

**Project name:** From the border to integration – support for realizing the guaranteed rights of refugees and migrants in the Republic of Croatia

**Project promotor:** Earthlings – Are You Syrious (AYS)

**Project implementation period:** 01.01.2021. – 31.12.2023.

**Total project value:** € 240,000 of which € 120,000 was provided through financial support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway within the European Economic Area and Norwegian grants

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**Link to relevant website:** areyousyrious.eu

### **Project summary:**

The problems that refugees face in Croatia begin with the very act of crossing the border, where they are exposed to police violence and illegal expulsion from the country. Those who manage to stay in Croatia and seek asylum wait up to two years to have their processes resolved. During this period, they do not have access to language courses or other integration programs. They often lack basic information on how the system works, and do not even have access to free legal aid. Once, despite all obstacles, they manage to obtain asylum, which unfortunately only minorities succeed in, the process of their integration remains difficult due to prejudices, low employment, language problems, insufficient qualifications, and difficult access to health, education and accommodation.

The Are You Syrious Association brings together about two hundred volunteers, including many highly qualified experts in supportive and related professions, on whose many years of experience the work of our teams is based. The association is led by three experienced NGO managers, together with a full-time project manager and two permanently engaged professional associates. Volunteers and staff of the association are continuously improving in order to competently respond to the challenges faced by our customers, which we detect in our daily work at the AYS Integration Center in Zagreb.

The project FROM THE BORDER TO INTEGRATION is the result of a holistic approach to the problems that refugees face from the moment they arrive in the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Project activities begin by monitoring access to the asylum system, including collecting testimonies of victims of illegal expulsions and reporting on illegalities, and informing those who manage to stay in the Republic of Croatia about the steps needed to exercise their rights. In addition to individual consultations, we offer asylum seekers and asylum seekers humanitarian aid, Croatian language courses and job search support, and their children individual support in learning and integration. With the targeted presentation of the association, we refresh the base of volunteers for students and experts in helping professions. We also include retirees in our activities, whose knowledge and life experience provide a valuable balance to the theoretical knowledge of the younger volunteers, and also contribute to a better understanding of different generations of our users.

With the engagement of a large number of volunteers and regular communication with relevant institutions, we enable users to overcome language and other barriers faster, in order to become well-integrated members of our society as soon as possible.