International Development), 15% from contracted work and the rest from other sources. Of the £246m (€288m) expenditure in 2020, 7% went to refugee support and migration work, 18% to crisis response and 46% to international projects.

### *Refugee/migrant policy within the British Red Cross' overall work*

As with other National Societies of the IRCRCF, the British Red Cross follows the seven fundamental principles that shape its work as a humanitarian body. Consequently, its priority is the alleviation of human suffering in all forms, which results in a broad portfolio of work. Direct interventions and support are focused within the UK, targeting vulnerable groups of all kinds, while the substantial funding for international projects is directed at supporting sister bodies in third countries. Work with refugees forms a significant part of the organisation's activities.

### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

The British Red Cross is a classic example of a globalist organisation. The central ethos is one of humanity, seeking to address and lessen human suffering in all forms and in all places. This is further strengthened by the IRCRCF's principles of neutrality and independence, which have developed from its historic origins as a provider of relief to all those wounded in conflicts. The corollaries of these principles can be seen in the international federative structure of the IRCRCF and the high level of cross-support between national societies. The framing of migrant-focused work is therefore as helping vulnerable people to meet their basic needs and protect their fundamental rights, rather than as a function of migration- or refugee-specific obligations (see Focus Area 2 of the British Red Cross' International Strategy).

One particular aspect to note here is the IRCRCF principle of unity, which requires that there is only one national society per country. This limits on-the-ground activity by British Red Cross (most international services staff are based in the UK, and most of the rest work with the IRCRCF itself) and makes financial support the key overseas tool. However, the principle also requires National Societies to work in an open manner and across their entire territory, thereby keeping a set of mutual obligations in place to minimise differential treatment in different locations. The British Red Cross places the seven principles in a very central place in its presentation and activity, arguing "they still guide us through adversity. They still command respect."

### *Field-based work*

The British Red Cross is the largest independent provider of refugee support in the UK, with centres in 58 locations providing food, accommodation support, guidance on accessing public services, healthcare and emotional support, notably survivors of trafficking. In 2020, nearly 30,000 migrants were supported through these services, including securing accommodation for 4,400 individuals. In all cases, priority has been given to addressing basic needs and "help[ing] people forced from their homes to build new lives by protecting them at every stage in their journey, and supporting those who seek safety in the UK" (Annual Report 2020).

Aside from immediate support services, the British Red Cross is also much involved in family reunion work, mostly bringing women and children to join husbands and fathers with refugee status or humanitarian protection in the UK: this work, coordinated with other national societies and the International Organisation for Migration, has resulted in 10,000 reunions in the past decade.

Funding to other National Societies is centred around disaster management, coupled to work on addressing more systemic aspects, including chronic hunger and protracted conflict. Migration and displacement is one of the six areas of focus in the British Red Cross' International Strategy, with work to improve consistency of Red Cross provision along major migration routes in Europe and Africa, more support for irregular migrants and forcibly displaced people and improved links to help with anti-trafficking and family reunion.

### *Policy-based work*

Given the particular nature of the Red Cross, advocacy activities have operated within a relatively confined framework, in order to not disrupt the ability to pursue core objectives. However, the British Red Cross has engaged in lobbying activities, notably over reform of UK

asylum policy. This has been done both under its own briefings and campaigns and via work with the Together With Refugees coalition with other UK bodies. Senior staff from the British Red Cross have also engaged with media on issues such as the growth of cross-Channel migrant movements in 2021, both to advance their advocacy of humanitarian action and the connection to government policy.

The organisation is also very active on social media, sharing information with the general public about their work and building support for particular campaigns. It is one of the first major UK charities to move into new platforms such as TikTok, reaching new and younger demographics than Facebook or Twitter.

### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

The IRCRCF was closely involved in the process of formulating both the Global Compact on for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), stressing the importance of obligations under international law, the centrality of humanitarian protection and the need for equitable responsibility sharing. Both the IRCRCF and the British Red Cross issued positive statements on the conclusion of these Compacts, but also began to work on efforts to ensure effective implementation.

In 2020 the British Red Cross produced an extensive report summarising roundtable discussions with international and national organisations, governments, academics and migrants about how best to ensure implementation of the GCM. Among the recommendations was a need to take a ‘whole of government’ and a ‘whole of society’ approach, to maximise the chances of the GCM’s provisions being enacted and enforced. Increased participation of migrants was also seen as a priority, in a more supportive environment where detention was exceptional and proper access to welfare and other public services was ensured. While the COVID pandemic has shifted attention subsequently, the British Red Cross have continued to push these elements in their advocacy. As a result, there is no call at present for reform of the Compacts.

### *Evaluation*

As one of the largest organisations working on refugee- and migration-related work in the UK, and as the national arm of a key international body, the British Red Cross has had to tread a careful path. On the one hand, the commitment to alleviating human suffering in all forms compels it to act in support of individuals whatever their background or life history; on the other, the increasing politicisation of immigration in British politics since the turn of the millennium makes it hard to avoid clashes with government. However, it is perhaps because of the special mission of the Red Cross that it has been shielded from the kind of criticism directed at other charities or NGOs in this field: its most visible fieldwork in the UK is directly to non-migrant groups, even as most of its expenditure goes to support work overseas.

This reflects the clear alignment of values and work: the clarity of the seven principles is repeatedly echoed throughout reports and policy documents and gives a strong steer to all activities. For refugees and migrants of all kinds, this has meant a reliable source of support for a wide range of needs: this includes both support that other organisations might provide, but also more specialist services such as the family reunification work with the IOM. That such work was maintained through 2020-1 and the worst of the Covid pandemic is a reflection of

the level of commitment (and resource) that the British Red Cross provides, as part of a global system that aims to be able to intervene at all stages of a migrants' journey.

### **5.3 Case 2: Emergency (Italy)**

Emergency was founded in Milan, Italy, in 1994 by Gino Strada. It is an officially recognized NGO, registered at United Nations ECOSOC and partner of EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid (ECHO). The main headquarter is based in Milan, but branches are in the US, UK, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Japan. It is focused on the provision of medical services and social development projects, not only in war-torn areas, but also in high poverty regions.

Since 1994, Emergency has operated in 19 countries and treated over 11 million people. Other than in Italy, Emergency is currently deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda.

Its budget is mainly composed of private donations and fundraising, but it is also sustained by the Italian public authorities, UN and EU.

#### *Refugee/migrant policy within Emergency's overall work*

Emergency's work is mainly based on the idea that medical treatment is a fundamental human right and must be available to everyone. It must be completely free of charge and of excellent quality. They assist victims of war, poverty, and landmines, build hospitals and train local staff.

In respect to migrants and refugees, Emergency has worked on post-rescue assistance in the Mediterranean Sea, providing teams of doctors, nurses and cultural mediators as part of its in the sea rescue mission organised by Proactiva Open Arms. The organization has also delivered assistance to migrants in Sicily, particularly in the ports of Pozzallo and Augusta, offering primary care to migrants upon their arrival.

#### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

Emergency is a globalist organization, inspired by a culture of peace, solidarity and respect for human rights. All activities are grounded in the conception of healthcare, as a fundamental human right, driven by equality, quality and social responsibility. Although cooperation with international organizations is not refused in principle, Emergency prefers to deal with voluntary support and fundraising, since their approach to the total abolition of war has been struggling with states' performances in some cases ('We deal with war every day; we see its consequences, we treat its victims, we talk about its horrors. But our goal is to abolish it').

Emergency offers completely free-of-charge medical and surgical care. This means that treatment is guaranteed to anyone in need of assistance, with no discrimination on the basis of political, ideological or religious beliefs. In Afghanistan, for example, Emergency has established several hospitals, open to anyone, including Taliban.

#### *Field-based work*

In respect to migrants and refugees, Emergency has focused on two main activities: post-rescue assistance in the Mediterranean Sea, and assistance to disembarked people in Sicily.

During summer 2019 and early 2020, Emergency has been involved in SAR missions in the central Mediterranean, in collaboration with other organizations, in particular with

*Proactiva Open Arms*, providing medical assistance to migrants on board. In August 2019, they have been involved in the ‘Mission 65’, when 107 people were rescued from the sea and kept on board Open Arms off the coast of Lampedusa for more than 20 days. The ship follows medical protocols informed by the infection prevention procedures that Emergency has been using in its projects around the world, including measures to manage flows of people, and swab tests.

In Sicily, Emergency has started a project of assistance to migrants arriving to Italy from Libya. Between 2013 and 2018, they have assisted 18,365 people, offering 38,030 consultations.

In 2015, the organization has started working in different Sicilian ports, including Augusta and Pozzallo, offering primary care to migrants upon their arrival. To respond to their specific needs, in 2016 a new project started, focused on providing primary psychological assistance, to more vulnerable patients, such as unaccompanied minors.

Together with healthcare staff, doctors and nurses – psychologists-psychotherapists and cultural mediators also worked in our teams, in order to better evaluate the healthcare needs of migrants as they arrive and inform them of the administrative and legal steps they must undertake.

Emergency staff has also worked in various at centres for unaccompanied minors, like First Reception Centres and CAS (Extraordinary Reception Centres) “Frasca” in Rosolini and “Mondo Nuovo” in Noto, in the province of Syracuse.

#### *Policy-based work*

Their approach is defined as follows:

*“it is our duty not to look the other way: that is why we are asking, once again, for legal and safe channels of access. And until Europe responds, we will be with those who save, with those who welcome, with those who do not turn away. We believe that human life is an absolute value and we do not want to helplessly watch a massacre that is repeated every year.”*

Emergency has been extremely active in the advocacy, trying to increase public awareness on major conflicts, humanitarian emergencies and global diseases. In 2016, an office in Brussels has been opened to interact with EU institutions. They have a very informative [blog](#), in which field experiences are described. They also share books and documentaries on [the culture of peace](#) and in support of the abolition of war campaign.

The organization has also been very active on almost social media, sharing pictures, videos, reports and data, particularly as for rescue operations in Central Mediterranean.

#### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

In 2017, Emergency has joined the European Development Days, and has promoted a specific workshop on the topic of Vulnerability in the migration processes: a health perspective’, involving several other NGOs and EU bodies’ representatives.

In most recent years, Emergency has been very active in Geneva and New York, at the UN preliminary meetings which then brought to the Global Compact. The organization

continues to stress the need to guarantee health care to every human being as a human right and has pushed its advocacy efforts in that sense.

### *Evaluation*

Emergency is one of the most important Italian humanitarian NGO and one which has built its integrity and reputation on field. This has contributed to make it totally trustworthy in the public opinion as well as among political institutions and parties. The founder, Gino Strada, who has recently passed away, has always been considered as a very eminent and reliable humanitarian supporter.

However, due to high politicization of the campaigns and activities, carried out in several regions of the world, Emergency has also been exposed to criticism, particularly when it comes to SAR operations in the Central Mediterranean. In any case, the organization has always been coherent with its principles and approaches.

### **5.4 Case 3: CESVI (Italy)**

CESVI is an independent NGO, founded in Bergamo Italy in 1985. It operates worldwide, grounded on the ideals of social justice and respect of human rights. It mainly provides humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations in condition of poverty or struck by war, natural calamities and environmental disasters. Its core values are the ethical principles of legality, correctness, independence-neutrality and social responsibility.

CESVI is very active in Italy but also deployed in Latin America, Africa, Middle East, Southeast Asia. The organization has contributed to manage several humanitarian emergencies, including the tsunami in south east Asia (2004), the earthquakes in Peru (2007) and Pakistan (2008), the earthquake in Haiti (2010), the flooding in Pakistan (2010 – 2011), the earthquake in Emilia Romagna, Italy (2012), the typhoon in the Philippines (2013), the earthquake in Nepal (2015), the earthquake in Central Italy (2016), the passage of Hurricane Matthew in Haiti (2016).

The budget is a combination of public funds from institutional donors, including UN agencies (UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, UNOCHA), European institutions (ECHO) the Italian public authorities, and private donations and fundraising.

### *Refugee/migrant policy within CESVI's overall work*

CESVI's vision is based on the need to take care of wellbeing of vulnerable people. Therefore, main projects have focused on unaccompanied foreign minors, aiming at providing widespread reception and integration support. In accordance with Italian law, CESVI has worked on the spread the positive experience of "tutoring" by voluntary families. The staff believes that "interaction" is more suitable than integration and is the result of the promotion of citizenship, as a combination of job and training.

CESVI has promoted an innovative experience of solidarity and civic engagement, supporting the project "A guardian for every minor", carried out by the partner association AccoglieRete carries in Syracuse.

In Bergamo, the "SOSSteniamoci" project, supported by local authorities, has facilitated the integration of 25 unaccompanied foreign minors, through professional training courses and job placement in local companies. CESVI looks forward to expanding such initiatives and turn into practices in several other Italian regions.

### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

CESVI can be defined as a globalist organization, inspired by universal values and focused on human rights and human wellbeing and the need to assure protection.

Actively engaged in cooperation with Italian public authorities, the organization is strongly committed even to international cooperation, and is already a reference point for the UNHCR intervention programmes addressed to refugees and asylum seekers.

Since 2002 CESVI has been part of the European network Alliance 2015, composed of 8 NGOs from various countries, among the biggest in the humanitarian field.

### *Field-based work*

CESVI has launched the first migrant hospitality and protection projects in 2011, in Italy, following the Arab Spring events and the crisis in Northern Africa's crisis. Such projects aimed at support integration or return to native countries.

Since 2012, CESVI has progressively reinforced its commitment to vulnerable individuals and those at risk of exclusion. In 2014, projects started to focus on the category of Unaccompanied Foreign Minors (UFM).

Since then, reception, integration and protection of UFM has been one of the main streams of CESVI's work on Italian territory. Two issues have been particularly taken into consideration for project implementation: the voluntary legal protection and the accompanying through majority age with support paths for social, economic and housing independence.

### *Policy-based work*

CESVI is particularly active in the advocacy field. The website provides a rich list of publications and reports, addressed to institutions and individuals who want to know more about the key issues of our work. Reports usually provide a statistical and analytical overview on the migratory phenomenon but also suggest to institutions concrete proposals for action and policy recommendations.

In the reports, case studies from the field are also described as positive working models to be applied in similar contexts. CESVI believes in the innovation and experimentation of new practices, which have already been tested efficiently. The same experiences are also described in a blog, which has a more informative approach.

CESVI is finally very active on social media, where video, pictures and testimonials are employed.

### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

Although CESVI has always been cooperative at national and international level, there is no direct involvement in the building up of Global Compacts.

The organization has indirectly been involved through participation to the Alliance, set up in 2000 in the context of the Millennium Objectives.

This campaign, carried out in the framework outlined in the Sustainable Development Objectives, addresses the general public and aims to combat world-wide poverty, cooperating in the poorer countries with development programs. It ultimately tends to promote awareness campaigns in Europe. CESVI is part of the Alliance, together with ACTED (France); Concern

Worldwide (Ireland); HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation (Switzerland); Hivos (Holland); People in Need (Czech Republic); Welthungerhilfe (Germany).

Within the Alliance, the members organizations have tried to favor a common space for dialogue and exchange of best practice, other than to open more rooms for advocacy and public deliberation.

### *Evaluation*

CESVI represents an interesting example, among Italian humanitarian NGO. It has been created in a small environment and has exponentially grown, expanding its staff, the fields of intervention and, most importantly, its partnership at national and international level.

The organization has demonstrated to be very coherent with its principles and approaches over the years and has also developed a strong commitment to cooperation with various institutions, including EU bodies and UN agencies. Even in most sensitive policy fields, including migration issues, CESVI has never been exposed to criticisms, maintaining a neutral but substantially cooperative humanitarian profile.

## **5.5 Case 4: METAdrasi (Greece)**

METAdrasi – Action for Migration and Development is a non-profit, nongovernmental organisation that was founded in December of 2009, with the mission to provide quality services for the reception and integration of refugees, migrants, and unaccompanied minors in Greece. Its headquarters is in Athens but since 2010, it has a constant presence on the mainland as well as on the Eastern Aegean islands. It currently employs approximately 350 interpreters, trained and certified by METAdrasi, in 43 languages and dialects, and a total of 352 volunteers.

Annual income is about €16.815.821 per year, from a diverse set of sources: some 41.2% from UNHCR, 1.06% from c0-funding from EU rogramms, 21.68% from International organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations (e.g., IOM, UNICEF), 26,93% from EU funds, 2.02% from bilateral institutional funders and 7.28% from private funders. Of the €16.806.264 expenditure in 2020, 50.36% went to interpretation services (in asylum procedures, reception centres at the borders, hospitals, educational activities and the COVID-19 hotline), 8.59% in education and integration of refugees, 34.98% for protection activities focusing on unaccompanied minors, and 6.07% in legal aid, support to victims of torture and migration work.

### *Refugee/migrant policy*

METAdrasi is guided by the principles of consistency, efficiency, transparency, and the flexibility to adjust to emerging needs. Its activities and intervention focus on the areas of interpretation to refugees and migrants, the protection of unaccompanied and separated children, the protection and support of other vulnerable groups and the provision of legal aid to asylum seekers, certification of victims of torture and deployment of humanitarian aid, educational programmes aiming at the education and integration of refugees and migrants.

### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

Despite the fact that METAdrasi like most of the Greek NGOs advocates the principles of humanitarianism it could be argued that it is mostly a regionalist NGO. It is one of the largest



NGOs focusing on refugee protection that operates only in Greece, in the Greek mainland, and the Greek islands. METAdrasi's work is focusing on helping those in vulnerable positions, in line with their moral or legal obligations (respectively) towards refugees and migrants. It advocates that not only the Greek state but also the EU are responsible for refugees' protection. In particular, it advances a distribution of refugees within the EU. For example, METAdrasi advocates for the processes surrounding migration management to be 'clearer and simpler, so as to provide for a constant effective and sustainable solidarity mechanism that guarantees the fair share of responsibility of Member States'. Also, METAdrasi argues that 'the forms of solidarity and incentives for relocation should be expanded and enhanced.'

METAdrasi adopts a region-centric pluralist approach in relation to migration governance as they collaborate with the EU, the Greek States and local authorities, as well as international organizations and other Civil society actors. In fact, in a commentary in respect to the New Pact on migration and asylum METAdrasi noted that, 'The role of the civil society should be given due weight and CSOs should have a formal role in the procedures'. In the same document METAdrasi highlighted that 'the role of NGOs, which possess expertise and knowledge in various fields, has not been taken into account in this context'.

#### *Field-based work*

METAdrasi is one of the largest NGO providing refugee support in Greece. Between 2010 and 2020 METAdrasi has achieved over 1.800.000 interpretation actions with over 350 interpreters were trained and certified by METAdrasi, in 47 languages and dialects, with 70 interpretation training seminars. METAdrasi has implemented programmes to support refugees in 104 hospitals and 276 schools. Also, it has supported over 17.000 unaccompanied and separated children and other vulnerable persons through its escort services from detention facilities or destitution to safe accommodation facilities. It has supported over 7.000 refugee unaccompanied and separated children through the guardianship programmes in the Greek mainland.

In addition, METAdrasi has intervened and supported more than 493 unaccompanied refugee children in shelters, 106 unaccompanied refugee children in foster families, 132 refugee teenagers lived in 26 supported independent living apartments. METAdrasi has also implemented various programmes in the Greek mainland by providing legal aid to approximately 70.000 asylum seekers, medical assessment and certification to approximately 1.400 victims of torture, Greek language lessons to approximately 4.500 refugees and support to almost 7.500 refugees in non-formal education in the islands of Lesbos and Chios, in Thessaloniki (North Greece), and 8 locations in Athens. METAdrasi has also supported 125 refugees to find work.

#### *Policy-based work*

METAdrasi advocacy activities have operated within a relatively confined framework, in order to not disrupt the ability to pursue core objectives. METAdrasi has engaged in lobbying activities, notably over reform of the asylum and migration management in Greece and the situation of the unaccompanied children. This has been done both under its own briefings, joint statements with other CSOs, and public announcements.

### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

Despite METAdrasi's longstanding engagement and work in asylum and refugee support as well as in lobbying activities, the organisation has not been involved in the process of formulating the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR). It seems that the only actor which took part in the formulation of GCM and GCR was only the Greek state while the Greek CSOs did not have any involvement in any stage of it.

### *Evaluation*

METAdrasi is very consistent with its attitudes and objectives, and this is evident from the range and quality of the activities and programmes that has been implementing since its establishment in 2009. METAdrasi identified a huge gap in refugee support and protection by the Greek state in respect to the unaccompanied and separated refugee children who were often detained in inhuman and appalling conditions in closed detention facilities in the Greek mainland or they were experiencing homelessness and precariousness. Also, METAdrasi identified the lack of interpretation services for irregular migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the detention facilities as well as the public services (e.g., hospitals). In addition, there was a huge gap in the provision of medical assessments and support of victims of torture on behalf of the Greek state. These gaps have been inflicting serious problems to refugees and violation of their human rights for years, e.g., the lack of this kind of support was resulting in refugees' restricted access to information, asylum, medical health, and treatment. However, METAdrasi since its establishment has played a crucial role in filling in these gaps in the field of interpretation, and the protection of unaccompanied children and the support of the victims of torture. METAdrasi is very consistent with its attitudes and objectives, and this is also evident from the fact that in the last decade it has extended its activities and programmes within the whole asylum procedures: for example, METAdrasi provides interpretation services in all the stages of the asylum process, as well as in the reception centres and refugee camps.

### **5.6 Case 5: Greek Council for Refugees (Greece)**

The Greek Council for Refugees is a Non- Governmental Organization, which has been active since 1989 in the field of asylum and human rights in Greece. The Council provides free legal and social advice and services to refugees and people coming from third countries who are entitled to international protection in Greece. It also focuses on vulnerable cases, such as unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking etc. The ultimate goal is their protection and their smooth integration in our country. The Council's headquarters is in Athens but implements various programmes in Athens, Thessaloniki and in the region of Evros (Orestiada, Alexandroupoli, Rodopi) but also in every entry point in Greece, such as the Aegean islands, where people in need of international protection enter in great numbers. The main sources of income come from European and co-financed Programs, by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, by grant making trusts as well as companies and individuals.

Annual income is about €6.299.137,80 per year from a diverse set of sources including private contributions of € 120,306: 51% from UNHCR, 23% from IOM, 11% from other sources, 6% from Open Society Foundations, 5% from Dutch Council for Refugees, 3% from

OXFAM, 3% World Jewish Relief. Of the € 6.293.814,59 expenditure in 2020, 10% went to administration costs, and 90% went to provision of services to refugees and asylum seekers.

### *Refugee/migrant policy*

The Greek Council for Refugees' principles and activities towards refugees are shaped and materialised in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention, the 1967 New York Protocol and in accordance with the international, EU and national legislation. Through this lens, it implements various activities for people seeking international protection by focusing on vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, victims of human trafficking and violence.

### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

Like most of the Greek NGOs advocates the principles of humanitarianism it could be argued that it is mostly a globalist NGO. The Council adopts a Global corporate pluralist approach in relation to migration governance as it collaborates mainly with international organisations the local authorities, and other Civil Society actors. It has heavily criticised the EU policies for raising barriers to international protection and the rule of law. For example, in its annual report the Council criticises the EU in respect to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum as a policy which is meant 'to intensify the drift towards dangerous approaches and practices of deterrence, focusing on push-backs and detention instead of protection'. From this angle, the Council advocates for refugees protection in the country of asylum based on international solidarity and sharing of responsibility rather than policies of 'return sponsorship', deterrence and externalisation.

The fact that the Council has a more universalised approach towards the refugee situation and therefore the belief that the international community has the responsibility to protect refugees is evident from this quote from a letter to Francis Pope in Greece in 2 December 2021: 'This is 'European countries cannot and should not deny their share of responsibility for the protection of refugees. The shift of responsibility towards other countries in exchange for financial support increases global inequalities and is morally dubious. At the same time, it exposes refugees to danger of ill treatment or places them in a state of limited protection. A Europe built on the values of Humanity, Democracy and Solidarity cannot be legitimised in constantly transferring its own responsibilities elsewhere. The same applies to some governments which unilaterally renounce their own share of responsibility and accountability.'

### *Field-based work*

The Council is one of the oldest and largest CSOs in Greece providing refugee support. Throughout 2020 it provided legal aid to 4,946 asylum seekers and refugees at all stages of the asylum procedure, counselling, and representation support before the authorities during the asylum procedure, as well as counselling and representation in civil and criminal cases related to the legal status. Psychosocial support to 2,497 asylum seekers during the asylum process, medical, educational, and housing issues in the regions of Attica, Thessaloniki, Epirus, and Thessaly, as well as in the island of Crete. Legal aid and social support to asylum seekers in detention.

The Council also manages the Safe Zones for unaccompanied minors in refugee camps in Attica with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the

funding of DG HOME - The Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. Rehabilitation services to victims of torture who have applied for asylum or are recognized refugees in Greece. Legal aid and psychological support to victims of gender-based violence.

#### *Policy-based work*

The Council has been very active in raising awareness and influencing public policy in respect to refugees and migrants, the reform of the asylum and migration management in Greece, the situation of people seeking asylum in detention, victims of trafficking and gender-based violence, and the unaccompanied children. This has been done both under its own briefings, joint statements with other CSOs, and public announcements, training materials and reports, as well as the multiple cases that it has supported to the European Court of Human Rights.

#### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

The Council is not involved in the process of formulating both the Global Compact on for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees. It seems that the only actor who took part in the formulation of the Compacts was the Greek state and the Greek CSOs did not have any involvement in any stage of it.

#### *Evaluation*

The Council is very consistent with its attitudes and objectives, and this is evident from the range and quality of the activities, advocacy, and programmes that it has been implementing since its establishment in 1989. From 1989 onwards it has highlighted and challenged shortcomings and malfunctions of the asylum system. It has also highlighted the challenges that irregular migrants are facing inside the detention centres, refugee camps and throughout the whole asylum process. The Council has systematically communicated to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe a series on selected issues, within the framework of the execution of the ECtHR judgment *M.S.S. v. Belgium and Greece*. It has been advocating and working towards a policy reform of the asylum system, and of the migration management in Greece in compliance with Geneva Convention, the New York Protocol and therefore its statute, and objectives.

### **5.7 Case 6: Care4Calais (UK)**

Care4Calais was established in the summer of 2015 in direct response to the European migrant crisis of that year, and more particularly the creation of the 'Calais Jungle' migrant camp on the outskirts of the Northern France port. The charity has no paid staff, relying solely on approximately 1,500 volunteers for all its activities in France, Belgium and the UK.

Annual income in 2020 was nearly £900,000 (€1.05m), almost all in donations: Much of this was goods and materials provided by donors, rather than money. Some 93% of the £587,000 (€687,000) expenditure went to the activities on the ground.

#### *Refugee/migrant policy within the British Red Cross' overall work*

The organisation is solely concerned with supporting refugees on both sides of the English Channel. While it has grown from its original work in the Calais Jungle, all subsequent work

has followed the same pattern of providing humanitarian aid and support for refugees, adapting to needs as required.

#### *Attitudes towards refugees/migrants*

Care4Calais presents its mission in the language of globalism. Refugees are seen as needing the same dignity as anyone else, with volunteers being “respectful of their common humanity”. This is reflected in a number of ways, beyond the original impetus to act in the face of the very harsh conditions in the Calais Jungle in 2015/6. The organisation’s remit has broadened to include efforts to change public understanding of and government policy towards refugees.

At the same time, there is a note of nation-statist language in parts of the materials produced by the organisation. Calls are made to “a fair and tolerant British society” that creates an obligation of charity in protecting those that cannot protect themselves. However, this has to be understood within the context of a clear mission to welcome, support and help integrate refugees arriving in the UK: a large section of the group’s website is devoted to presenting refugees in humanitarian terms.

#### *Field-based work*

The group’s work falls into two main categories: direct aid to refugees in sites in continental Europe and work with those seeking asylum in the UK.

Following the dismantling of the Calais Jungle in 2016, work at refugee sites has become more dispersed. Significant clusters still remain in the Calais region and along the coast into Belgium, as well as Normandy. Care4Calais provides food, clothing and sleeping bags in all these areas, as well as Paris and in the south of France on the Italian border. The French government’s dispersal policy has also resulted in temporary encampments, for which the group has developed rapid response processes to ensure provisions reach people before they are moved on. Collaborations with local groups has allowed Care4Calais to help in wider support for refugees, including childcare and social interaction in Calais and a food kitchen in Brussels. Since 2017, Care4Calais has worked with Anaya Aid to send surplus clothing to refugees in Syria, as part of a more general effort to reduce waste in the donation system.

Within the UK, the group also provides food and clothing to asylum-seekers, supporting roughly 3,500 individuals across the UK, via a number of local groups. A specialist Access Team also operates to help with initiating asylum applications and connecting individuals with full legal support. This work sits around the provision of the government and of other groups, rather than providing a full replacement.

#### *Policy-based work*

Advocacy work is relatively small in comparison to the field-based activities of Care4Calais. This is partly a function of its financial and organisation model and partly a reflection of its founding mission. However, the group has progressively built up links with other groups to campaign both generally on more welcoming attitudes towards refugees and specifically on particular issues. Recent examples include opposition to the Nationality and Borders Bill, where Care4Calais has worked with a number of other groups in the Families Together coalition to voice opposition, and making legal challenges to the UK government’s consideration of using pushbacks in the Channel.

The group has also worked to build links with media organisations, journalists and politicians to show them the lived experience of the refugees in Northern France, as part of their efforts to shift public attitudes. This has also helped with generating donations, as in 2021 with seeking support for Afghan refugees, where the group collected over £30,000 (€34,000) of clothing in short order. The group has also used small street protests to draw attention to refugee issues.

#### *Relationship with Global Compacts*

There is no evidence of engagement with either the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) or the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) by Care4Calais as an organisation. While the group frames its work in humanitarian terms, there is no obvious reliance on any international framework, instead taking a much more intuitive approach to meeting refugees' needs. As a volunteer-only group, and as one that has such a strong focus on direct aid, there is both limited capacity and little need to refer up to higher levels of international norms.

#### *Evaluation*

Care4Calais is typical of small to medium-sized organisations working on refugee issues in the UK. It provides substantial volumes of direct aid in several countries, backed up by a network of volunteers within the UK itself. The ambition of the charity has grown beyond its original remit as capacity has built up and the local situation in Calais has changed markedly, but it is clear that this has not resulted in a focus of focus or alignment with the core objectives.

At the same time, the group highlights the difficulties faced by organically-generated and -run organisations, which are typical of the smaller end of the NGO spectrum. Funding is very contingent and uncertain, while the exclusive reliance on volunteers produces risks around continuity of provision. In Care4Calais' case, concerns about its governance and decision-making have led to a formal inquiry in 2021 by the Charity Commission, the UK's regulator, that might result in significant new costs to operation. In part this reflects the growth of the group, but it also draws attention to the problems of matching up institutionalisation with a dynamic set of priorities and activities that result from that initial compulsion to help others.

## **6. Analytical insights**

The cases presented in this report highlight a number of key points that enrich and inform the conceptual framework and our understanding of the role of CSOs in the realisation of work for and about refugees and migrants.

As has been shown, the rich variety of CSO forms and approaches represents something of a double-edged sword. On the positive side, the flexibility and adaptability of individual organisations means that they are very able to fit themselves into whatever spaces might exist around other provision, whether from public or private bodies. On the downside, this requires a prior recognition of such spaces and a need for action. The organic and essentially bottom-up approach of CSOs means that their construction of a worldview is endogenous and might not match the understandings or evaluations of others.

This highlights the critical importance of keeping the very **variable conceptualisations** of situations by different CSOs central in building up any model of overall activity and action.

As discussed in the conceptual framework section, there is a key division between those groups seeing refugees or migrants as a case in themselves, and those who take a cross-cutting humanitarian categorisation, within which refugees or migrants are (sometimes) instances of another category. The cases in this report offer some illustrations of both types of CSO.

At a basic level, what distinguishes refugees and migrants is their dislocation from their original residences, i.e. they are defined by their spatial movement, typically across international boundaries. This contrasts with humanitarian categories that are marked by a lack of adequate provision of some basic right or need (e.g. safety, education, food, shelter), which can be suffered independent of whether one has moved or not. Even if in many cases there is a considerable overlap between the two categorisations, they still speak to rather different assumptions about the boundaries of what might require attention and action by any given CSO.

The six cases in this report demonstrate some aspects of this difference. For those treating refugees or migrants as the relevant category – Care4Calais, the Greek Council for Refugees and METAdrasi – the priority for action sits around the relocatory aspects of their experience, first in managing the physical (and legal) process of entering a new territory, and then in starting to integrate into a new host community. Care4Calais provides the clearest example of this, as it moved from its original mission of providing basic emergency aid in an emerging crisis situation to more broad-based action in transitional spaces and then connections through to host community integration.

By contrast, the cross-cutting humanitarian CSOs – British Red Cross, CESVI and Emergency – have frameworks of action that focus on particular types of need, into which refugees and migrants might fall. Notably this means that such groups operate across a wider – and more flexible – geographical space than is the case for the other group: even when bound to only work within a certain territory, as is the case for national Red Cross societies, extensive funding can be moved across borders to ensure resource is delivered where most appropriate. In addition, these groups take pre-formed frameworks into particular situations which can mean a need for a period of adjustment to the particular needs of refugees and migrants and which do not necessarily require an end-to-end engagement with those individuals' relocations. Most obviously, Emergency's focus on medical treatment is one that is evidently critical, but which cannot simply be structured onto the life experience of someone fleeing persecution.

Crucially, neither type of CSO is optimal for refugee or migrant needs. While the first group are better able to provide a continuity of contact and support, they often lack the depth of expertise or resource to match the level of provision possible at different stages by the second group. With this in mind, we should also note the critical importance of **collaboration** between individual CSOs.

The diversity of conceptualisations means a similar diversity of activities and capacities. While this might be seen as the production of redundant overlapping between groups, in practice this is an issue primarily limited to crisis situations where coordination can take time to emerge. In more stable settings, CSOs appear very willing to engage in interactions and cooperation with other bodies: all of the CSOs in this report have extensive networks that they have built up, both on the ground and within the sector. Those cooperations are typically driven by either a need to access specialist or additional resource, or by a desire to amplify lobbying and campaigning messages (be that on addressing conditions in refugee camps in Greece or

changes to legal frameworks in the UK). This provides something of a counterpoint to the earlier comments on the impact of conceptualisation, since CSOs rarely close themselves off from others working on pertinent activities, even if their starting point has been rather different.

However, all of this work is framed by one major contingent constraint: **resources**. None of the CSOs discussed here has a completely reliable source of funding their work. While larger bodies such as British Red Cross or the Greek Council are able to access significant sums through national or international sources there is still a considerable exposure to changing income, something that is only more pressing for the smaller organisations. Similarly, all the groups here rely in large part on the labour of volunteers, rather than salaried employees: even prior to the Covid pandemic, ensuring an on-going pool of individuals willing to make the necessary commitments of time and effort was a major challenge. Here again, size provides some protection, albeit without the level of certainty that public bodies might be able to have, given their more institutionalised access to public funding.

The conditionality of resources matters because of the scale of **direct aid** that CSOs provide to refugees and migrants. Whether regarding emergency aid or social integration activity, the richness of CSO diversity, experience and expertise has been well illustrated by the cases in this report. As has been discussed already, precisely because CSOs are outside of public agencies, they are much better placed to provide support that is driven by refugees' and migrants' needs, rather than what state bodies might have created, which can be either incomplete or poorly-designed for individual needs. Even when handling an aspect that might conceivably be dealt with by governments – as with the Red Cross's work with the IOM on family reunification – the connection of that activity into a wider set of actions on social integration maximises both its chances of success and its impact on individuals' lives. Again, the ability of CSOs to be flexible both internally and as part of a wider community means that they are essential in helping refugees and migrants navigate a highly complex environment of legal, welfare, health, education and economic matters, in ways that governmental bodies would not be able to substitute. Bodies such as METAdrasi or Care4Calais offer structured paths for individuals to move out of crisis or high-pressure situations into positions of relative security where they can begin to reengage with society more fully.

The cases also highlight the extent to which CSOs are **key voices in national debates** about refugees and migrants. A key part of their importance is the extent to which they allow refugees and migrants to speak with their own voices, something that has been a long-standing challenge in all three countries considered here. CSOs either showcase the lived experiences of such individuals or provide platforms for them to speak directly to policymakers, media or the wider public about both specific challenges and the broader picture. Typically, CSOs have tied their campaigning to particular events or issues, rather than taking a more generic approach: the rapid growth of migration flows across the Mediterranean from 2015 prompted repeated campaigns by both the Italian and Greek CSOs discussed here, while the UK's proposed reform of legislation has been a more recent driver of work by the British groups. While it is hard to identify any clear examples among our sample of where a CSO has directly and successfully changed public policy, they still remain critically important in moving issues up in prominence and salience, and in providing informed contributions to media debate.

Finally, the cases have underlined the value of CSOs in **making the Global Compacts more effective** instruments. If it was primarily international-level CSOs that were directly



involved in the lobbying for, and formulation of, the GCM and GCR, then it is national and local groups that find themselves at the forefront of driving implementation, even if this is still at an early stage. Strikingly, among our six groups only the British Red Cross and Emergency appear to have engaged with the Global Compacts directly to date; not coincidentally, these are also the two largest CSOs we consider and so are better placed to consider activity that requires engagement with the broader international order. In both these cases, the priority has been on placing the GCM/GCR within the wider set of international obligations – such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the UN Convention on Refugees – to better enact the nominal obligations that signatories have committed to. In this sense, the Compacts are not transformative, but incremental and another means by which CSOs might leverage political and policy change. If smaller CSOs have demonstrated little interest to date, then this might be partly explained by their relatively high need to deal with both resourcing and operational demands, as already discussed. However, the connectedness of the CSO community – both within and across national boundaries – means that the scope for further awareness raising and utilisation by individual groups is likely to grow over time. Again, the particular locus of CSOs to represent refugees’ and migrants’ own voices means that they are also likely to be critical in the on-going debate about effective implementation and enforcement of the Compacts.

## **7. Policy implications**

This report has highlighted not only the diversity of CSO involvement in supporting refugees and migrants, but also their importance. That importance is not simply one with relevance to those individuals themselves, but also to the functioning of the broader international system of refugee and migrant protection. With this in mind, it is useful to draw out a number of key implications for national and international policy-makers working in this field.

### *How we frame and discuss refugees and migrants matters*

There is no one correct way to define refugees and migrants, but rather a wide range of possibilities, each of which comes with a set of assumptions and priorities. The variety of CSOs’ understanding of such individuals, their needs and the best way to address them is testament to this. It is important to recognise this for two main reasons. Firstly, it opens up possibilities for interactions and cooperations between groups – public and in civil society – that might not be otherwise apparent. By acknowledging that others see the world through a different lens, we might discover synergies for effective action that better address individuals’ needs. Secondly and more negatively, it allows us to identify where there are gaps or shortcomings in provision, either within one’s own organisation or across bodies. In both cases it is only through a sensitivity and self-reflection on the assumptions that are made and the language that is used that it is possible to avoid narrow and incomplete action or groupthink.

### *CSO involvement is contingent on resourcing*

CSOs come from civil society and the interests and concerns of individuals in that society. The wide range of groups that exist reflect the wide range of things that those individuals consider to be worth acting on. But the main constraint on action is resourcing: if money or personnel are not available, then it is very hard to engage in sustained activity. As a result, even if CSOs contain the potential to be a flexible and prompt pathway for addressing emergent needs, then

that potential requires access to resources. While some of those might be accessible from within the existing CSO community, there is an evident need for public bodies and international organisations to also play their part, through various funding vehicles or sub-contracting.

*Not supporting CSOs will create significant problems for states*

This report has highlighted some of the very substantial contributions that individual CSOs have made in recent years for refugees and migrants, from sea rescues and emergency aid through to family reunion and helping people become integrated and productive members of host countries. Much of this work is of a nature that public bodies would be either only able to do with major changes in operating systems and funding, or simply unable to provide at all. States therefore need to recognise that failure to enable CSOs to operate within their territory comes at a significant price to governments, in terms of increased demands on public bodies and more critical situations. Ideally, states need to move beyond simply tolerating CSO activity towards a more collaborative relationship.

*CSOs are a key means for refugees and migrants to have a voice*

More than most other groups, refugees and migrants suffer from a lack of voice. Their movement across national boundaries, uncertainties over their legal status and the frequently highly fraught conditions under which they live all conspire to make it very difficult for them to organise, let alone to seek representation or to lobby. CSOs represent the first line of engagement in many cases, and also provide various mechanisms to allow refugees and migrants to speak for themselves. Both nationally and internationally, acknowledging that particular opportunity offered by CSOs can be a vital means of starting to close the gap in representation at a time when systems of protection are under closer scrutiny and challenge.

*CSOs can help to make the Global Compacts more meaningful*

The Global Compacts on Migrants and on Refugees are currently rather disconnected from much of the work of CSOs on the ground. While large groups have begun to engage with the agendas that the Compacts have launched, their priority – and the likely priority of the entire CSO community – is to turn words into actions. As the British Red Cross has noted, implementation needs a ‘whole of society’ approach, in which states both recognise this and act to draw the widest possible circle of partners to translate commitments into substantive policy and public buy-in. CSOs are a critical and indispensable part of this process, given their work and their representation and efforts to sidestep or ignore them are likely to result in a weakening of the potential impact of the Compacts.

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