

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

PROJECT	
Project name and acronym:	Civil Society Solidarity Movement II - CISOMO II
Participant:	INSTITOYTO KOINONIKIS KAINOTOMIAS KAI SYNOXIS
PIC number:	928680717

EVENT DESCRIPTION			
Event number :	3		
Event name:	Study Visit in Germany : Exploring Civil Society's Role in Refugee and Migrant Advocacy in Germany		
Type:	Study Visit		
In situ/online:	in-situ		
Location:	Munich, Germany		
Date(s):	31.10.2024 - 02.11.2024		
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.cisomo.eu/thematic-events		
Participants			
Female:	21		
Male:	11		
Non-binary:	0		
From country 1 [Greece]:	10		
From country 2 [Bulgaria]:	3		
From country 3 [Poland]:	2		
From country 4 [Slovenia]:	3		
From country 5 [Sweden]:	3		
From country 6 [Denmark]:	3		
From country 7 [Germany]:	4		
From country 8 [Romania]:	4		
Total number of participants:	32	From total number of countries:	8

Description

Provide a short description of the event and its activities.

On November 1, 2024, a diverse group of civil society representatives, activists, scholars, and policymakers gathered at Rilano Hotel München to participate in a study visit aimed at exploring Germany's civil society role in refugee and migrant advocacy. The event, part of the Civil Society Solidarity Movement II (CISOMO II), provided a deep dive into how advocacy groups, NGOs, and grassroots organizations contribute to shaping migration policies, mobilizing volunteers, and supporting vulnerable communities.

As participants arrived at the venue, they were greeted by event organizers, who facilitated registration and provided an overview of the day's agenda. The air buzzed with anticipation as attendees introduced themselves, exchanged greetings, and prepared for a day of intensive discussions.

The event officially opened with a brief welcome speech, emphasizing the importance of civil society's role in advocating for refugees and migrants, especially in light of recent policy shifts across Europe. The introduction set the stage for a day of critical reflection and knowledge sharing.

The first session featured a compelling thematic speech on the broader role of civil society in advocating for the rights of refugees and migrants. The speaker, an expert in human rights and migration policies, highlighted:

-How Germany's civil society has evolved to address refugee needs.

-The impact of civil society engagement on policy-making.

-The importance of public mobilization in shaping discourse on migration.

A historical perspective was provided, tracing back to Germany's response to the 2015 refugee crisis and its ongoing efforts to integrate displaced individuals. The session emphasized that NGOs, grassroots organizations, and volunteer groups are the backbone of migration advocacy, offering both humanitarian aid and policy intervention.

The second session delved deeper into the key organizations leading refugee advocacy efforts in Germany. Participants were introduced to the diverse network of civil society actors, including presentations of:

-Pro Asyl (Frontline organization dedicated to defending refugee rights)

-German Red Cross (Essential humanitarian services and support)

Through real-life case studies, the session showcased how these organizations have shaped public narratives, lobbied for policy reforms, and provided direct aid to asylum seekers. The discussion also examined the challenges these groups face, such as political opposition, funding limitations, and the increasing burden of bureaucratic regulations.

After a short coffee break, participants engaged in a session focused on advocacy strategies, highlighting how civil society organizations effectively campaign for refugee rights. Discussions covered:

-Methods of public engagement, including protests, petitions, and digital activism.

-The role of social media in spreading awareness and countering misinformation.

-The power of storytelling in advocacy – how real refugee experiences move public opinion.

A case study was the "Wir haben Platz" (We Have Space) campaign, which successfully mobilized thousands of people across Germany to demand increased refugee intake. The discussion underscored that public pressure could force governments to act, even in restrictive political climates.

This session took a critical look at the intersection of migration and gender, shedding light on the unique struggles faced by women, LGBTQ+ refugees, and other marginalized groups, presenting:

-Gender-sensitive policies and how they shape refugee support programs.

-The challenges of migrant women in accessing employment, education, and healthcare.

-How organizations incorporate gender perspectives into their advocacy efforts.

The session emphasized the need for tailored support systems, recognizing that not all refugees experience displacement the same way.

In this powerful session, gender rights activists shared firsthand accounts of advocating for migrant women. Panellists spoke about:

- Legal barriers faced by female asylum seekers.***
- The importance of safe spaces for migrant women.***
- Programs designed to empower refugee women, such as job training initiatives.***

One of the panellists, a former refugee-turned-activist, moved the audience with her personal journey of overcoming adversity and becoming a leader in the migrant advocacy space.

Before the lunch break, this session focused on the importance of grassroots movements in advocating for refugees. Speakers highlighted small but powerful community-driven projects that:

- Provide direct assistance to newly arrived refugees.***
- Organize local solidarity networks.***
- Offer language training and cultural integration programs.***

The post-lunch session explored how to effectively engage and sustain volunteer efforts in refugee support up to:

- Training programs for volunteers.***
- Best practices for long-term volunteer retention.***
- The psychological toll of working in refugee support and how to prevent burnout.***

Participants shared their experiences in mobilizing communities, emphasizing the power of volunteerism in making a tangible impact.

The next session was highly engaging, allowing attendees to apply what they had learned throughout the day, by implementing a debatable workshop, participants worked in groups to:

- Develop new advocacy campaign ideas.***
- Identify effective messaging techniques.***
- Share lessons from their own experiences.***

The event concluded with a reflection session, where participants had the opportunity to look back on the day's discussions and share their key takeaways. Many attendees expressed how the study visit had broadened their understanding of effective advocacy strategies, the importance of intersectional approaches, and the role of grassroots movements in shaping migration policies.

In addition to discussing insights gained, participants reflected on how they would apply new strategies in their own work. Whether through strengthening their organizations' outreach efforts, improving collaboration with other advocacy groups, or implementing new policy initiatives, there was a shared sense of urgency and commitment to making a tangible impact.

A key theme that emerged was the importance of solidarity and sustained engagement. Attendees voiced their dedication to strengthening refugee advocacy efforts, ensuring that their work continues to amplify the voices of migrants and refugees, and advocating for policies that prioritize human rights and dignity.

Organizers emphasized that the conversations would not end here. Plans for follow-up events, networking opportunities, and continued collaboration were discussed, reinforcing the idea that civil society must remain a powerful and united force in the fight for migrant rights.

Concluding, taking the above into account, it is highlightable that this study visit was more than just an academic exercise, but it was a call to action. Participants left not only with renewed motivation but also with concrete strategies to improve their advocacy efforts. The discussions, insights, and case studies presented throughout the day operated as a foundation for future initiatives and stronger collective action.

Agenda

Date: November 1, 2024

Venue: Rilano Hotel München, Domagkstrasse 26, 80807 München

10:00 – 10:15 | Welcome and Registration

Registration of participants and distribution of event materials.

Brief introduction to the study visit's purpose and goals.

Overview of the agenda and key themes for the day.

10:15 – 10:45 | Thematic Speech: The Role of Civil Society in Strengthening Refugee and Migrant Advocacy

Introduction to the significance of civil society in shaping migration policies.

Historical perspective on Germany's engagement in refugee support.

Discussion on the importance of grassroots activism and public mobilization.

10:45 – 11:15 | Thematic Speech: Germany's Civil Society in Action

Overview of Germany's leading advocacy organizations.

Case studies of Pro Asyl, The German Red Cross, and other grassroots initiatives.

Discussion on challenges and successes in migrant support efforts.

11:15 – 11:30 | Coffee Break

11:30 – 12:00 | Session: Advocacy Strategies and Successful Campaigns

Effective methods of public engagement in advocacy.

Role of social media and storytelling in mobilizing public opinion.

Case study: "Wir haben Platz" campaign and its impact on migration policies.

12:00 – 12:30 | Thematic Speech: Intersectionality in Action – Gender and Diversity in Migrant Advocacy

Gender-sensitive approaches in refugee support.

Challenges faced by migrant women and LGBTQ+ refugees.

How advocacy organizations address intersectionality in their programs.

12:30 – 13:00 | Panel Discussion: The Voices of Women in Migration

Personal accounts from gender rights activists and migrant women leaders.

Exploring barriers to equality for female refugees.

Highlighting initiatives that empower and support women in migration.

13:00 – 13:30 | Thematic Speech: Community-Driven Advocacy – Grassroots Initiatives Supporting Refugees

The role of community-driven projects in providing direct aid and advocacy.

Conversations with grassroots leaders and volunteers on their work.

Exploring how local initiatives can create large-scale impact.

13:30 – 14:30 | Lunch Break**14:30 – 15:00 | Session: Volunteer Mobilization and Capacity Building**

Best practices for training and sustaining volunteer engagement.

Addressing burnout and long-term commitment challenges.

Case studies of successful volunteer-driven advocacy efforts.

15:30 – 16:00 | Workshop: Lessons on Effective Advocacy Techniques

Interactive group discussions on advocacy messaging.

Developing new campaign strategies for migrant rights.

Sharing best practices from participants' experiences.

16:00 – 16:30 | Closing Reflections and Next Steps

Sharing key takeaways from the sessions.

How participants will apply new strategies in their work.

Discussion on future networking and collaboration opportunities.

Final thoughts and commitments to strengthening civil society's role in refugee advocacy.

HISTORY OF CHANGES

VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).