

WELCOME @CATÓLICA

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

S O C I A L E N T R E P R E N E U R S H I P

Team 1 – WELCOME @CATÓLICA

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1. PROBLEM STATEMENT – PROBLEM TREE

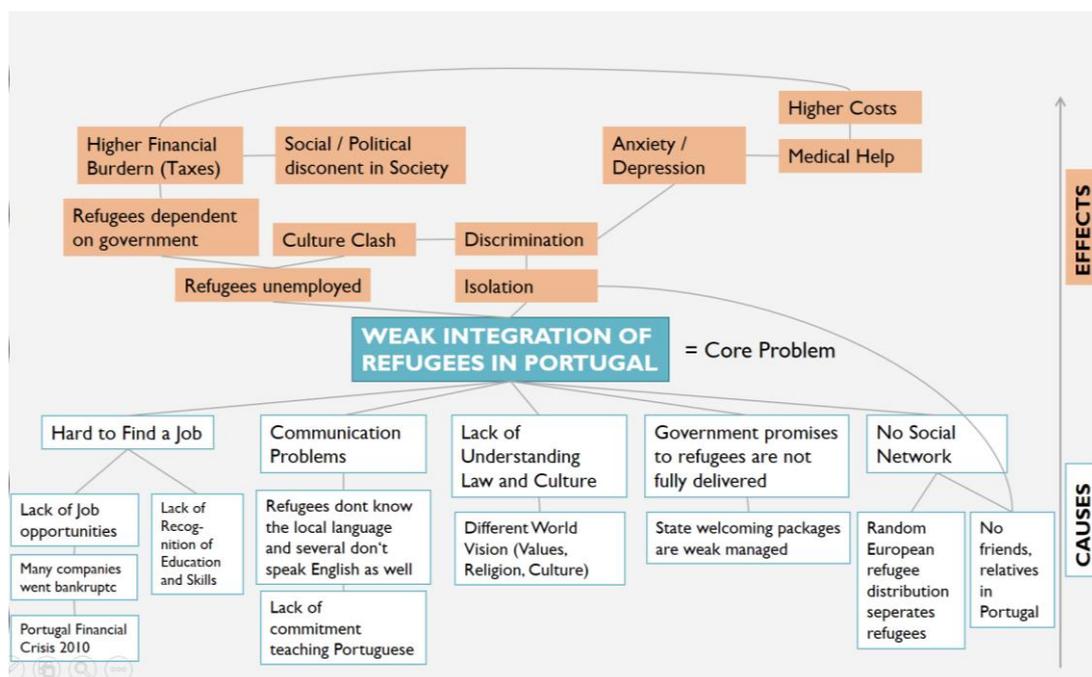
Approximately 1500 refugees arrived in Portugal until last year, which is a very low number when compared to other European countries like France and Germany. This small number is interrelated with the fact that when the refugees come to Portugal, they don't have family or friends, because the majority are in those countries mentioned above as well as the perception that Portugal is not capable of offering job opportunities.

On the refugees' arrival, there are many organizations that usually focus on different aspects, such as, language, jobs, etc. When they arrive to Portugal they are received by Social and Corporate Institutions to get first "AID" (food, clothes, home, health). As a second step, there are institutions which help them with languages courses, access to education and labour integration. Among these institutions we have Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, Santa Casa da Misericórdia, ACM (Alto Comissariado para as Migrações) and PAR (Plataforma de Apoio aos Refugiados). This last one is a platform of many well-known Portuguese institutions which is focused on families of refugees while the others also help singular individuals.

At the moment, there are many gaps when it comes to the refugees' integration which has been somehow neglected by this country. Although the existing institutions are doing a worthy job, it's still not enough. According to Mohamad Abou Ras, a refugee that is currently studying in Lisbon at ISCTE, the main challenges faced by the refugees are:

- Lack of established ethnic communities. Portugal doesn't have a history of immigration from Arabic speaking countries compared to France, Germany and Britain. According to Cristina Santinho, a researcher from ISCTE, "there are no family networks and no friend networks that support the arrival of other refugees".
- The State welcoming package often gets "lost" due to poor management which leads to poorly delivered promises.
- Lack of job opportunities – it's not easy for a refugee to find a job in Portugal. The language is the main barrier, since several refugees don't know how to speak neither in Portuguese nor in English.

To better understand the causes which lead to a weak integration of refugees in Portugal and its consequences, we did a Problem Tree:



This weak integration can lead to negative spillovers and vicious cycles; when refugees don't know the local language and its culture and laws they can be discriminated, which leads to isolation that, as consequence, may encourage violence and more discrimination. The weak emotional support and the inexistence of family or social networks come associated with anxiety and depression, which will make them need medical help. Due to all the above, the overall cost for society will increase and refugees will become a higher financial burden since they will probably be unemployed.

2. BENCHMARK

After fully understand this important problem, we realized that one of the most difficult obstacles they face when arriving to Portugal is to receive the needed support to fulfill their personal aspirations and integrate the society. We kept on doing our benchmark and found out that there is only one University, ISCTE, that offers the possibility for young adults that want to pursue their studies in Portugal, by giving them a scholarship. However, this program is only available for the refugees that were allocated to Câmara Municipal de Lisboa, which means that the others that were designated to other institutions do not have the chance to enrol for this scholarship.

Mohamad Abou Ras, the student who received that scholarship, pointed out the main problems related with this initiative:

- Everything is “too bureaucratic”: they cannot meet refugees outside the organizations and it is hard to find help without them.
- There is no support when it comes to practicing the local language outside classes, no one is responsible for the refugees' integration in the day to day life as a student in Portugal
- There is no program to help them understand how college works, including the simplest things like what are the rules, how to check your schedule.
- Nobody focuses on what are “the needs of refugees”, or neither on their areas of interest.
- Recognition of Education: Mohamad needed to take courses, with the same description, of the ones that he already done in his home town, but they were not recognized.

All of these aspects contribute to their isolation and the feeling of being “lost and not accepted”. The need to help them to create a friend's network is also a crucial piece of the story, and that is why we want to create the program *WELCOME @CATÓLICA*.

3. INTRODUCTION OF THE PROJECT – CORE ELEMENTS & ACTIVITY SYSTEM MAP

In this context, our aim is to get through these challenges and make the refugees part of our society. We want to provide refugees between 18 and 30 years old with FREE educational opportunities, as well as tools to help them feel socially integrated. In order to achieve this, our goal is to implement a one year preparatory program at our university, Universidade Católica de Lisboa.

WELCOME @CATÓLICA will be based on 3 CORE ELEMENTS:

- **Cultural Exchange:** In order to break communication barriers and teach refugees about local culture, habits, language and national law. It will promote culture diversity and provide refugees with the needed tools to better integrate the Portuguese society. Furthermore, this will help them to get along with locals and increase their job opportunities in the future.
- **Free access to Education:** Guest-Study Program which will enable them to attend different courses of their choice, workshops on career paths and receive information & support through the Academic Registration Process and faculty rules.

- **Buddy-Program:** intends to establish a personal relationship with a local student, while being also integrated on a bigger social network that aims to support the refugees and to engage them on social and sport activities. Moreover, it will allow the break of barriers and prejudice between Portuguese and refugees. The organization will be responsible to find the buddies, through building a typical profile and making interviews, since these Portuguese students need to be fully committed to help the refugees in their needs and integration process.

4. VALUE PROPOSITION

The program *Welcome @Católica* provides refugees **Free Access to Education** and promotes **Cultural Exchange**. It offers a one year preparatory course, which includes Language & Culture courses and a **Guest Study Program**, where they can attend workshops and specific courses of their choice to help them find a bachelor degree to pursue. Moreover, it will offer a Personal Buddy Program where students will engage on different types of social activities and support them at a personal level, thus, creating a **Network** of people to fully integrate them in the day-to-day life in Portugal.

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, the success of this project will add value in several different ways. On one hand, we need to focus on the fact that we are talking about people, and what matters in this case is the major positive impact that it can have on their lives. By providing them the opportunity to access education and social integration, we give them the possibility to fulfill their personal aspirations and achieve a full integration in society. On the other hand, with the inclusion of refugees in a college environment, we will promote the contact between several cultures and thousands of students. Thus, enhancing cultural exchange, the diminish of prejudice and empower the creation of open-minded citizens. Our final goal is to eradicate the idea of “us vs them”, that still exists on both sides, and create a universe of united diverse people.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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