



# Training Kit on Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations: HANDBOOK

## Introduction



This publication forms part of the project ‘Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations’, funded by the European Union’s Erasmus+ Programme.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the partner organisations and do not represent the opinion or position of the European Union Programmes Agency, Erasmus+ or the European Commission.

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***Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led  
Community Organisations***



# Foreword

Welcome and thanks for picking up this **Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations** (RCOs). The **Training Kit** is the product of months of inclusive and community-based discussions on the central role played by refugee-led groups in refugee protection strategies. It acknowledges that the prevalent advocacy model dominated by civil society organisations having little or no significant refugee participation is an inefficient one.

Firstly, it risks taking into account the lived impact of laws and policies on the very people for whom they are made. Secondly, it often relegates refugees and their inclusion to tokenism and representation models that strengthen – at times to an institutional level – the understanding and consequential treatment of refugees as disempowered or vulnerable ‘beneficiaries’, ‘target groups’ or ‘persons of concern’.

The discussions that led to this **Training Kit’s** publication, complemented by existing literature, were based on a firm commitment to adjust this advocacy model with the ultimate aim of improving the quality of protection enjoyed by refugees.

It is therefore with great pleasure that we are sharing this **Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations**. We hope that it will be a useful and enriching tool in your work with refugee-led groups, and that it will stimulate an exciting discussion within your own network on

how to maximise your training activities with follow-up strategies and initiatives.

We wish you the best of luck and look forward to receiving news of your training events! If you would like to share your experiences with us, we would love to hear them...just get in touch with comments and feedback!

*“If Europe is to move towards more inclusive, rights-respecting and dignified laws and policies, both internally and externally, refugees must be elevated to the status of equal advocating partners through organised (formal or informal) community organisations and the role of RCOs must be identified as one of the key interlocutors between refugees and host communities.”*

# Acknowledgements & Abbreviations

## Acknowledgements

This **Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations** (RCOs) was made possible thanks to the invaluable input of so many people. In all the countries covered by the Erasmus+ project, the project partners engaged in interviews, focus groups, peer review meetings and other discussion activities to ensure that our methodology and content are relevant and effective.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who participated in these activities and who shared their knowledge and expertise with us.

We also thank Erasmus+ for funding our project, and the representatives of Malta's **European Union Programmes Agency** (EUPA) for their constant support and feedback.

## Abbreviations

CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CoE	Council of Europe
ECRE	European Council for Refugees and Exiles
EU	European Union
EU MS, MS	European Union Member State
IOM	International Organisation for Migration

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RCO	Refugee-led Community Organisation
RSD	Refugee-Status Determination
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

*Throughout this Training Kit, unless otherwise stated or unless the context otherwise requires, the term 'refugees' is intended and should be interpreted to include asylum-seekers, beneficiaries of refugee status, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and beneficiaries of Temporary Protection status.*



# The Erasmus+ Project (2019 - 2022)

## Background

This **Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations** was jointly produced by 8 NGOs, funded by the European Union's Erasmus+ programme. The project ran from 31 December 2019 through till 30 June 2022.

The idea for the project was born of the wish to improve refugee protection through the active inclusion of refugees and refugee-led groups in advocacy activities.

We noted that whilst in some EU Member States (MS) refugee-led groups are solidly established, active and engaged, in many other MS advocacy initiatives targeting refugees' protection needs are largely or exclusively organised by non-refugee-led groups.

We also noted the absence of refugee-led groups in negotiations and discussions being held at the EU level.

With this context in mind, we set out to explore a methodology that would ultimately see a dramatic improvement in the quality of human rights enjoyment

by refugees. We also wanted to ensure that our project did not attempt to reinvent the wheel, but that it could build on the vast amounts of lessons learnt in this sector.

## Partners

The Erasmus+ project was led by Maltese NGO aditus foundation and implemented in partnership with the following NGOs:

- ➡ Cyprus Refugee Council
- ➡ Dutch Council for Refugees
- ➡ European Council on Refugees and Exiles
- ➡ Greek Forum of Refugees
- ➡ Jesuit Refugee Service (Malta)
- ➡ Mosaico – Azioni per i rifugiati
- ➡ Syrian Volunteers Netherlands (Associated Partners)

## Publications

During the project's first phase, we researched and published reports on the status of RCOs in our respective MS and at EU level. These reports were prepared on the basis of desk research, interviews and focus groups with various partners including government agencies (asylum offices, reception agencies, integration units, etc.), refugee-led organisations, non-refugee-led organisations, academics and international organisations (UNHCR, IOM, etc.).

These **National Reports** on the status of refugee-led community organisations covering Malta, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and the Netherlands, and the EU-level report are available at the [project's website](#).

Following their publication, these reports were the basis of dissemination and awareness-raising articles published in the MS covered by the project and in the **ECRE Weekly Bulletin**. All articles may also be accessed via the [project's website](#).

The national and EU reports led to the publication of a **Comparative Report**, where trends and commonalities were identified with a view to creating the **Training Kit's** building blocks. Together with the Comparative Report, a **Literature Review on Refugee-Led Community Organisations** was published in February 2021.

The **Literature Review** gathers over 30 publications on the theme of RCOs, providing summaries of the recommendations and conclusions found in key documents.

## Peer Review

In early 2022 we organised peer review events in which the draft Training Kit was presented to our partners and stakeholders. The aim of these meetings was to stimulate and gather input on the Training Kit, whilst also to continue the conversation on the importance of supporting RCOs.

The input we received from the peer review activities was processed and ultimately influenced the final discussions on the present Training Kit.



# Photos from the project...





# Values & Principles

The organisations putting together this **Training Kit** are all NGOs with a mission to improve the quality of human rights enjoyed by refugees. It is with this philosophy in mind that we designed this **Training Kit**, as not merely a tool to support the efficiency and impact of refugee-led groups, but also to promote a rights-based approach within the ethos of RCOs themselves.

This **Training Kit** is guided by the principles and values enshrined in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, complemented by other international instruments such as the **Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees**, the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**, the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**, the **European Convention of Human Rights** and the **EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**.

In particular, this **Training Kit** enshrines and promotes the following core values:

- ➡ All refugees are to be treated with dignity and respect for their humanity.
- ➡ All refugees are equally entitled to all their fundamental human rights and are to be treated without discrimination.
- ➡ The diversity within refugee communities must be acknowledged in all activities affecting them. This includes laws and policies, as also relationships between refugees and the entities they engage with.
- ➡ We support the empowerment of refugees and of refugee communities, in order for them to take control and representation of their lives and futures.

Although the Kit itself does not contain a module dedicated exclusively to human rights issues, instruments and themes, it is clear that the entire **Training Kit** is ultimately a human rights education tool.

We therefore encourage you to reflect on these principles prior to the organisation of any training session, and to identify key elements that need to be addressed or that could arise in the context of discussions during the individual modules.

# Refugee-led Community Organisations

Ample research highlights the crucial role played by refugee-led community organisations (RCOs) in their contexts.

They provide bridge support to newly-arrived refugees, facilitate swifter integration by offering information on procedures and daily life, provide language and cultural orientation training, support refugees wishing to contribute to host societies and, generally, assist in the normalisation process of making a host community become home.

In situations of hesitation, or fear of loss of cultural identity, RCOs play a role of engaging with community members to discuss the advantages of integration, whilst emphasising the opportunities of maintaining one's cultural identity.

Together with promoting engagement with the wider community, RCOs also see their role as uniting and strengthening the community, promoting its culture, faith and language, building confidence and fostering a creative, active and healthy community.

RCOs often define their purpose as that of supporting the integration process by engaging with public services and the wider community, with campaigning as a key component of their missions.

Campaigning often covers issues such as asylum procedures, reception conditions, human trafficking, LGBTIQ+ asylum-seekers, detention, unaccompanied minors, women and anti-racism.

Generally, there seems to be a common purpose of influencing public opinion towards a more accurate and respectful perception of refugees.

A central discussion held within the Erasmus+ project, and reflected in all the project's publications, focused on a working definition of 'refugee-led community organisations'.

Whilst wanting to ensure a definition that requires or at least implies the active participation of refugees within the organisation, we were acutely aware of the risk of over-emphasising the notion of representativeness.

On the basis of extensive research into working definitions and input from the project partners, particularly the refugee-led partners, we agreed to rely on the definition proposed by the **Refugee Council** (United Kingdom) in the 2018 publication '**A bridge to life in the UK: Refugee-led community organisations and their role in integration**'.

This definition informs our approach to this **Training Kit** and below we explain in more detail how the definition's various components are reflected in the Training Kit's values, content and methodology.

*“...organisations led mainly by people from communities whose members include significant numbers of refugees and their descendants, and whose activities and services address the needs of refugees.”*



## What's in the Training Kit?

The **Training Kit** is made up of a number of components, working together to ensure a comprehensive and accessible experience for both trainers and learners.

The Training Kit is composed of 3 elements:

- ➔ **Trainer Handbook: Introduction** (.pdf);
- ➔ **Training Content and Handbook for National Advocacy** (.ppt and .pdf);
- ➔ **Training Content and Handbook for EU-Level Advocacy** (.ppt and .pdf)

The **Training Content** components are a series of PowerPoint presentations, one per module, containing the materials intended to be used during each training session. Some of the presentations are to be used as downloaded, without modifications, whilst others require you to add information that is relevant to your specific context.

We designed the Training Kit as a whole, so we urge you to avoid amending those parts that are not intended for adaptation as this might affect the Training Kit's overall effectiveness.

The Erasmus+ project produced the presentations in English, Italian, Greek and Dutch.

The **Trainer Handbooks** complement the presentations. You'll find a step-by-step guide on how best to implement a training programme using the Kit. Together with these introductory sections, the Handbooks will walk you through the entire Content.

The layout of the Handbooks is user-friendly: it follows the slides in the **Training Content**, making it easier for you to browse through it whilst having the slides open on your computer.

At the time of publishing, the Handbooks are only available in English.

## Why 2 training programmes: national & EU?

The **Training Kit** is intended for refugees and refugee-led groups keen on engaging in advocacy activities.

Yet the creation of refugee law and policy throughout the EU is no longer the exclusive prerogative of national governments.

With the **Common European Asylum System** (CEAS), the EU has been seeking to harmonise the way refugees are treated across EU territory through the adoption of legal and policy instruments governing various aspects of refugees' experiences.

The two fora – national and EU – are clearly linked and often interdependent, and the advocacy skills and information required to engage with them might be similar.

Yet it is important to acknowledge the particularities of the two regimes and provide support to those RCOs wishing to engage in either, or both.

On the basis of the issues your learners want to tackle, you must answer the following question: *“am I organising a training on national-level advocacy or for the EU level?”*

## Who is the Kit intended for?

...any person, organisation or entity wishing to actively participate in this supporting the empowerment of RCOs!

We hope that the **Training Kit** is accessible to a wide group of interested people and organisations, whilst at the same time guaranteeing a high level of expertise and value.

The modules do not require you to engage professionals for their delivery, yet of course they are best-delivered by persons who are knowledgeable in the relevant themes.



# Photos from the project...





## How do you adapt the Kit for your own context?

As mentioned above, many parts of the **Training Kit** are adaptable to your context. For example, the module covering national asylum systems is clearly intended to be relevant to the EU MS where the training participants are active in.

Whenever such an adaptation is possible or even necessary, the Handbook will clearly indicate it in the relevant section covering the particular module.

## What is the Kit's training method?

This Kit is intended to be accessible, intelligible and relevant.

It is targeting trainers and participants who might or might not be too well-acquainted with the complexity of asylum terminology, procedures, entities; the intricacies of establishing and running an effective organisation; and the challenges of leading or representing other persons.

Acknowledging this learning context and exploring ways of working with it was a key point of our discussions, and we hope that the Kit meets our objectives! The following tools are used:

- ➡ Powerpoint presentations with textual and visual information including videos;
- ➡ A central trainer or group of trainers, with the possibility of inviting guest speakers;
- ➡ Facilitated group discussions;
- ➡ Preparatory and/or follow-up assignments;
- ➡ Exercises, assignments and practical activities.

It is clear that it will be up to individual trainers or training organisations to establish which training methodology best suits the particular group of learners.

Nonetheless, we would always underline the need for our **Training Kit** and all training activities using it or based on it to be as accessible, intelligible and relevant as possible to refugees and/or refugee led groups.

## Participation Certificates?

Yes, a template for the **Certificate of Participation** is included in the **Training Content** package. You may add details onto it before printing. Since the Kit was developed with Erasmus+ funding, please do not remove or amend key elements of the template.

## How many learners should you aim for?

You will be more effective if you keep the group small and contained. We suggest not exceeding 15 learners, as this number allows you to organise group discussions and activities whilst simultaneously not having too large a crowd. Larger numbers over a long period could also result in many drop-outs.

## How long does it all take?

At the start of each module, we give you an idea of how much time we estimate it would require to implement...excluding breaks!

We recommend that the national-level training is not compacted in a few days but spread out. The EU-level training may be compacted in a shorter time-frame, for example where it is being implemented to an RCO visiting Brussels.

- ➡ Don't stretch it too much! However, leave at least 2 months between the last 2 modules as there is an assignment that requires time for completion.
- ➡ Design a training programme that matches your participants' availabilities. Discuss logistics with them!
- ➡ Leave some days between modules, to give participants sufficient time to digest and process content.
- ➡ Dedicate at least 10 minutes at the beginning of each module for a brief recap and summary of the previous module;
- ➡ Use the Q&A session to allow learners to bring their own experiences into the discussion on the Module's theme.
- ➡ End each session with debriefing and evaluation. We've provided you with tools for this in each module!

# Who should you be targeting?

Learner Profile		Trainer Profile	
Refugees?	Ideal!	Knows the asylum context?	Ideally yes.
Other migrants?	Could be useful, but would need trimming.	Training experience?	Depends. You could have a group of trainers with different profiles...as long as properly coordinated.
Interest in advocacy?	Definitely!	Refugee background?	Fantastic and strongly recommended!
Experience in advocacy?	Great, but not necessary!	One or many?	A group approach would be best since the Kit is sometimes legal, sometimes social, sometimes political...
Registered NGO?	Not required.		
Train-the-trainer potential?	Would be excellent, but it's fine if not.		
Same country of origin or mixed?	Really depends on your context, but always try to be inclusive.		
Ages? Genders? Diversity issues?	Up to you, but be as inclusive as possible! Either mixed groups, or sessions just for the LGBTIQ+ community...you know best.		



## Ok, so now what?

You will need the following minimum resources:

- ➡ A Handbook...National or EU?
- ➡ The **Training Content** presentations! Decide whether you want to share them with the learners before the sessions.
- ➡ Your trainer(s) and any guest speaker(s)!
- ➡ Your participants.
- ➡ An informal, comfortable and accessible space to deliver the training. Try to find a space that allows for breakout sessions or small group discussions. Be creative and check if RCOs or other NGOs have such spaces.
- ➡ Refreshments for breaks.
- ➡ A computer, a projector and speakers.
- ➡ An internet connection.
- ➡ Optionally, writing materials for the participants.
- ➡ Flip chart, coloured markers, sticky notes.

## Conclusion

We wish you the best of luck with your training activities!

If you would like to share your experiences with us, we would love to hear about them...just get in touch with comments, feedback and photos!

When sharing info and news on your event, don't forget our hashtag [#RCOtrainingkit\\_refugees](#)

## Certificates of Participation

In the **Training Content** package you'll find a PowerPoint slide with a template for a **Certificate of Participation**.

Use this template to acknowledge your participants' hard work! Add your own logo and other logos you might need to add in (e.g. of a funder, etc.).

Do not remove the Erasmus+ logo!

## Module Evaluation Form

You'll also find a PowerPoint slide with a template for a **Module Evaluation Form**. Use this template when you ask your participants to evaluate each module, in the last minutes of each session, adding your own questions to the blank rows.

Use the **Module Evaluation Form** as part of an on-going evaluation conversation with your participants.

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