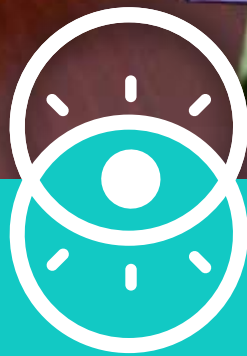


SPAIN



I GET  
YOU

Promoting best practices to prevent racism  
and xenophobia towards forced migrants  
through community building

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**Cover photo**  
Migrant youths and volunteers play cards as part of the Gauen project in Bilbao, Spain. (Still taken from the Spanish *I Get You* video: Denis Bosnic / JRS Europe)



## I GET YOU SPAIN

National chapter no.9 of the European *I Get You* report

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>03</b>
1.1	Context: Racism and Xenophobia towards Forced Migrants in Spain	03
<b>2</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>07</b>
2.1	Mapping Phase	07
2.2	Qualitative Interview Phase	07
2.3	Limitations	07
<b>3</b>	<b>Data Findings</b>	<b>08</b>
3.1	Summary of Quantitative Results from Mapping Phase	08
3.2	Results of the Qualitative Phase	08
<b>4</b>	<b>Inspiring Community Building Initiatives</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Policy Recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>

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# Introduction

Over the last two decades, Spain has worked to include and integrate an increasing number of newcomers into its society. However, more recently the economic crisis and some political changes have hampered efforts of the civil society and locals to welcome forced migrants in the best possible way. In Spain, the numbers of migrants transiting through and arriving to the country during the so-called refugee crisis were not comparable to other European countries, mostly given its geographic location and forced migrants' desires to journey to Northern Europe. Nevertheless, different civil society organizations have created Community Building Initiatives (CBIs) to support the social inclusion of forced migrants in the Spanish society.

The Servicio Jesuita a Migrantes (SJM) Spain, with decades of experience in advocacy, accompaniment and service to forced migrants, has conducted the research of *I Get You* in Spain in collaboration of the different organisations that integrate the SJM network. SJM identified 31 CBIs that represent the spirit of hospitality that *I Get You* tries to promote. These initiatives do not only focus on reception, but also try to have a wider approach contributing to the social inclusion of forced migrants and to prevent discrimination, racism and xenophobia. Although Spanish citizens generally feel positively about migration from non-EU states, there is still much work to be done for true societal mutual integration and cohesion. Here, gaps and discrepancies can mainly be found regarding economic status, choice of occupation and societal hierarchy between newly arrived forced migrants and the general population of Spain.

*I Get You* is based on the idea that by promoting social inclusion of forced migrants it is possible to prevent racism and xenophobia in society.

SJM has seen that CBIs in Spain are contributing to this objective by creating relationships between forced migrants and local communities in neighbourhoods with high levels of social exclusion. The research shows that Spanish initiatives seek to give forced migrants the tools to reach self-sufficiency, autonomy and a higher level of self-esteem to take control of their lives and to help them to contribute positively to society.

## 1.1 CONTEXT: RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA TOWARDS FORCED MIGRANTS IN SPAIN

The recent history of emigration and immigration from and to Spain is marked by different waves of change and intensity. In the early part of the 1990s, during the economic boom, Spain received many migrants, experiencing one of the largest waves of migration in European history. However, by 1998, it was one of the EU Member States with the lower percentage of migrants, less than 2 percent of the population having been born abroad. This low number shifted again by 2005, when, with almost four million migrants who represented 8.5 percent of the total population, Spain was ranked fourth in the EU member states according to the number of foreign born population.<sup>1</sup> In 2015, as consequence of the financial crisis, the number of Spanish people, as well as migrants, leaving the country began to increase and there was also a downturn in the number of people who came to Spain in search of a better life, even reaching a modest negative inflow in the year after.<sup>2</sup>

Since 2015, there has been an increase in the number of people arriving to the southern border of Spain, but this increase does not reach the figures of other European countries such as the Balkan countries, Italy or Greece. According to the

<sup>1</sup> Velasco, J.C. *El impacto de la inmigración en España – consideraciones generales*. 2006. <http://www.madrimasd.org/blogs/migraciones/2006/05/12/22082>

<sup>2</sup> Bruegel. *The remarkable case of Spanish immigration*. 2015.

International Organization for Migration (IOM), by the end of September 2017, 15,942 forced migrants –11,631 by sea and 4,311 by land–reached Spain compared to 13,246 in all of 2016.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, figures for 2017 show that there are almost 4.5 million foreign born inhabitants out of a total population of 46.5 million. From this population, nearly 2 million are citizens from other EU Member States. In addition, there are another 2 million Spanish citizens that have been born in another country, so the population with a migration background is higher than what it can be surmised from the data alone due to the nationalisation process.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1.1 Forced migrants' situation in Spain

Forced migrants in Spain face multiple obstacles that prevent their successful integration. Access to labour market is a key element in the process of integration. While in 2007 forced migrants had many possibilities to find jobs, the economic crisis reverted this situation, and between 2007 and 2012 migrants' employment rate reduced by 20 percent, more than double the reductions that Spanish citizens experienced at the same time.<sup>5</sup> Eurostat data and research from Bruegel confirm, "The financial crisis led to a disproportionate increase in unemployment rates among migrants."<sup>6</sup> This is partly explained because many forced migrants worked in sectors especially affected by the crisis, such as the service industry and construction. The unemployment rate of migrant population today is still higher (24 percent) than the national average –18 percent– and poverty rate for non-EU nationals is 55.3 percent, while for the Spanish population is 18.8 percent.

This situation responds partially to the adverse characteristics of Spanish labour market but it also responds to the absence of a model for integration of forced migrants in the long

term. Spain never adopted the implementing regulation of the Asylum Law (2009) to provide the legal framework to define the socioeconomic integration model. Instead, there are annual rigid plans based on financial availability of funds each year. The recognition of foreign qualifications and diplomas is key for labour integration. However, this process is quite opaque and tiring and carries significant costs in terms of time and money. The process of academic recognition of studies can take between two to four years, depending on the case. Finally, Spain is one of the European countries where the asylum process is most complex. It can take two years or more to obtain a resolution and this affects adversely labour possibilities, employers only offering temporal contracts and asylum seekers losing the possibility to credit or improve their studies through grants, for example.

The migrant population also faces less coverage by social protection mechanisms due to the contributive logic of more precarious employment, less trajectory at the formal economy and greater difficulties to access quality jobs. Moreover, migrants often lack the support of their families and the community networks, an element that has been essential for Spanish citizens to compensate the cuts in public spending in the last years. The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion is not meeting the needs of the migrant population neither promoting migrants' integration.<sup>7</sup> Finally, there has been a reinforcement of migrant rejection policies, such as push-backs in the border cities of Ceuta and Melilla ('devoluciones en caliente') and detention.<sup>8</sup>

### 1.1.2 Discrimination in Spain

Spanish citizens seem to be more tolerant to migration than other EU Member States. 52 percent of Spanish feel positively about migration from non-EU states, while only 44

<sup>3</sup> International Organization for Migration. *Migration Flows – Europe*. 2017. <http://migration.iom.int/europe/>

<sup>4</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística. *Demographic studies*. [http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica\\_C&cid=1254736176951&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735572981](http://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/es/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736176951&menu=ultiDatos&idp=1254735572981)

<sup>5</sup> OECD. *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In*. 2015. <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/press-note-Espana.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Bruegel. *The remarkable case of Spanish immigration*. 2015. <http://bruegel.org/2015/12/the-remarkable-case-of-spanish-immigration/>

<sup>7</sup> Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM). *Country Brief: Undocumented Migrants and the Europe 202 Strategy: Making Social Inclusion a Reality for all Migrants in Spain*. February 2016. [http://picum.org/picum.org/uploads/publication/CountryBrief\\_Spain\\_Final\\_EN.pdf](http://picum.org/picum.org/uploads/publication/CountryBrief_Spain_Final_EN.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> SOS Racismo. *Annual Report on Racism in Spanish State 2016*. Pages 121-155. 2016. <http://www.sosracismomadrid.es/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016-Informe-Anual-2016-definitivo.pdf>

percent of EU citizens in average feel positively about it.<sup>9</sup> In addition, Spain experienced less hate speech targeting Muslim migrants than other EU Member States.<sup>10</sup> The Committee for the Elimination of Racial or Ethnic Discrimination (Consejo para la Eliminación de la Discriminación racial o étnica) recommended to avoid using discriminatory, racist or xenophobic speech in election campaigns, which showed the public administration's commitment to the fight against hate speech.

Despite Spanish populations' relatively positive perception to migrants at the height of the so-called refugee crisis,<sup>11</sup> and the non-existence of extreme right and xenophobic political parties with parliamentary representation, Spain has institutionalised and politicalised racist occurrences. Also present is micro-racist attitudes and poor practices regarding the treatment of migration in the media and in the public debate. In particular, there has been a growing number of fake or exaggerated news stories about migrants, that have impacted the public opinions about migrants in Spain.<sup>12</sup> Foreign nationals and Muslim migrants are increasingly reported to the police or stopped by the police due to alleged 'suspicious behaviour' or suspicion of radicalisation.<sup>13</sup> It is common for the police to stop people based on race and ethnicity during routine police contacts on the street or in public spaces.

After the last terrorist attacks in Paris, Brussels, London and, more recently, Cambrils and Barcelona, speeches about fear and security have multiplied. The so-call refugee crisis combined with the terrorist attacks and the widespread use of the expression 'radical Islam' have increased the negative perception of Muslims in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

In 2015, there were in Spain 1,328 hate crimes, of which 505 were racist and xenophobic crimes.<sup>15</sup> However, it is important to point out that these figures can be misleading since undocumented migrants are reluctant to report crimes for fear of arrest and deportation due to their irregular status. The Spanish authorities require a person to show his or her ID or residence permit when reporting a crime.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, since 2015, sporadic attacks against refugees, migrants or mosques have increased by over 30 percent.<sup>17</sup>

In Spain, racism and discrimination also have an economic dimension, where the faltering economy is used as an excuse for people who are stuck in informal jobs, while the government does not do enough to develop adequate policy responses for underemployment. There are also some other forms of subtler discrimination that leads to racial segmentation, such as the case of people with a foreign background who cannot find a job that matches their educational level.

There is additional space for concern as attitudes and policies towards migration have begun to change in the last years. The prolonged economic crisis, the high unemployment rates and the conservative government in power since November 2011 are having a clear impact on integration as well as on the rise of discrimination.<sup>18</sup> An example of these negative policies was the exclusion of undocumented migrants from the Spanish healthcare system starting from 24 April 2012, when the Spanish government passed the 16/2012 Royal Decree on "Urgent Measures to Insure the Sustainability of the National Health System (SNS)". Although the government has since reconsidered its effectiveness and undocumented migrants can

9 European Commission. *Eurobarómetro Standard 86: Informe nacional*. Autumn 2016. <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/yearFrom/1974/yearTo/2017/surveyKy/2137>

10 European Network Against Racism. *Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-2016*.

[http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport\\_2015x2016\\_long\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport_2015x2016_long_low_res.pdf)

11 *ibid.*

12 *ibid.*

13 *ibid.*

14 *ibid.*

15 <http://www.enar-eu.org/Racially-motivated-crimes-2011-2015>

16 European Network Against Racism. *Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-2016*. [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport\\_2015x2016\\_long\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/shadowreport_2015x2016_long_low_res.pdf)

17 SOS Racismo. *Annual Report on Racism in Spanish State 2016*. Pages 121-155. <http://www.sosracismomadrid.es/web/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/2016-Informe-Anual-2016-definitivo.pdf>

18 Migration Policy Institute. *Exceptional in Europe? Spain's Experience with Immigration and Integration*. 2013. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/exceptional-europe-spains-experience-immigration-and-integration>



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“We are twenty beneficiaries, another twenty supervisors, two more apartment supervisors and two coordinators. The team meets regularly once a month, and we meet with the boys every week more informally. Although I am the oldest here, I continue to learn from each encounter, it is mutual and ongoing learning process. It enriches me to see how we forget who we are and how we can become like big family in the meetings. The migrants accommodated in the project like to speak about their journey what they have gone through, their experiences help to open us, but we also help them so that they can understand our society.

In the meetings between tutors and coordinators, we learn how we can help them to recover from what they have lost during their path. From my experience, I can say that in general after two months here, they begin to smile, to talk and to participate more actively in initiatives. The project is called Baobab because Baobab is an African tree where people meet to discuss, provide advice. It is incredible the number of people who are involved in the project, especially the volunteers. All together, we built Baobab to be a welcoming space.

This program has been working for ten years now. Twelve out of the forty-two migrants who participated in Baobab last year, have already left with papers or some work. The main goal of the project is the migrant’s integration, so we give them access to training, courses and workshops. The beneficiaries are young people from Sub-Saharan Africa who have been here for less than a year, they are with us for two years and in the third one they can start the regularization process. We want them to become autonomous, but avoiding a paternalistic approach, we cover their basic needs and they organize themselves. We organize talks in schools, universities, testimonies in the media if the migrants are willing to participate, and we also collaborate with other NGOs.

I have lived in Africa for many years, there I learned the spirit of true hospitality as was given to me there. It is much wider than welcoming in a flat: it is to be close with people and to know more about them.”

once again access the healthcare system, it gave the impression to Spanish society that migrants are a burden for the Spanish taxpayers and fostered negative images.

It is also important to point out that the situation of forced migrants is not the same in all the regions of Spain. It seems to be more difficult

in Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish enclaves located in mainland Africa. Amnesty International has identified different and ongoing human rights violations, such as the inadequate conditions in reception centres with no specialised services who are victims of trafficking, trauma or those with disabilities and a lack of information provided to people once they are accommodated there.<sup>19</sup>

# Methodology

The project research was divided into two complementary phases, a mapping phase and a qualitative research phase. The intention of these two phases was to first provide a broad picture of existing initiatives in terms of numbers and statistics and then to learn more about specific initiatives.

## 2.1 MAPPING PHASE

During the first phase of the research SJM mapped 31 CBIs although it is clear that a much larger number of CBIs exist in the country. Six organisation members of the SJM network contributed to identify CBIs across all the Spanish territory.<sup>20</sup> The different associations first connected with CBIs through their social media channels to link them with the public awareness campaign and to complete the online Mapping questionnaire. More than 136 organisations were contacted via social media and email. However, the data was mostly collected through personal or telephone interviews and only 1 out of 4 CBIs completing the questionnaire on their own or without assistance.

The 31 initiatives mapped are mainly from Madrid, Catalonia, Basque Country, Andalucía, Asturias and Castilla-León. Hence, 7 out of 19 Spanish regions have been covered. Despite the important presence of migrant population in Ceuta and Melilla, it was not possible to include CBIs from these cities due to a lack of social or community initiatives in this region.

Spain represented 9.8 percent of the 315 CBIs that were mapped across Europe as part of *I Get You*. The results from this quantitative research phase were published in the Spanish Mapping Report, available in electronic version on the *I Get You* website.

## 2.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS AND EVALUATION

During the second phase of the research SJM conducted semi-structured interviews with staff members, forced migrant and local community participants of 20 CBIs across the Spanish territory. The main goal of this phase was to evaluate the quality of the CBI to identify good practices.

The criteria from the research team to select the CBI for the qualitative interviews was the geographical coverage (north, centre, south and east of Spain) as well as the diversity of the CBIs in terms of services and target group and dimension.

The location of the CBIs interviewed from north to the south were:

- Bilbao
- Burgos
- Madrid
- Alicante
- Jerez de la Frontera
- Oviedo
- Barcelona
- Valencia
- Sevilla

The questionnaires were translated into Spanish and the research team conducted in-person interviews. Some of the migrants interviewed experienced difficulties to answer the questions that were sometimes too technical. Moreover, no interpretation was foreseen in the project budget therefore the researchers used the local resources to gather the information, often relying on non-professional interpreters.

The information gathered during the interviews was evaluated against a set of criteria developed by a group of experts selected by JRS. The ten Delphi criteria were taken into account to identify good practices aiming at promoting social inclusion of forced migrants.

20 Asociación Claver -Sevilla-, SJM Valencia, Fundación Migra Studium -Barcelona-, Fundación Ellacuría -Bilbao, and Fundación San Juan del Castillo, Pueblos Unidos -Madrid

# Data Findings

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08

## 3.1 SUMMARY OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS FROM MAPPING PHASE

In Spain, *I Get You's* mapping phase collected quantitative data about 31 CBIs. A summary of the main finding has been regrouped into three subsections regarding the CBI's, the forced migrants and the local citizens and communities involved in the CBI.

### Community Building Initiatives

- 50 percent of the CBIs have less than 100 beneficiaries and 22 percent have more than 100.
- In terms of services provided, 33 percent of CBIs described their main field of action as intercultural activities, followed by awareness raising with a 22 percent and recreational activities with 17 percent.
- As for the CBI Budget 83 percent of the initiatives have an annual budget of less than 25,000 Euros, 5.6 percent between 25,000-50,000 Euros and 11.4 percent over 50,000 Euros.

### Forced Migrants and Refugees

- 33 percent are unaccompanied minors and 4 percent of the beneficiaries are families.
- Half of the forced migrants involved in CBIs are young people, between 19-25 years old.
- 45.7 percent of beneficiaries are originally from Sub-Saharan Africa countries, 37.1 percent are from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria, 11.4 percent are from North African countries, and 5.7 percent from Europe and Latin America.
- Around 50 percent of CBIs work with asylum applicants.
- 66.6 percent of the migrants who participate in the CBIs, stay linked to the CBI or one of the CBI projects for more than a year and with others staying more than two years.

### Local Citizens

- Around 40 percent of the CBIs have volunteers from the local the community (neighbourhoods and parishes), as well as university students and young people (18 to 25 years old), although there is an intergenerational mixture.
- Most of the CBIs are small-sized in size in terms of participants, 60 percent have less than 100 participants. On the other hand, 16 percent engage more than 1,000 local citizens.

## 3.2 RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE PHASE

Although the CBIs interviewed in Spain provide a range of different services they seem to share a common objective: to create a more inclusive society. During the qualitative phase *I Get You* learned more about the context and the insights of the sample of CBIs in Spain.

### Interaction and Encounter & Participation

All selected CBIs contribute to create a space for human intercultural encounter, so local citizens and forced migrants can get together and share experiences and feelings. The interaction of the CBIs tries to build new relationships and friendships so migrants can feel part of a community. A cooperative network between local workers and volunteers and forced migrants helps to improve their social conditions but also helps local society to have a new perception from the migrant community. Attending forced migrants at risk of social exclusion with a human accompaniment, walking with them on this hard path, trying to empathise and understand their feelings after living traumatic experience is an awareness raising for the local volunteers.

Asier, a coordinator for the CBI Gauean in Bilbao, describes the initiatives in relation to encounter and participation: "We offer welcoming places to face the scarcity in housing field. These young people are into insertion process. We complete residences by sharing rooms and apartments. On the other hand,





📷 The food festival Sumando Gehituz in Bilbao where culinary delights from different cultures are shared (Photo supplied by SJM).

we have a space for connecting local people with Unaccompanied Youngsters, to make their reality more visible, breaking stereotypes and prejudices. A full and direct knowledge happens; people get to know about the difficulties to find a place in this society.”

Many CBIs enable forced migrants to be agents of social change giving them voice and promoting empowerment and self-representation through participation in local community activities and actions, rights focussed workshops, promoting spaces of dialogue and reflexion, engaging them as volunteers in the activities of the organisations and in raising awareness actions. In this way, they can play an active role to make a deep social change and seek for local citizens’ humanity and empathy.

### **Awareness Raising & Education**

Most of CBIs utilise their experience to make local population aware of the problems forced migrants face during their journey, as well as once they arrive to new country and they tried to settle into a new a new society.

Paula, a volunteer for *África Imprescindible*, in Bilbao, describes how this works, “For the past two years, *África Imprescindible* projects included activities for development education in schools with young people from 6 to 16. Also in actions and assessment surveys, the improvement in attitude towards migration can be proved. There are less damaging opinions against migrants than in other population groups.”

Many CBIs try to achieve this goal by organising external activities such as events, seminars, conferences, street actions or public testimonies. The scope of the awareness raising activities is conditioned to the size of the CBI and the experience of the staff and volunteers involved. In general, the CBIs interviewed orient their communications strategy to social media. The raise awareness activities are focus, on one hand, in denouncing human right violations; and on the other hand, in using individual cases to show that migrants are not just statistics but human beings with similar needs, attitudes and hopes that the rest of the society.

### Support and Service Provision

All the CBIs provide service to forced migrants and most focus their service provision to provide basic needs to help migrants to become self-sufficient. Most of the CBI are trying to help forced migrants to cover their basic needs such as housing and food while providing them some vocational training and languages course. For example, “We work on legal advice, social care, labour counselling, accompaniment, welcoming, we are only able to do so in collaboration with others organization, like Welcoming Solidary Network, welcoming people in transit to Europe,” described a member of staff from Hospitalidad in Madrid.

From the CBIs interviewed many initiatives organise both internal as well as external activities. Some examples are walking along the Camino de Santiago to food festivals such as Sumando Gehituz in Bilbao, cultural initiatives, language pairs such as Parelles Linguistiques in Barcelona, leisure activities like hiking and cooking, professional training, community services like cleaning and gardening, inter-religious talking groups, and legal advice.

### Interculturalism

CBIs make it possible for people from different backgrounds to know one another and learn about their different cultures. This has created very positive atmospheres of cooperation and respect throughout the initiatives *I Get You* interviewed. All the CBIs have taken cultural diversity into consideration when designing their activities and services. The coordinators of the CBI pointed out that this was relevant point to build up meaningful relationship within the different CBIs. Paco, the coordinator of Mandela Social African Restaurant in Madrid, explains, “We want to break with stereotypes... We want to contribute with personal and human values: to share, to talk to each other, to make friends to work with, to build human relationships.”

Very often this intercultural exchange happens by working in mixed pairs or groups of local volunteers and forced migrants.

### Dignity & Hospitality

Many forced migrants interviewed express their wish to be treated in the same manner and with levels of respect and dignity as local citizens are. After surviving difficult situations and journeys

to reach Europe, people have a lot of hopes and expectations that are not immediately met upon arrival. Forced migrants feel positively about the space and opportunities CBIs can provide. They also expressed the positive associations that being able to tell their stories and share about their experiences have personally for themselves as it allows them to be open and to feel like others genuinely care.

Some of the CBIs interviewed are part of a national hospitality network across Spain. The main objective of CBIs involved in this network is to create social links and relationships between forced migrants and the local community as a way of building a stronger culture of ‘welcome’ in Spain. A refugee, who has benefited from the accommodation aspects of Hospitalidad in Madrid, tells about his experience of being warmly received, “Pueblos Unidos not only helped us, it’s a family for us. On the first day we got here, we met Mariana. She is now family.”

### Sustainability & Innovation

The availability to access public funding seemed to be essential for most of the CBIs to guarantee their sustainability. Many CBI seek to diversify their funding strategies by involving government institutions especially as well as private donors. By doing this, CBI try to prevent future conflict of interest while ensuring the sustainability of their activities.

Most of the CBI are providing simple services and basic needs for forced migrants and would not expressly define themselves as innovative. However, some are a different in the way that they view values such as accompaniment and do it in a unique way. An example is the Mandela restaurant in Madrid, a social restaurant whose employees are forced migrants. The restaurant works as normal business, but it is also an opportunity for forced migrants to be trained as waiters or chefs.

Luis, a staff member from the Mandela restaurant described the situation in terms of financial sustainability: “We all know this is a business, so if we work hard, and do it well, people come back, and that’s good for our future. We had financial support from a foundation in the beginning, but not anymore. Now it must be sustainable by itself. Sustainability is a core part of this business model.”



“Red de Intercambios is a space of encounter and exchange for people from diverse cultures. That was the goal when it was born. We think time banks are a powerful and efficient tool for social change. Through exchanging services and time, human and social relationships strengthen, encouraging equality, solidarity and respect. Most of the participants I have met told me that they have found a place where they can share and contribute but also learn. We are empowering migrants, improving their self-esteem and determination. They feel useful and find that we all have things that other people need. The concept of reciprocity is appreciated and valued.

One of the advantage of this initiative for me is that is quiet flexible, my commitment is changing, depending on my availability and project’s needs. I could say that on average I dedicate two hours per week. I personally contribute by planning and seeking resources for the office, rather than an operative task. I participate in meetings, conferences, trainings because I believe that to defend the right of the migrants we need review the actual procedures, and that we also need to promote and disseminate the hospitality and welcoming values that support this initiative. I am also involved in a dancing club, monthly meetings, dissemination activities and services exchanging.

Breaking prejudices and stereotypes within the local community is one of the main goals of our initiative. Somehow, I believe than in a small scale we have achieved this mental transformation, so the new challenge is growing more and more. We care about the human factor, making people feel home and inviting them to participate and build this project together with us. The network is what our participants want it to be. There are constant opportunities to know about other cultures and humans, not only in a personal way, but also through horizontal relationships, rather than a hierarchical structure.”

📷 Group photo of participants in the CBI Baobab in Madrid (Photo supplied by SJM).



# Inspiring Community Building Initiatives

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From the 20 CBIs that took part in the qualitative research phase, SJM selected five based on the evaluation of the qualitative interviews. Here, we describe these five CBIs and explain their good practices.

## HOSPITALIDAD

Hospitalidad, based in Madrid, is both a holistic service programme supporting forced migrants and a national campaign with four main strategies: accompaniment of migrants and refugees in Spain, accompaniment of migrants and refugees outside Europe, advocacy, and raising awareness. In Spain, it fills the gaps in the national reception system and it promotes socioeconomic integration. The initiative provides support to forced migrants through a network of communities and volunteers who provide them with a wide range of services, such as housing, assistance in accessing the labour market, and social links. The staff members and volunteers assist refugees by offering them breakfast, helping in their asylum application process with legal counselling, teaching them the local language and accompany them on their new life. Volunteers accompany them to the doctor or to open a bank account but also for a walk, so that they feel welcome and accompanied in this integration process. The motto is 'to open the house' to forced migrants. Marie, a volunteer from the CBI, describes the main goal of the work as to "make people self-sufficient and able to handle their lives without our intervention."

This initiative excels in the value of hospitality because it fosters a welcoming attitude among neighbourhoods, religious congregations and civil society who provide accommodation to forced migrants. This CBI also contributes to raise awareness among the locals who involved themselves in the project by creating spaces of encounter and interaction between them and forced migrants.

## CASA MAMBRÉ

Since 2009, Casa Mambré in Seville has hosted forced undocumented migrants that have been in Spain for a while and, who have the skills to integrate but do not have the economic resources and a regular status that allow them to do so. The house belongs to the Society of Jesus and it is run autonomously by a Christian community of lay people (CVX), some of whose members also live in the house. Caritas and Asociación Claver provide the technical support. In this CBI, forced migrants find not only a house but also a family. They also receive tailored support based on their individual needs. Forced migrants have the opportunity through the CBI to meet local people who are volunteers. Often, these encounters lead to strong connections that help forced migrants make important contacts for the future, not only for work, but also for leisure and free time activities. Through these new friendships, members of the CBI are now planning gastronomic days, artistic photography workshop, and new training activities based on the needs and interests of the people involved.

One of the characteristics of Mambré is that it has a high level of participation, from both sides, the forced migrants and the local community. By welcoming forced migrants and their families, the CBI includes them in the routine of the neighbourhood, so they can feel part of the community. Mambré lets migrants set their own objectives and tries to help them to achieve them by reinforcing their autonomy and self-esteem.

## GAUEAN

This CBI, located in Bilbao, provides temporary accommodation for three or four months to young migrants who arrived in Spain as unaccompanied minors and lose state protection after turning eighteen. A hospitality network, supported by about 45 volunteers of all ages under the coordination of Fundacion Ellacuria, Gauean provides shelter, food, vocational training and recreational activities to

young people hosted in an apartment in the city of Bilbao. By meeting local young people and families who come to volunteer and provide support, the young migrants build personal networks and learn skills to find a job and plan for their future. Gauean has an innovative holistic approach because it covers the basic needs of the young migrants but also provides a stable environment and personal accompaniment in their path to become self-sufficient and independent. This is indispensable for the dignity of every young person as they grow into adulthood.

This initiative covers a gap in the protection system for unaccompanied minors provided by the national government in Spain. This is because social services do not foresee transitional protection for former unaccompanied minors who frequently end up living on the streets without access to a shelter after turning eighteen. This CBI is also innovative because there is not a lot of programmes focused on unaccompanied youths with a big and successful component on employment. The hospitality of the local community is shown through the high participation of volunteers from different ages and backgrounds, such as students, families, sisters from religious congregations and even former beneficiaries who accompany the young migrants daily.

### ÁFRICA IMPRESCINDIBLE

A network of three local and five sub-Saharan African associations that work together in Bilbao to improve forced migrant's self-representation and to raise awareness within the local citizens by teaching about African culture and artistic traditions. They organize different activities such as theatre, concerts, photograph exhibitions, workshops related to the African culture. It provides also orientation and training, empowering forced migrants to become a part of the civil society as social agents of their own integration. Since 2001, the CBI has organised an Annual Conference to promote reflexion, and encounter with the Sub-Saharan African reality in the Basque Country. It also acts as a platform where forced migrants can use their voice to advocate for better conditions in Basque Country. A member of the staff, Lucía, even discussed plans to expand advocacy efforts for the future, saying, "This year, we want to concentrate our efforts to increase our advocacy capacities, by creating networks and synergies with other entities, like Pro Africa Group Euskadi, as well as creating dialogue spaces

with institutional agents. I believe that we have managed to make some progress to consolidate the organizations' structures and our activities' quality."

The structure of this CBI is innovative since it is joint platform of local and migrant associations. This initiative also has a strong element on education and awareness raising. After all these years they have become a local reference. This initiative reaches a diverse and heterogenic audience and tries to spread messages against prejudice and negative attitudes towards forced migrants. Through the social networks they share articles and documents with the public and they have created a stable network with other NGOs, media, educational institutions and other platforms.

### RED DE INTERCAMBIOS

This CBI is a time bank initiative that brings together different people to exchange free services and promote community building in Valencia. Using this time bank, forced migrants can access language lessons or administrative help in exchange for cooking lessons, language classes or other services. While not exclusively directed at forced migrants as a target group, every month around 80 percent of the forty people who work with Red de Intercambios are forced migrants. On average, each person dedicates about 10 to 15 hours per month involved in the initiative, which shows a high level of participation. One person involved, Fatima, describes her experience as, "Knowing new people and their culture through exchanging services and activities is very enriching. I am getting to know more things about the local community and make new friends."

Red de Intercambios is an innovative CBI that combines social economy and interculturalism. It is also a way to create spaces of encounter and interaction allowing forced migrants and locals to help each other and to build relationships while fighting against social exclusion. This initiative contributes to return dignity to forced migrants as they are empowered to help others and they are not only passive receptors for support. Finally, it also helps to show to local citizens that forced migrants can offer services and benefits to other people. It is sustainable and it promotes in an innovative way participation and encounter between locals and forced migrants.

# Policy Recommendations

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Drawing conclusions from the best practices identified in *I Get You*, SJM Spain has elaborated a set of recommendations for the Spanish government and local authorities.

## Recommendations for the Spanish Government:

- . The new plan should include specific measures to meet the needs of migrants such as provision regarding access to housing, healthcare system and education for migrants and refugees as especially vulnerable people in the host country. Furthermore, the plan should include measures regarding social integration and social cohesion to tackle the challenges of increasing diversity and foster tolerance and peaceful coexistence.
- **Increase and strengthen integration programmes** for basic cultural and language competences, professional skills and training and socio-communitarian programmes.
- **Promote social mobility and access to qualified employment** by developing a strategic Plan for the labour integration of refugees and asylum seekers, by accelerating recognition of foreign qualifications and diplomas and facilitating and encouraging non-compulsory higher education among migrants.
- **Reform the national reception system of asylum seekers** to respond to the gaps and limitations of the existing model and to be able to offer diversified services and plans, tailor-made to the needs of the variety of profiles among asylum seekers.
- **Approve the implementing regulation of the Asylum Law of 2009** to provide the legal framework for the definition of the socioeconomic integration model.
- **Promote interculturalism, access to cultural offer and participation in public services**

through training and awareness raising among civil servants and public services providers.

## Recommendations for the Regional Governments – Comunidades Autónomas:

- **Take measures to facilitate labour integration of migrants**, such as child-care for all children under five years old and family conciliation measures.
- **Ensure local funding to promote community based initiatives** for the social inclusion of migrants.
- **Guarantee equal conditions in protection assistance and access to the minimum income system of nationals and migrants with regular status.** Measures that are necessary to ensure them a dignified standard of living, considering their vulnerable position as they generally have limited access to other contributory protection mechanisms or support networks.
- **Guarantee access of all forced migrants to the public health system**, including access to individual medical records at the SNS database (national health system) and regular access to treatment, especially for chronic illnesses.
- **Fight hate speech and institutional racism** by promoting intercultural training of civil servants in public services.

## Recommendations for the provincial and municipality authorities:

- **Promote community building programmes to prevent social conflicts.** Peaceful cohabitation must be a priority for local governments. The best way to prevent conflicts is to meet each other and learn about differences, commonalities and each other's struggles.

The experience of CBI's such as Casa Mambré and Gauean show that promoting spaces of interaction and migrants' involvement in cultural life, incorporating traditions and celebrations of new communities in the public space are successful activities to this end.

- **Ensure access of migrants to local services** such as municipal social services, sports facilities, emergency support and cultural and social programs.
- **Promote migrants' participation in municipal cultural life.** The experience of community building initiatives such as África Imprescindible can be a useful example.

**JEAN-CLAUDE**

*FORCED MIGRANT BENEFICIARY,  
CASA MAMBRÉ HOUSING PROJECT IN SEVILLE*

“I have lived in Casa Mambré since November 2016. It has been a great help for me and for the other migrants who live there. When we came here we did not have a place to sleep, neither the opportunity to learn the language. Living in the house is a wonderful opportunity to learn about other cultures as well. Sometimes, when it's full, we can prepare African food and we talk for example about women's rights or weddings, because things in Spain are different. I compare them to my culture, and realise how different many things are here.

For me, the calm I experience here in the house is something I really appreciate. I feel accompanied and supported when I am down. These elements help me to grow in strength. Getting training and sharing with others are also a great opportunity to find a better future. One day I would like to have a decent life, a job and house of my own.

Meanwhile, I participate in awareness raising activities organised by the project, such as workshops and school talks. I believe that these public activities are beneficial for migrants but also the Spanish society who often ignore all the difficulties we have faced. I personally like to speak with teenagers, I want them to realise how lucky they are to have so many opportunities. Children are especially open to change and are in general more sensitive.”

📷 Girls take part in an event organised as part of the Hospitalidad campaign (Photo supplied by SJM).





Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic organisation with a mission to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of refugees and others who are forcibly displaced.

[Jrseurope.org](http://Jrseurope.org)

[Igetyou-jrs.org](http://Igetyou-jrs.org)