ECSILI Final Report

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1. Executive Summary

ECSILI Empowering Communities - Local Action Plan for Social Inclusion and Labour Integration of Refugees, has successfully concluded after 18 months of collaboration to improve the social and labour market inclusion of Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw, Poland, and Arad, Romania.

The project was carried out by a transnational project consortium, coordinated by the European Social Network, the network of social services in Europe and included the Regional Government of Andalucia, department of inclusion, family youth an equality, the City of Warsaw, the Social Care Directorate of the City of Arad and SkillLab, who participated in the project until June 2026. It piloted an integrated approach for refugee inclusion combining personalised case management, skills profiling, employment support and community activities to address participants' diverse needs and facilitate their integration into local communities and labour markets.

A total of 130 Ukrainian refugees benefited from the ECSILI project: 80 in Warsaw and 50 in Arad. Each participant received individualised support to identify their individual social inclusion needs, set their social inclusion goals and access relevant services. The approach was positively received with satisfaction with case management reaching 94% in Arad and 92% in Warsaw.

The Pilot evaluations showed encouraging results in both locations. In Arad, none of the respondents to the post-pilot survey reported being unemployed, compared with 28% of respondents at the start. All respondents reported improved social integration and well-being, and all respondents surveyed reported having someone to turn to for emotional support. In Warsaw, the share of respondents reporting unemployment fell from 91% at the start to 55% at the end of the pilot. In addition, 52% of post-pilot survey respondents reported improved or significantly improved social integration and well-being.
These results reflect self-reported changes among survey respondents and should be interpreted in light of the different sample sizes and local contexts.

Beyond individual outcomes, ECSILI contributed to **strengthening local institutional capacity and cross-sector cooperation**
Through the development of Local Action Plans the project fostered closer cooperation between social services, employment providers and community organisations. In total, 50 staff members were trained across Warsaw and Arad, building organisational know-how to support continued collaboration beyond the project.

A key achievement was the development of the Updated Framework Model, which consolidates the experience and lessons learned throughout implementation into a transferable methodology for integrated social and labour market inclusion. The model identifies seven guiding principles for the transfer and adaptation of integrated social inclusion

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approaches, from coordinating local resources and individualised planning to monitoring, governance and policy development. By building on the experience from Andalusia's ERACIS strategy and adapting its approach to Warsaw and Arad, ECSILI demonstrated the European added value of transferring social innovation across different contexts.

The project's final conference presented its results to 85 participants from 13 countries, representing NGOs, municipalities, academia, regional authorities, national ministries, the European Commission and the International Organization for Migration. A policy roundtable explored how ECSILI's outputs could be embedded in public policies, exploring opportunities to translate ECSILI's findings and practical outputs into public policies and existing service delivery systems, supporting their wider application and potential replication.

Overall, ECSILI leaves a legacy of strengthened institutional cooperation, enhanced professional capacity and a practical, transferable methodology for integrated inclusion. By combining individualised support with cross-sector collaboration and transnational knowledge exchange, the project has generated valuable experience and tools that can inform future approaches to refugee inclusion across Europe. Ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of these achievements will depend on continued institutional commitment, adequate human and financial resources, and the effective integration of the project's methods and practices into existing local services and policy frameworks.

2. ECSILI: context, objectives and approach

2.1 Context and identified needs

The ECSILI project was developed in response to the need to strengthen social and labour market inclusion support for Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw, Poland, and Arad, Romania, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. As the initial emergency response evolved towards longer-term integration, the need for coordinated services, personalised employment support and opportunities for community participation became increasingly important. Local needs analyses conducted in both cities identified common challenges. Despite often having strong educational backgrounds and professional experience, many Ukrainian refugees faced difficulties accessing employment suited to their qualifications. Language barriers, the limited recognition of foreign qualifications, legal uncertainty and fragmented support services hindered their integration. Support was often provided by multiple organisations without sufficiently coordinated referral pathways or consistent individual follow-up. The analyses also highlighted the need to move beyond emergency assistance towards more sustainable, person-centred support that connects social services, employment opportunities and community resources.

2.2 Objectives and approach

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ECSILI aimed to improve the social and labour market inclusion of Ukrainian refugees by adapting the principles of ERACIS (Andalusia's Regional Strategy for Social Cohesion and Inclusion) to the local contexts of Warsaw and Arad. Implemented in Andalusia since 2018, ERACIS promotes integrated support by coordinating local services around the needs of vulnerable individuals.

The project adapted this approach to prioritise social and labour market inclusion, taking into account the resources, institutional arrangements and needs identified in each city. Its implementation was based on four complementary elements:

- **Local action plans:** establishing cooperation between public institutions, employment services and community organisations, with clear roles, responsibilities and referral pathways.
- **Individualised case management:** providing tailored support based on each participant's circumstances, skills and employment and social inclusion goals.
- **Digital skills profiling:** introducing SkillLab, an online tool designed to help refugees identify their skills and explore relevant career opportunities, while supporting professionals in career guidance.
- **Community activities:** creating opportunities for social interaction, peer support, cultural exchange and connections with the wider local community.

Through these elements, ECSILI sought to improve coordination between local services, strengthen participants' access to personalised support and develop a transferable model for integrated social and labour market inclusion.

2.3 Implementation contexts

In **Warsaw**, the needs analysis highlighted the difficulties experienced by Ukrainian refugees in accessing employment corresponding to their qualifications and experience. It also identified gaps in personalised career guidance, follow-up and coordination between social and employment services. ECSILI therefore focused on strengthening cooperation between the Warsaw Family Support Centre (WCPR) and the Warsaw Labour Office, while introducing individualised support, digital skills profiling and community activities.
In **Arad**, the analysis identified a support system involving public institutions and non-governmental organisations, but with limited formal coordination between providers. Although many refugees had professional qualifications and were employed, underemployment and language barriers remained significant challenges. ECSILI sought to strengthen cooperation between the Arad Social Care Directorate (DAS), the County Agency for Employment (AJOFM) and two local NGOs, Centrul de Vis and the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, Arad branch, to provide more coordinated support and improve access to employment and integration services.

2.4 Project consortium

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The project brought together five partners contributing complementary expertise and responsibilities:

- **European Social Network (ESN):** the network of public social services in Europe. It coordinated project implementation, supported partner cooperation, monitored quality and contributed to dissemination.
- **City of Warsaw:** implemented the pilot through the Warsaw Family Support Centre and the Warsaw Labour Office, developing the Local Action Plan and providing individualised and community-based support.
- **Arad Social Care Directorate (DAS):** led the second pilot, coordinating local partners and implementing the Local Action Plan and support activities.
- **Regional Government of Andalusia (CISJUFI):** contributed expertise in the ERACIS methodology and supported its adaptation through training and technical guidance.
- **SkillLab:** provided the digital skills-profiling tool and technical expertise to support career guidance and the development of the project framework. The organisation withdrew from the consortium in June 2026 due to organisational constraints.

By combining the experience of the Andalusian model with the needs and resources of the two pilot cities, ECSILI sought to demonstrate how coordinated services, personalised case management, digital tools and community engagement can contribute to more integrated support for Ukrainian refugees and inform similar initiatives in other local contexts.

3. How the ERACIS strategy was adapted for ECSILI

ERACIS was adapted for the ECSILI project combining local needs assessments, knowledge transfer from Andalusia, the adaptation of a digital skills-profiling tool, and practical training for the professionals responsible for implementation. This process aimed to translate an established approach to integrated social and labour market inclusion into a model suited to the institutional arrangements, available resources and needs of Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw and Arad.

3.1 Local Needs Assessments and Stakeholder Consultations

The development of the ECSILI model began with local needs assessments in Warsaw, Poland, and Arad, Romania, to identify the main barriers faced by Ukrainian refugees and explore how existing support systems could better respond to their social and labour market inclusion needs. The assessments examined refugees' circumstances, available services and resources, and local employment opportunities.

Each city organised three focus groups involving Ukrainian refugees, case workers and local stakeholders, including representatives of public institutions, social services, employment agencies and non-governmental organisations. A common set of guiding questions, developed in collaboration with CISJUFI and SkillLab, ensured a consistent approach across both cities while allowing the findings to reflect local circumstances and priorities.

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The consultations highlighted a shared challenge: although support services were available in both cities, provision was often fragmented, with limited coordination between organisations and insufficient opportunities for sustained, personalised guidance. The assessments therefore pointed to the need for a more integrated approach, bringing together local actors through Local Action Plans (LAPs) and establishing clearer cooperation and referral pathways. This approach would enable case managers to assess individual needs, connect refugees with relevant services and coordinate tailored pathways towards employment and social inclusion.

In Warsaw, the analysis highlighted the difficulties faced by Ukrainian refugees in accessing employment that matched their qualifications and professional experience. Despite often having strong educational backgrounds and previous work experience, many encountered language barriers, difficulties obtaining recognition of their qualifications and limited access to individualised career guidance. Fragmented support services and insufficient follow-up further complicated their transition into the local labour market. These findings underlined the importance of strengthening case management, introducing structured skills profiling and connecting employment support with community activities to promote longer-term inclusion and participation in local life.

In Arad, the assessment similarly revealed a gap between refugees' qualifications and their employment opportunities. According to data provided by the Arad County Agency for Employment in early 2025, 635 Ukrainian citizens had been employed in the county since the beginning of the conflict. However, employment did not necessarily translate into the effective use of their skills, as some qualified professionals worked in positions below their educational and professional level. Language barriers and difficulties with diploma recognition were identified as significant obstacles. The analysis also highlighted the economic vulnerability of many households, particularly those dependent on a single income, alongside gaps in coordination between public institutions and non-governmental organisations. At the same time, consultations revealed a strong willingness among local actors to cooperate, creating an opportunity to establish a more structured local partnership. The involvement of organisations such as the Union of Ukrainians in Romania, Arad branch, also offered potential for supporting language learning and community integration.

The findings informed the adaptation of ERACIS to the local contexts of Warsaw and Arad, retaining its core principles of coordinated services, personalised case management and multi-agency cooperation. They also guided the adaptation of SkillLab's digital tool to support skills profiling and career guidance. The assessments highlighted the need to address social and labour market inclusion together. These findings laid the foundation for a flexible model that could be adapted to other local contexts.

3.2 Learning from ERACIS and the Study Visit to Seville

A central element in developing ECSILI was the transfer of knowledge from ERACIS, Andalusia's Regional Strategy for Social Cohesion and Inclusion, which has been implemented since 2018. Drawing on its experience, CISJUFI prepared an analysis of the strategy covering its guiding principles, governance arrangements, operational methods and practical implementation

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across different municipalities. Particular attention was given to personalised inclusion pathways, the role of social services professionals and cooperation between local stakeholders.

This analysis provided the consortium with a practical reference for understanding how ERACIS organises local resources around the needs of vulnerable individuals. Rather than treating employment, social support and access to services as separate interventions, the approach promotes coordinated action through local partnerships and individualised case management.

To complement this preparatory work, the consortium organised a transnational study visit in Seville after the local needs assessments had been completed, enabling the training to address the specific challenges identified in Warsaw and Arad. The programme combined training on the ERACIS methodology with practical sessions on personalised socio-labour inclusion pathways, local inclusion strategies and the use of the SkillLab app.

The study visit strengthened the consortium's understanding of how the ERACIS principles could be translated into practical arrangements in the two pilot cities. It also enabled partners to identify which elements could be transferred directly and which required adaptation to local resources, institutional responsibilities and the needs of Ukrainian refugees. The knowledge gained was subsequently shared with additional professionals through local training sessions.

3.3 Adapting the SkillLab Digital Skills-Profiling Tool

Alongside the organisational and methodological adaptation of ERACIS, ECSILI introduced SkillLab, an online skills-profiling tool intended to support career guidance and labour market integration.

Led by SkillLab, the adaptation process drew on the local needs assessments and consultations with the implementing partners. The tool's career exploration component was adjusted to reflect occupations in demand, entry-level opportunities, career progression pathways and barriers affecting Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw and Arad. Occupations were mapped against the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) taxonomy to support the relevance of the career recommendations.

The platform was customised with ECSILI branding and made available in Polish and Romanian, while retaining Ukrainian for participants. Its functions enabled users to document their educational background, professional experience and other relevant life experiences, identify their skills and explore potential career paths. Case managers could use the resulting profiles to support discussions about participants' abilities, employment goals and possible routes into the labour market.

The intention was to complement, rather than replace, professional guidance. By providing a structured way to identify skills and explore career options, the tool was expected to help case managers develop more targeted support pathways and encourage refugees to consider employment opportunities beyond their previous occupations.

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3.4 Developing the Initial Framework Model

Building on the local needs assessments, the ERACIS analysis, the study visits and the adaptation of SkillLab, the consortium developed an initial Framework Model for refugee support. The model translated the principles of the Andalusian strategy into practical guidance for the two pilot cities.

It established a common methodological basis for organising local resources around individual needs, while allowing flexibility to reflect differences between Warsaw and Arad. Its main components included:

- Local coordination: developing Local Action Plans that define the roles, responsibilities and cooperation arrangements of the organisations involved.
- Individual assessment and case management: assessing participants' needs, skills, circumstances and employment readiness to determine appropriate forms of support.
- Personalised inclusion pathways: setting individual goals and identifying practical steps towards social inclusion and employment.
- Coordination of services and referrals: connecting participants with relevant social services, employment support and other resources available locally.
- Digital skills profiling: integrating SkillLab into case management procedures to support skills identification and career exploration.

The Framework Model was intended to help local organisations move beyond isolated interventions towards a more coordinated approach in which social support, employment services and community resources contribute to shared inclusion objectives.

Importantly, the model provided a common reference rather than a rigid implementation blueprint. The two cities were expected to organise their partnerships and procedures according to their existing institutional structures and available resources. This balance between a shared methodology and local flexibility became a defining feature of the ECSILI approach.

3.5 Staff Training and Preparation for Implementation

The final stage of preparation focused on equipping the professionals responsible for delivering the model. Following the study visit to Seville and the internal validation of the Local Action Plans, local training sessions were organised in Warsaw and Arad. The training schedules were aligned with the preparation of the plans to ensure that staff understood the agreed procedures, roles and responsibilities before the pilot began.

In Warsaw, 30 staff members from the Warsaw Family Support Centre (WCPR), the Warsaw Labour Office and external partner organisations took part in training covering the ERACIS methodology, individualised case management, the integration of SkillLab into existing workflows and opportunities for inter-institutional cooperation. In Arad, 20 staff members from four implementing organisations received a similar training, adapted to the city's specific Local Action Plan. Training materials, case manager guidelines and user manuals were shared with participants to support the consistent application of the methodology.

The training helped translate the Framework Model into practical working arrangements. It strengthened professionals' understanding of personalised inclusion pathways, clarified how

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different organisations could contribute to participants' support and introduced a common approach to using skills profiling within case management.

By involving professionals from multiple organisations in both cities, the training also supported the development of working relationships needed for coordinated implementation. The knowledge and materials generated through these activities remain a potential resource for the participating organisations beyond the project, providing a basis for continued cooperation and the further application of ECSILI's methods.

4. Putting the ECSILI Model into Practice: Warsaw and Arad

The ECSILI model was implemented through two Local Action Plans (LAPs), which translated the principles of ERACIS into practical arrangements for coordinated, personalised social and labour market inclusion support. While both cities followed the same overall approach, their implementation reflected differences in local institutions, partnerships and available resources. The model combined inter-institutional cooperation, individual case management, skills profiling, employment support and community activities to address the interconnected challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees.

4.1. Local Action Plans and Governance

In Warsaw, the Local Action Plan was jointly developed by the Warsaw Family Support Centre (WCPR) and the Warsaw Labour Office (UP). It established a framework for cooperation between social services and employment services, clarifying their respective responsibilities and creating opportunities for more systematic information-sharing and referrals. A key achievement was the establishment of shared responsibilities between the two departments, strengthening the connection between social support and employment services.

In Arad, the Local Action Plan was coordinated by the Social Care Directorate (DAS Arad), in partnership with the County Agency for Employment (AJOFM Arad) and two non-governmental organisations: Centrul de Vis and the Union of Ukrainians in Romania. The three partner organisations signed a protocol of understanding with DAS Arad, formalising their roles and responsibilities and providing a basis for coordinated support. The partnership brought together public services and community organisations, enabling participants to access a broader range of employment, social and integration support.

In both cities, the plans established a foundation for more integrated service provision. Staff subsequently reported improvements in communication and cooperation, with regular direct contact helping organisations better understand one another's services and coordinate their responses to participants' needs.

4.2. Recruitment and Individualised Inclusion Plans

130 Ukrainian refugees were recruited for the pilot: 80 in Warsaw and 50 in Arad. Recruitment methods reflected the local context. In Warsaw, the Labour Office identified eligible

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participants through its jobseeker database, while in Arad, DAS used its existing refugee database alongside outreach through community organisations.

Each participant was assigned a case manager (and a career counsellor in Warsaw) and supported in developing an Individualised Inclusion Plan. These plans identified personal goals, skills, employment aspirations and barriers to inclusion, translating them into practical steps and referrals to relevant services. Regular meetings allowed staff to review progress, reassess needs and adapt support accordingly.

This approach represented a shift away from one-off information provision towards continuous, person-centred guidance. Support extended beyond employment to include administrative and legal issues, access to housing and social services, language learning, emotional well-being and other barriers affecting participants' ability to integrate.

Participant feedback highlighted the value of this personalised approach. In Arad, 94% of respondents to the post-pilot survey reported being satisfied with case-management support, while the remaining 6% were very satisfied.

Written testimonies collected through the same survey asking to provide example of the support provided:

- *"They helped me find housing and provided me with information about the medical and social services available to my family."*
- *"I was often helped to find a job, but what pleased me most was having someone to talk to and work with to find the best solutions."*
- *"For work, emotional support, trust, and a lot of encouragement."*

In Warsaw, 92% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, giving case management an average rating of 4.45 out of 5. Participants particularly valued having someone who could help them navigate complex situations, identify solutions and provide encouragement throughout the process.

Written testimonies collected through the same survey asking to provide example of the support provided:

- *"Active support and assistance in resolving complex issues related to documents. Resolving certain legalization issues - not only my own, but also those of my children."*
- *"It was important to gain a new perspective on the situation and how I present myself, as well as new ideas for finding a job."*

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- *"For me, the most important thing was the psychological and motivational support from my [case] manager."*

4.3. Employment Support, Skills Profiling and Community Activities

Employment support combined individual guidance with practical workshops and opportunities to develop skills, explore career options and understand local labour markets.

In Warsaw, activities included workshops on CV preparation, job interviews, recruitment processes and employer expectations, alongside Polish speaking clubs and sessions with human resources professionals. Resilience workshops also supported participants' emotional well-being, while community events created opportunities to connect with other Ukrainians and local residents.
Participants' qualitative feedback on the activities was collected through semi-structured interviews:

"The psychological workshops were very helpful in understanding my own emotions and resources and were also interesting and useful in understanding other people".

In Arad, employment-related activities included recruitment and information sessions, practical guidance on job searching and workplace expectations, and Romanian language courses. Cultural celebrations, percussion workshops, art therapy and events involving local organisations provided additional opportunities for social interaction, emotional expression and community participation.

Participants' qualitative feedback was collected through semi-structured interviews:

"the events where I could interact with other compatriots were important. I met young people like me and became friends with them. I was happy to be part of the Ukrainian community."

Both cities also introduced SkillLab, a digital skills-profiling tool designed to help participants identify skills gained through education, professional experience and other life experiences. The platform generated career recommendations and supported case managers in exploring potential employment pathways with participants. In Arad, the tool was used from the beginning of the pilot until SkillLab's withdrawal from the project. In Warsaw, implementation began later because of the time needed to resolve data protection and GDPR-related requirements.

The tool received mixed feedback, suggesting that the tool was useful for self-reflection and skills identification but less effective in directly connecting participants with job opportunities. These experiences highlighted the importance of combining digital tools with professional guidance and practical employment support.

Overall, implementation in both cities demonstrated the value of combining individualised case management with coordinated services, employment-focused activities and

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opportunities for community participation. Although the specific activities differed, both cities sought to address the multiple dimensions of integration rather than treating employment as an isolated objective.

5. Results and Outcomes

The ECSILI pilot generated results across employment, social integration, participant well-being and institutional cooperation. While the outcomes differed between Warsaw and Arad, feedback from participants indicated that the project helped them better understand their skills, navigate local systems, identify possible employment pathways and strengthen their support networks. The findings below draw on pre- and post-pilot surveys and qualitative interviews. As the number of survey respondents varied across questions, the results should be interpreted in light of the available response samples.

5.1. Employment Outcomes

In Arad, employment indicators improved over the course of the pilot. At entry, 28% of respondents were unemployed and 38% were employed full-time. At the end of the pilot, no respondents to the output survey reported being unemployed: 46% were employed full-time, 26% part-time and 14% in temporary or irregular work. A further 9% were studying or taking a course, and 6% were self-employed or freelancing. Nevertheless, 58% were still looking for a job, indicating that employment stability and access to suitable positions remained important challenges.

Participants generally perceived the project as contributing positively to their employment situation. Among 37 respondents, 47% reported that their situation had improved and 53% that it had somewhat improved. Satisfaction with employment-related services was also high, with 86% of 34 respondents satisfied and 6% very satisfied.

In Warsaw, 91% of respondents were unemployed at the beginning of the pilot. In the post-pilot survey, 55% of respondents reported being unemployed. Participants rated the improvement in their employment situation attributable to the project at an average of 3.16 out of 5. Satisfaction with employment-related services averaged 3.89 out of 5, with 65% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied.

The findings suggest that ECSILI supported participants in progressing towards employment, although the extent of progress varied. In Arad, the post-pilot survey showed a particularly positive employment picture, while in Warsaw, unemployment remained a significant challenge. In both cities, the results also underline the distinction between entering employment and securing work that matches participants' qualifications, experience and long-term aspirations.

5.2. Social Inclusion and Well-being

Social inclusion and well-being were important dimensions of the ECSILI approach, reflecting the understanding that sustainable inclusion requires more than access to employment.

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In Arad, all 34 respondents to the post-pilot survey reported improvements in their integration and well-being. All respondents also indicated that they had someone to turn to for emotional support, practical help and support more generally. Participants described improvements in their ability to manage difficulties, greater confidence in navigating everyday life and a better understanding of available opportunities.

In Warsaw, participants rated improvements in overall integration and well-being at an average of 3.54 out of 5. A total of 52% reported that their situation had improved or significantly improved, while 10% reported no improvement. At the end of the pilot, 77% said they had someone to turn to for emotional support, and 79% reported having someone to turn to for practical help and general support.

Qualitative feedback illustrated how individualised guidance and group activities contributed to these outcomes. One participant in Warsaw explained that the project had helped them recognise their abilities and consider career options they had not previously considered. Another described feeling less anxious about the future after receiving support to address practical problems. In Arad, participants similarly highlighted the value of learning Romanian, discovering their existing skills and developing greater confidence in managing everyday challenges.

These findings suggest that ECSILI helped participants build confidence, strengthen support networks and develop a greater sense of agency, although the scale of reported improvements varied between the two cities.

5.3. Participant Satisfaction and the Value of Personalised Support

Personalised case management emerged as one of the strongest elements of the ECSILI model.

In Arad, all respondents who rated case-management support expressed satisfaction, with 94% satisfied and 6% very satisfied. In Warsaw, 92% reported being satisfied or very satisfied, and the service received an average score of 4.45 out of 5.

Participants valued both the practical and interpersonal dimensions of the support. Assistance with documentation, housing, access to services and job searching was frequently mentioned, alongside encouragement, trust and emotional support. The opportunity to discuss individual circumstances with a dedicated professional helped participants identify realistic next steps and feel less isolated when facing complex challenges.

Community activities also received positive feedback. In Warsaw, these activities achieved an average satisfaction score of 3.95 out of 5, with 69% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied.

Quotes extrapolated from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion with refugees provide insights into the participants' assessment of their participation in the project:

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- *"In general, yes, I feel that something changed. So now I can see in different way what can I represent and what kind of skills I have. And now I'm more risky. (...) now I can, for example, thinking about the job. Maybe it's not for me, but I have some skills that are suitable for this job."*

- *"Now it's like much easier. We understand some options. Because from the very beginning it was really very hard to understand something. But now it's easy. It's like... Yeah, it's really, we were, like, we were scared at the beginning. But now, but now this... we see the light at the end of the tunnel. And we are going ahead"*

- *"In practical classes with HR, I learned so much valuable stuff that my worldview changed, my fears and despair vanished - the anger I felt towards coworkers and employers. Remember we analysed that table - the difference between our and Polish mentality, the difference between our and Polish rhetoric, the difference between our and Polish approach to work, employment, and professional communication. I now understand why my colleague behaves or speaks in one way or another, I accepted this difference and let go of all this nervousness; besides, I learned to speak 'their language.' There's much less stress and negative emotions."*

- *"Even just leaving the house. Meeting interesting, educated people. Even right now we are talking here and it's pleasant for us. And contacts have definitely expanded. Of course, confidence and self-esteem grew"*

- *"First of all, I found greater peace. Before, I lived in constant anxiety about the future. Thanks to the project, I had the opportunity to find solutions to problems in my life. I dealt with my problems."*

In Arad, 66% of respondents were satisfied and 34% very satisfied, with no dissatisfaction reported. Participants highlighted the importance of meeting other Ukrainians, developing friendships, improving language skills and engaging with the wider community.

Quotes extrapolated from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion with refugees provide insights into the participants' assessment of their participation in the project:

- *"I still have difficult moments, but I handle them better"*

- *"The project didn't change my life drastically, but it helped me take the necessary steps"*

- *"I manage better now because I learned a bit of Romanian"*

- *"The information I received helped me feel better prepared when facing employers"*

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- *"I discovered how many skills I actually have"*

Taken together, these findings indicate that the combination of individual support and group activities was an important feature of the ECSILI approach, addressing both practical needs and the social dimensions of integration.

5.4. Staff Learning and Inter-institutional Cooperation

ECSILI also produced organisational outcomes by strengthening cooperation between the institutions involved in refugee support.

In Warsaw, the partnership between WCPR and the Labour Office established a more structured relationship between social services and employment services. Staff reported improved communication and a better understanding of each other's work, making it easier to coordinate support for shared participants.

In Arad, the Local Action Plan brought public institutions and NGOs together through a more formalised partnership. Case managers highlighted the value of meeting face-to-face rather than relying primarily on telephone communication, which helped establish stronger working relationships and a clearer understanding of the services available.

Training on ERACIS, individualised case management, Local Action Plans and SkillLab further strengthened staff capacity to apply an integrated approach. The practical experience gained through the pilot, alongside the procedures and guidance developed, provides a basis for continued cooperation beyond the project.

These organisational changes are particularly relevant to the transferability of ECSILI: the model depends not only on the support provided to individual refugees, but also on the capacity of local organisations to coordinate their work and sustain collaborative practices.

Some quotes gathered during the monitoring and evaluation phase of the project illustrate these outcomes:

" *The project connects us more, we learn about each organization. If we have clients from them, we can talk to our colleagues at the WCPR and ask them to talk to them again and we tell them something about these clients. Communication is better, and in the future we would like to keep this cooperation."*

- Career Counsellor A, Warsaw Labour Office

" *So, another thing that we learned in this project, it was that the… all the institutions came face to face because till now, till the project, we… they always call and speak at the phone, but now we stay at the same table, and we meet each other, know each other, and the impact of the… of this relation, it is biggest than to speak at the phone. So, this was a very good thing, and it will help for the future to continue in this way."*

- Case Managers group interview, DAS Arad

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5.5. Usefulness and Limitations of SkillLab

SkillLab supported the project's focus on recognising refugees' existing skills and exploring career options beyond their immediate employment opportunities. Its value was most evident in helping participants reflect on their professional and personal experiences, identify transferable skills and understand the competencies required for different occupations.

In Arad, 93% of users agreed or strongly agreed that the tool helped them understand their skills, while 97% reported that it helped them understand how they had acquired those skills. Similar levels of agreement were recorded for describing skills more confidently and understanding the skills required for a target profession. However, confidence in finding employment in that profession was lower, at 73%.

In Warsaw, participants reported moderately positive outcomes across the assessed dimensions, with average ratings ranging from 3.47 to 3.57 out of 5. Nevertheless, overall satisfaction with the tool was lower than for other project components. Some participants questioned its direct usefulness for finding work, suggesting that skills discovery did not always translate into concrete employment opportunities. Feedback collected during the focus group discussion with refugees:

"the experience of working with the SkillLab application can be assessed as partially valuable, although we talked at meetings with project participants and people complained about it a lot. This application has nothing to do with finding a job. It's just self-discovery, I guess."

The experience demonstrated that digital skills profiling can complement personalised career guidance, but it cannot replace direct links with employers, appropriate recognition of qualifications, language support or practical assistance with job applications. Its effectiveness also depends on integration into case-management workflows and the availability of relevant, locally adapted career recommendations.

5.6 The Updated framework Model

Following the pilot and the completion of the pilot evaluation reports, ECSILI developed an updated version of the transferable framework model for the social and labour market integration of Ukrainian refugees. Building on the original model developed during the pilot phase, the updated framework consolidated the lessons learned from the pilot implementations in Warsaw and Arad into a practical methodology for other cities and organisations seeking to develop integrated socio-labour inclusion practices for vulnerable groups. Before leaving the project SkillLab also contributed recommendations on the integration of digital tools into the model, including how these tools can support implementation and the requirements they should meet to effectively assist employment and social services.

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The updated framework promotes a shift away from fragmented service provision towards a person-centred approach in which local resources and services are organised around the needs of individuals, rather than requiring individuals to navigate disconnected systems. Its transferability lies in providing a structured methodology that can be adapted to different local contexts and target populations while maintaining a common set of principles.

The model identifies seven common principles that underpin its transfer and implementation. These are: (1) mapping and coordination of the local resource ecosystem, to identify existing services, stakeholders and resources and strengthen cooperation between them; (2) reception and comprehensive systemic assessment, to develop an understanding of individuals' interconnected social, personal and employment needs; (3) person-centred planning and co-creation of the pathway, ensuring that individualised support plans are developed in collaboration with beneficiaries and reflect their circumstances, capacities and aspirations; (4) connection between the labour market and the social and labour market inclusion of people supported by social services, promoting stronger engagement with employers and closer links between employment opportunities and social support; (5) evaluation, monitoring and evidence generation, to assess progress, identify implementation challenges and inform continuous improvement; (6) local governance and validation of the model, to ensure that the approach is relevant to local needs and supported by the institutions responsible for its implementation; and (7) scaling up into policy through advocacy and awareness raising, to encourage wider adoption of integrated inclusion practices and support their incorporation into local and regional strategies.

Together, these principles provide a common methodological foundation while allowing cities to determine how best to operationalise them according to their institutional arrangements, available resources and the needs of the populations they support.

The development of the updated framework also highlighted the organisational and resource requirements necessary for successful implementation. Effective delivery depends on the capacity of local authorities, social services, employment services and other relevant stakeholders to coordinate their work, share knowledge and develop coherent support pathways. Dedicated case management capacity is important to ensure continuity of support, while clear roles and responsibilities, effective referral mechanisms and regular communication between partner organisations help reduce fragmentation and duplication. Adequate human and financial resources are also essential to maintain these arrangements, engage beneficiaries and employers, and carry out monitoring and evaluation activities. Digital tools can support this process by facilitating skills profiling, information management and the coordination of services, provided that they respond to the practical needs of professionals and are appropriately integrated into existing workflows. The framework therefore goes beyond describing the model's core principles: it identifies the organisational capacities, cooperation mechanisms and practical conditions needed to translate them into effective local practice.

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The transferability and practical relevance of the framework were further explored through a validation workshop involving 28 participants, including 15 Andalusian stakeholders and 13 consortium staff members. The workshop focused on the design, implementation and improvement of Local Socio-Labour Inclusion Plans for vulnerable groups, drawing on the experience of the Andalusian ERACIS model and the pilot activities implemented in Warsaw and Arad. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss the transferability of the main elements of the Andalusian approach, reflect on the strengths and difficulties identified through the pilot evaluations, and identify potential improvements for future local inclusion plans. The feedback and insights gathered during the workshop informed the final version of the Updated Framework Model, strengthening its practical relevance and its potential for application in different institutional and geographical settings.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Lessons Learned

The monitoring and evaluation of the ECSILI pilot implementation in Warsaw and Arad were supported by two external experts who developed a monitoring and evaluation framework, to systematically assess the progress, outcomes and effectiveness of the pilot activities, identify areas for improvement, and examine the potential for replicating the model in other European municipalities.

The framework adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative evidence collected through input and output questionnaires with qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews, written testimonies, focus group discussions and local stakeholder consultations. City-specific monitoring matrices were also developed on the basis of each Local Action Plan, with common objectives and indicators relating to labour market integration, social integration and beneficiaries' well-being.

Data collection was carried out throughout the pilot, including during study visits to Warsaw and Arad halfway through implementation, and through additional interviews and focus groups at the end of the implementation period. The monitoring activities involved 18 refugees, 7 local stakeholders and 10 social workers.

Evidence was triangulated with project documentation and reviewed by the cities, the external expert and the European Social Network (ESN) to inform the final local evaluations.

Overall, the evaluation indicated that both Warsaw and Arad succeeded in establishing an operational model of individualised and coordinated support for refugees. The adoption of coordinated case management procedures, the development of individualised integration pathways and collaboration between municipal services provided a foundation for addressing beneficiaries' employment and social inclusion needs.

Regular monitoring meetings, study visits and exchanges between the two cities also supported the identification of implementation challenges and the development of practical

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recommendations. In Warsaw, the study visit highlighted the need to improve case management procedures and strengthen engagement with local employers to increase labour market integration opportunities. In Arad, the evaluation identified the importance of improving resource allocation, strengthening partners' contributions and expanding the network of participants involved in the initiative. Despite these achievements, both contexts faced structural barriers that limited the extent to which the support model could address refugees' needs. Legal and status insecurity emerged as a common obstacle, while the availability of suitable employment opportunities also constrained labour market integration. In Warsaw, additional challenges included stringent language requirements imposed by employers, the high costs associated with diploma recognition and limited employer willingness to recruit refugees into positions matching their qualifications. In Arad, the limited availability of qualified employment opportunities within the local community was a significant constraint. These differences underline the importance of adapting implementation to local labour market conditions, available resources and existing service networks, rather than applying a uniform approach across different municipalities.

Two main lessons emerged from the monitoring and evaluation process. First, the absence of specific key performance indicators (KPIs) in the Grant Agreement for measuring refugees' socio-labour market integration outcomes at the end of the pilot made it more difficult to assess results consistently. Future projects should therefore establish clear, measurable and realistic indicators from the outset. Furthermore, dedicated funding for interpretation should be planned for all relevant data collection activities to ensure that participants with limited English proficiency can fully express their experiences and perspectives.

Finally, the findings suggest that coordinated case management and individualised support can provide a valuable framework for refugee integration, but their effectiveness depends on factors beyond the direct control of implementing teams, including legal frameworks, employer practices, recognition of qualifications and the availability of suitable jobs. Future implementation should therefore combine tailored case management with stronger employer engagement, closer cooperation between local services, adequate partner resources and measures that respond to the specific barriers identified in each local context.

These lessons can help strengthen the effectiveness, sustainability and transferability of the ECSILI model in other European municipalities.

7. Model sustainability

7.1 Sustainability within implementing organisations (Warsaw and Arad)

The ECSILI project has strengthened the capacity of the implementing organisations to develop more integrated, person-centred approaches to social and labour market inclusion. During the final conference, speakers highlighted the development of new organisational know-how, particularly the capacity to collaborate with local institutions, develop comprehensive inclusion plans and coordinate resources around individuals' needs. A key

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achievement has been strengthening the use of case management as a means of connecting different forms of support, rather than addressing social, employment and community-related needs in isolation.

This knowledge and expertise will remain within the implementing organisations beyond the end of the ESFA grant. In total, 20 professionals were trained in Arad and 30 in Warsaw, creating a foundation for retaining and applying the project's methods and tools in future work. ECSILI has also increased awareness of the benefits of inter-institutional cooperation and provided the organisations with practical resources to support more coordinated service delivery.

Building on these foundations, sustainability efforts at the local level will focus on integrating ECSILI's approaches into existing working practices and identifying realistic opportunities to maintain cooperation beyond the project's lifetime. At the final conference, representatives from Warsaw and Arad explained they have been discussing how the project's practices could be continued after EU funding ends, while recognising that long-term implementation will depend on adequate staffing, financial resources and clearly defined institutional responsibilities.

In Warsaw, a key priority will be addressing the legal and data protection challenges that may arise when cooperation between employment and social services moves beyond the framework established by the project. Resolving these issues will be essential to maintaining information exchange and coordinated case management across institutions. The commitment expressed by local stakeholders provides a basis for addressing institutional fragmentation and applying the tools and knowledge developed through ECSILI to future cooperation.

In Arad, the main legacy will be the development of a more integrated way of working. Although case management was already used within the city's social services, ECSILI helped extend this approach to cooperation with employment services and community-based support. This has been pursued through collaboration with the county employment agency, non-governmental organisations and the Ukrainian community. The priority going forward will be to embed the lessons learned in existing procedures and identify feasible ways to sustain these partnerships, ensuring that cooperation remains centred on individuals' needs.

7.2 European Added Value

At the organisational and European levels, the European Social Network (ESN) will work to ensure that ECSILI's results continue to inform policy discussions, knowledge exchange and the development of social services. ESN will explore opportunities to secure funding for follow-up activities through relevant programmes, including the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

In addition, ESN will explore opportunities to build on ECSILI's results through the European Urban Initiative's City-to-City Exchanges, a continuously open initiative supporting peer

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learning between European cities facing similar sustainable urban development challenges. Under this initiative, Warsaw and Arad could act as peer cities, sharing their experience of adapting and implementing integrated, person-centred approaches to social and labour market inclusion with other municipalities interested in addressing similar challenges. ESN could support this process by identifying interested municipalities within its membership, facilitating matchmaking and contributing to the development of exchange concepts., it could provide a practical avenue for extending ECSILI's impact beyond the original project locations, increasing the visibility of its results and enabling Warsaw and Arad to share their experience with other European public administrations.

The consortium welcomes the opportunity to build on ECSILI and implement its approach in an improved form, informed by the experience gained during the project and the development of the Updated Framework Model. This next iteration would seek to address identified shortcomings, improve budget allocation and strengthen employer involvement, while preserving the project's core principles of individualised support, coordinated case management and cross-sectoral cooperation.

In parallel, ECSILI's results will be integrated into ESN's ongoing work, including activities supported through its operating grant. In particular, the Updated Framework Model developed by the project will be promoted as a practical reference for other public authorities and organisations interested in developing or strengthening coordinated, person-centred support services.

Regarding synergies with other EU-funded initiatives, ECSILI's final conference included the participation of the coordinator of the UNITE project, funded under the same call. Though at different governance levels, both projects emphasise individualised support for labour market inclusion, providing opportunities for mutual learning and potential future cooperation. Initial exchanges identified possible areas of complementarity, particularly the involvement of employers in inclusion activities. Further cooperation could help strengthen the links between individualised support, employment opportunities and labour market needs, building on the approaches and lessons learned through both projects.

Overall, the sustainability strategy combines the retention of knowledge within the implementing organisations, the integration of project practices into existing local services, the dissemination and further development of results through ESN's European networks, and the exploration of funding opportunities and project synergies. Maintaining these achievements will require continued institutional commitment, appropriate human and financial resources, clear responsibilities between participating services and solutions to legal and administrative barriers. While the end of the EU grant limits the resources available for continuing the original project in its entirety, ECSILI has established a foundation for preserving its key methods, further developing its tools and supporting the longer-term integration of social and labour market inclusion services.

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