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The Role of Civil Society in the Labour Market Integration of Migrants in Europe: An Introduction

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Abstract This paper serves as an introduction to a special issue that discusses the role of civil society in the labour market integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in six European countries: the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Switzerland and the UK. The paper presents a typology of civil society’s involvement in migrant labour integration—a policy-contested field—based on the relationship between non-profit and public sector organisations. Such ideal-type models are traditional public administration delivery, co-management, co-production with a partial or non-existent role for public sector organisations, and full co-production. In the six countries covered by the special issue, the existing relationship between the public sector and the civil society sector is affected by the specific social, cultural and economic contexts that underpin both their labour markets and welfare states. Although one model predominates in each of the six countries, in different ways and with different mechanisms, in all of them there is a trend towards the development of coproduction whereby the state plays either a central or a residual role.

Keywords Migration · Labour market · Welfare state · Non-profit sector

Introduction

In Europe, over recent decades, civil society’s efforts to save migrants’ lives at sea or to help them escape war and violence has become a news headline as well as a polarising political issue. However, less media attention is given to the vibrant civil society and its action that extends beyond the provision of shelter, food or clothes, or health care (Ambrosini, 2021; de Jong, 2019; Shutes, 2011). For example, there are a large number of civil society organisations (CSOs) that offer support to newcomers¹ hoping to penetrate what is for many of them an unfamiliar, and sometimes hostile, labour market. Migrants’ difficulties in finding employment are influenced by a range of factors such as restrictive legal frameworks, (Federico & Baglioni, 2021), discrimination (Larsen & Di Stasio, 2021; Wright & Clibborn, 2019), lack of job matching infrastructure in the host countries (D’Angelo et al., 2020), as well as individual trauma and physical and health conditions (Triandafyllidou, 2019). CSOs, though, can potentially play an important role in addressing these barriers and can thus facilitate better labour market integration.

Accordingly, the common thread of the papers gathered in this special issue is a research interest in the role that CSOs play in supporting different types of non-EU migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) joining

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¹ When using the term ‘newcomers’, we refer to the broader set of migrants that are in a given country, i.e. those who have recently arrived, such as asylum seekers, as well as those who have settled for some time, such as migrants with a permanent residence permit.

the labour market of European countries. While there has been a growing scholarly interest in the role CSOs generally play in integration and inclusion activities, relatively few studies have been carried out on migrants' experiences of labour market integration; indeed, this is an area that is under-researched and under-theorised within academia (Garkisch et al., 2017; Mayblin & James, 2019). More specifically, there is little evidence and just as little awareness of the capacity of CSOs to support the employability of migrants with different needs and characteristics (Garkisch et al., 2017; Ruiz Sportmann & Greenspan, 2019; Strokosch & Osborne, 2016). There are also a limited number of publications that focus on the interplay between public sector organisations and CSOs in designing, managing and providing migrant-focused employability services (Fry & Islar, 2021; Garkisch et al., 2017; Veronis, 2019). This area of research is of particular interest given that the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and in particular their labour market participation, have often been considered to be contentious policy issues (Geddes & Scholten, 2016).

Therefore, we aim to complement the academic debate on the role played by CSOs by emphasising the interplay between civil society and the public sector in the hitherto rarely observed context of the labour market integration of newcomers. We are also interested in exploring the dynamics of actors' interactions in a highly polarising policy field such as migration while joining the existing debate on coproduction, i.e. the collaboration of the public sector and CSOs in both planning and delivery services (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006), of migration-related welfare services within the broader framework of welfare state changes (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen, 2019). Hence, each of the papers in our special issue focuses on the role of CSOs in the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market whilst also exploring the interaction between CSOs and the public sector in specific national socio-economic and welfare policy contexts.

The context for our analysis is provided by six different countries, each of which is discussed in its own respective paper: the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and the UK. The choice of countries follows a 'most different system design' (Przeworski & Teune, 1970) and therefore is determined by their different political-institutional approaches towards welfare services, labour market and employment policies, and migration. For example, starting with welfare state services and the interplay of public and private actors, our approach has led us to select countries with diverse patterns of private–public collaboration in welfare services design and provision (ranging from countries where the 'public' still dominates the scene, such as Finland, to those where there has been a call for the private sector to step in, as is the case of

the UK, to countries where although no formal call has been made for private-sector aid, private companies have nevertheless had to step in to cover public gaps, such is the case for Greece and Italy). Given that for this introductory paper, the different private–public arrangements in welfare state implementation are a crucial aspect, we discuss them in greater detail in the section presenting our proposed typology.

Secondly, concerning employment policies, Finland has adopted activation and flexicurity measures, while southern European countries (e.g. Italy and Greece) have continued to rely on more rigid labour market policies and provided fewer social (welfare state-employment related) provisions (Aerschot, 2013; Eichhorst et al., 2009). Although in employment policies there is evidence for a 'contingent convergence' of instruments goals and outcomes that have the common principal purpose of a 'work-first approach' (Eichhorst & Konle-Seidl, 2008; Triantafillou, 2011), differences in terms of policymaking dynamics and implementation do exist and result in the establishment of diverse labour markets and employment policy regimes (Anxo et al., 2010; de Beer & Schils, 2009; Dingeldey & Rothgang, 2009; Gallie, 2007).

Thirdly, concerning these countries' capacity to integrate migrants into their labour market as measured by the MIPEX integration index,² our study includes countries hosting a more favourable policy environment (Finland), those who half favour labour market integration (the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom), and those hosting a slightly favourable context (Greece, Italy and Switzerland) (Solano & Huddleston, 2020).

Finally, our countries also differ in terms of other relevant institutional dimensions that may affect the dynamics underpinning the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Several studies have supported the idea that participatory and decentralised political contexts produce more responsive and redistributive policymaking (Calamai, 2009; Costa-I-Font, 2012; Simon, 1996) which sets the scene for a broader range of 'integration'-related policies. Hence, we also consider how various countries differ in terms of political institutional opportunities offered to public and private actors to deal with integration. Countries like Switzerland, and to a certain extent also the United Kingdom, have an institutional design that supports

² The MIPEX (migrant integration policy index) measures (across six continents, including all EU member states and the UK, covering the period 2007–2019) the capacity of countries to provide migrants with access to employment and targeted measures in a condition of full equality with countries' citizens. By considering a series of employment-related rights and services, the index has produced a sixfold typology, dividing countries into the following categories: (1) favourable context; (2) slightly favourable; (3) halfway favourable; (4) slightly unfavourable; (5) unfavourable; and (6) critically unfavourable. <https://www.mipex.eu/labour-market-mobility>

subsidiarity as well as decentralisation and multi-level governance which, in principle, may configure a large space made available for CSO intervention. By contrast, countries like the Czech Republic maintain strong centralisation and a weak culture of governance. Hence, integration patterns may evolve differently depending on the political-institutional context in which one is located.

Therefore, following such a ‘most different system design’, we can highlight both the similarities and differences in the responses towards those issues surrounding the labour market integration of migrants and the role CSOs play in it, thus shedding light on the causes of such patterns and variations.

This paper serves as an introduction to the special issue and it is structured as follows. In the next section, we present an overview of the barriers faced by migrants in the labour market and explore how civil society works in the field. After that, we focus on the academic debate concerning the interplay between CSOs and the public sector in designing and providing public services, particularly in relation to migration issues. We then conclude by exploring a typology of civil society provision and interplay with public sector organisations that has been developed based upon the six national-focused studies collected in this special issue.

Migrants’ Labour Market Barriers and CSOs

Migrants occupy different labour market positions and sectors across our six countries, but they have in common the fact that they face barriers to finding decent employment.³

Such barriers include legal and policy regulations related to the legal status that is conferred upon them on arrival: not all migrants are equally eligible to work. For example, in our six countries, asylum seekers must wait for a period ranging between two months (Italy) and 1 year (the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom) before being allowed to work (Federico & Baglioni, 2021). And even when they can work, there are limitations according to their country of settlement: asylum seekers are denied the option of becoming self-employed in all our countries except for Italy, and they can work in the public sector only in three out of our six countries (Finland, with some limitations, as well as the Czech Republic and Switzerland) (Ibidem).

Moreover, labour market integration is sometimes prevented by the societal context, including different forms of ‘othering’ (ranging from the stereotyping of migrants to racism or discriminatory behaviours) that discourage newcomers from working or that expose them to exploitation and harassment in their workplace (Čaněk, 2016; Greenspan et al., 2018). Furthermore, given the important role that social connections still play for people finding employment in Europe, the lack of social capital (or the reliance upon primarily an ethnic-bonding cluster of social interactions) might also prevent migrants from finding decent jobs (Aguilera, 2002; Kracke & Klug, 2021).

Additionally, the integration might be further undermined by the individual capacities of migrants, including their education, skills, and mental and physical well-being, but also their circumstances (D’Angelo et al., 2020), as well as the lack of support available to single-parent migrants with dependent children (Milewski et al., 2018).

Some of these barriers are common across most types of migrants, while others are more specific, depending on the migrant’s personal circumstances and on their reasons for migrating. In this vein, we should differentiate between, on the one hand, migrants that join a host country with the primary motivation of finding a job (so-called economic migrants) or reuniting with a family member, and, on the other hand, migrants who escape war and violence and enter Europe with a humanitarian protection permit. The former will potentially know the country already, which would prove useful when looking for a job, and very likely they will also have the opportunity to take advantage of ethnic ties and acquaintances, which is instrumental to finding employment (see, for example, Leschke & Weiss, 2020). On the other hand, a refugee or an asylum seeker cannot choose their country of destination, has typically experienced traumatic situations, and therefore requires a diversified pattern of support to be able to find employment (de Jong, 2019).

There are several barriers that stand in the way of all types of migrants. One is the lack of language proficiency: acquiring at least the basic knowledge of the host country language is widely considered to be an important condition to finding employment (Auer, 2018). Another barrier common across migrants’ typologies is acquiring knowledge of the host country’s admin/bureaucratic system (navigating the new environment), determining where to find job vacancy announcements, understanding which documents are necessary to be hired, how to prepare a CV, how to approach a job interview and how to negotiate an employment contract (Garkisch et al., 2017). Furthermore, a range of barriers experienced across countries and types of migrants are those connected with the possession and recognition of skills. Qualifications and skills are important

³ We adopt the ILO definition of a ‘decent’ job as a job that pays a fair income and guarantees a secure form of employment, safe working conditions, and freedom of expression and organisation. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>

Table 1 Overview of labour market integration barriers and how CSOs tackle them

Barriers		CSOs activities	
		Advocacy	Service
Legal/ policy	Issues with working permits related with status, contractual issues	Policy/legal change, participation in decision-making and advisory bodies, petitions and open letters	Legal counselling, legal support
Social	Discrimination, racism, lack of social connections	Pro-migrant campaigns targeting policy makers and the media; development of counter-narratives to xenophobic discourses; raise awareness about violations of working rights and exploitation	Multicultural events, opportunities of socialisation between local populations and migrants, job matching services for newcomers
Individual	Language proficiency, health and wellbeing issues, lack of work experience in the country, underdeveloped soft skills	Advocate for more language courses, tailored services and psycho-physical needs	Provision of language courses, health and wellbeing services, opportunities of training and internships or volunteering to acquire country work experience, support in administrative and bureaucratic procedures

in accessing work (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014), while soft skills such as understanding the cultural differences in a workplace enable smoother access to the labour market. CSOs aim to address the barriers described above by helping newcomers find a job that suits their skills and aspirations and that pays a decent salary (Ager & Strang, 2008).

CSOs stay active in the labour market integration field by providing, on the one hand, services such as education, language or skills training that mitigate the barriers to the employment of newcomers (Garkisch et al., 2017), and, on the other hand, by advocating through, for example, political advocacy for barriers to be abolished or reduced (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen, 2019), and, in several cases, by pursuing both strategies (Christensen & Alnoor, 2006). This is confirmed by the articles in our special issues, in which CSOs are shown to deploy both advocacy and service-related actions (see Table 1), as described in the following part.

In the papers presented in this special issue, CSOs are shown to tackle legal-policy barriers and to advocate for a variety of changes. For example, they strive for a more flexible visa system allowing migrants' status 'transfer': in all our countries, refugees cannot change their legal status to that of 'migrant worker' when they find employment, which de facto is a way to undermine their employment stability and career development. Similarly, CSOs lobby for a visa system that supports the accessibility of employability services for those migrants whose legal status prevents them from accessing such services. Besides advocacy, CSOs also provide services, which in the case of legal and policy barriers are primarily legal counselling and legal support actions.

Concerning society-based barriers, such as racism or xenophobia, on the advocacy side, CSOs organise campaigns to expose and combat discriminatory and racialised discourses on migration, as well as to shed a light on the populist 'misuse' of migration as a topic for political competition. On the service provision side, CSOs organise events providing opportunities for multiculturalism and socialisation for newcomers, which aim to broaden migrants' social connections and raise awareness of migrants among host communities.

Finally, CSOs try to break down barriers occurring at the individual level by advocating for better opportunities in the provision of translation services or language courses which, in many cases, are inadequate and criticised for offering a 'one size fits all' model that does not cater to the full range of language proficiency and learning capacity levels among newcomers.⁴ CSOs therefore often advocate for further action by social and health services to provide more tailored interventions. On the services side, meanwhile, they also provide opportunities for training and volunteering, which can translate into viable experiences to help them gain employment.

To summarise, the papers included in our special issue highlight that CSOs can mitigate several barriers preventing labour market integration. However, they also show that CSOs' involvement should not be idealised and that there are some limitations to CSOs' activities that need to be considered. For example, extant studies suggest that some of the aims of CSOs are hindered due to their material dependency on the public sector in producing and

⁴ These initiatives further include calls for more flexible schedules for the courses, aligned with the working schedule of migrants or reflecting their parenting commitments.

delivering services (Grubb & Frederiksen, 2021). This is particularly risky in a contentious policy field such as migration, where there is a risk of funding discontinuity or potentially mission drift. Furthermore, in the humanitarian crisis contexts, CSOs tend to inappropriately victimise migrants (Ambrosini, 2021), thus increasing the perception of migrants and newcomers as passive objects in need of ready-made assistance and whose agency is only a residual concern in the CSOs' activities.

Interplay Between CSOs and the Public Sector

Our scholarly interest in civil society activation in this field also reflects a wider interest in how CSOs have become key players in the making or delivering of social policy and services and in the current development of the European welfare state (Johnston & Brandsen, 2017). As a common European characteristic of the *post-trente glorieuses*, a neoliberal development of the welfare state started to emerge in the late 1970s, although with different degrees of intensity. The European welfare state has been implemented increasingly through the intervention of both for-profit-seeking and not-for-profit private actors, who have deployed their services in a range of combinations with public authorities, either complementing or partially or totally replacing them (Evers, 1995; Kramer, 2000).

A paradigmatic case is provided by the United Kingdom, where, after 2010, a central policy strategy of the ruling Conservative Party manifesto became known under the name of 'the Big Society' (Kisby, 2010). The key values of the Big Society were to be manifested through a greater level of voluntarism, thus paving the way for charities, private enterprises, and social enterprises to be much more involved in the running of public services. In practice, under the Big Society, public authorities engaged in more contractual relationships with CSOs, but this was complemented by sharp cuts to the budgets of public services (Levitas, 2012). Spending cuts have resulted in a greater level of voluntarism combined with the marketisation of third-sector providers (Han, 2017). Reductions in resources and a more prominent focus on contracting has also resulted in a scarce residual capacity for engagement in policy activity (Ware, 2017). This is particularly true for CSOs working in the migration field. The austerity measures introduced over the last decade have particularly affected CSOs that work with migrants, reducing the availability of services (and specifically those in the field of employability) for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Calo et al., 2022). Moreover, providing services for the UK Government (such as the Home Office department) does not come without tension and the reputational risk of receiving funds or negotiating objectives with a UK

Government which has consistently demonstrated its concern for border control rather than integration (Squire, 2017).

In Finland, there is a close and firm connection between civil society and the state but a clear division of labour between the two (Saukkonen, 2013). In recent years, due to the outsourcing of government services and a tightening of municipal budgets (Pirkkalainen et al., 2018), CSOs, with the help of the state and municipalities, have had a somewhat larger role in organising certain welfare services (Saukkonen, 2013). In this country, migrant labour market integration policy is provided through universalist bureaucratic social service structures, which aim to make available a high level of active labour market services for the target population of working-age unemployed migrants (Bontenbal & Lillie, 2021). Social services are largely the prerogative of the state (Salamon and Anheier, 1999: 229) but CSOs also play a secondary, though important, role (Numerato et al., 2019; Sama, 2012). According to Bontenbal and Lillie (2021) in this special issue, in Finland, CSOs compensate for gaps in official integration programmes' service coverage by offering more differentiated, flexible and innovative labour market services, which are sometimes more closely tailored to the situations of the recipients. The role of CSOs is especially important for those who cannot participate in official integration training. However, due to their limited nature, CSOs cannot provide a comprehensive solution to migrant labour market integration needs. Indeed, CSOs do not replace the offerings of the official integration programmes and their enlarged role has shifted their 'core business' away from advocacy (Pirkkalainen et al., 2018; Saukkonen, 2013).

Switzerland has a prominent civil society sector with strong historical ties with the public sector. 'Voluntary and civil society work in Switzerland are often considered complementary to government services and as desirable services for the society' (Dannecker, 2017, p. 58). The Swiss bottom-up federalism is embedded in the principle of subsidiarity which also nourishes the relationships between CSOs and the state. Under this principle, nothing that can be done at a lower political level should be done at a higher political level. The Swiss confederation can provide policy guidelines in the field of migration to cantons—the equivalent of local states—but these have discretionary powers in their implementation (see Fernández Guzmán Grassi & Nicole-Berva, 2022, in this special issue).

CSOs in both Greece and the Czech Republic can be characterised as weak (in the Czech case, see Fagan, 2005; for the Greek case, see Kalogeraki, 2020) and, for Greece in particular, underdeveloped. In the Czech Republic, although the number of CSOs has increased in the post-socialist era, civic engagement outside the sphere of leisure is relatively low (Fagan, 2005)—a trend also mirrored in

the area of migration. According to Čada et al. (2021), in the Czech Republic, economic stability accompanied by a relatively low number of migrants has brought about a system in which CSOs represent crucial actors in social policy processes and key partners of local, regional and central governments in social policy implementation. Service-providing CSOs are usually highly formalised and actively employ expert knowledge hand in hand with the provision of specialised services based on specific skills and knowledge, education, and experience. Although CSOs are recognised as being important, if not essential, actors in integration, it has been argued that their role is undermined due to a lack of financial resources (Bauerová, 2018).

In Greece, the combination of the economic downturn with the refugee crisis has led to the activation of a large spectrum of civil society managing the humanitarian crisis (Chtouris & Miller, 2017). The so-called ‘refugee crisis’ has resulted in an upgrade of the role that CSOs play in social solidarity, education, employment promotion, and so forth (Kourachanis et al., 2019), as well as an increase in institutionalised and atypical CSOs seeking to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees (Kalogeraki, 2020).

Finally, in Italy, according to Collini, (2022) in this special issue, the role of CSOs constitutes a pillar of the Italian welfare model in line with the Southern European welfare model characterised by residual public support and large family intervention, especially in care services (see Fazzi, 2013; Ferrera, 1996). Historically, CSOs have been involved in welfare politics in mutual accommodation with the state, playing a substitutive role in providing basic public services. The expansion of the activities of the third sector over recent decades has reinforced the division of labour between the state, which defines welfare policies, and the CSOs providing the services (Ranci, 1994). In line with its key role in the welfare system, the third sector has been widely acknowledged as crucial for providing assistance and integration of migrants (see, among others, Ambrosini, 2013; Vellecco & Mancino, 2015).

Towards a Typology of Civil Society Activation on Migrant Labour Integration

Based on the articles of this special issue, considering the relationship between CSOs and public sector organisations specifically in terms of migrant integration services, there are four main types of interplay between CSOs and the public sector emerging across our six countries: (a) traditional public administration planning and delivery; (b) co-management; (c) co-production with a partial or no role for public sector organisations; and (d) full co-production (see Table 2).

Before outlining the different models, offering a brief introduction to co-production will help to establish a better understanding of definitions and terminology. Co-production is a broad concept that can assume different meanings and definitions in a wide variety of contexts (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006; Ewert & Evers, 2014; Verschuere et al., 2012). In this paper, we use the definition that places a focus on the role of third-sector organisations and their relationships with the state in delivering public sector services (Bovaird, 2007; Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006). In this definition, co-production is separated from co-governance and co-management (Brandsen & Pestoff, 2006). While co-production includes the collaboration of the public sector and CSOs in both planning and delivery services, co-governance is conceptualised as involving CSOs in planning services. Co-management instead sees the role of non-profit organisations only in delivering public services (Bovaird, 2007; Pestoff, 2012).

Countries that fall within the category of traditional public administration delivery, such as the Czech Republic and Finland, are characterised by commanding the dominant position of the state that influences the majority of integration services in place to support newcomers. In the Czech Republic, this is exemplified by the strong role of the state in setting the agenda of integration services in which CSOs have relatively limited space for manoeuvre. In Finland, there is a developed pattern of services in the tradition of the high involvement of the state in social affairs as part of the Finnish welfare universalism. However, as discussed respectively by Čada et al. (2021) and by Bontenbal and Lillie (2021) in this special issue, notwithstanding the key position of the state, in both countries non-profit organisations play a significant role in the provision of integration services (Czech Republic) or in designing and providing policies (Finland), thus moving the relationship between the public sector and third-sector organisations towards a co-management or co-production typology. For example, in the Czech Republic, CSOs operating in migration have established strong collaborative networks by trying to conduct more critical, advocacy-driven initiatives and, consequently, over the last several years, the relationship with the public sector (both at the local level in big cities and at the national level) has improved. However, CSOs still have only a limited role in influencing the agenda or everyday praxis of the public sector. By contrast, in Finland, while there are legitimate concerns about CSO ‘mission-drift’, co-optation, and pressures on welfare universalism resulting from CSOs’ growth, the dominant trend has been one of synergic cooperation. However, the state still plays a sizeable role, and its retreat from active labour market policy involvement has been limited, meaning that outsourcing labour

Table 2 The typology of civil society intervention in migrants’ labour market integration

	Traditional public administration delivery/co-management	Traditional public administration delivery/co-governance/co-production	Co-production (but residual role of public sector)	Co-production (but residual role of public sector)	Full co-production	Co-management
	Czech Republic	Finland	Greece	Italy	Switzerland	United Kingdom
State—civil society in the policy process and service delivery	State leads the way, civil society used <i>longa manus</i> to fill gaps, limited participation in decision-making and advocacy	Civil society fully part of the policy process via social dialogue/tripartite agreements	Civil society fills the important gaps left by a limited public/state action both in service and advocacy	Civil society collaborates with the state (service implementation) but does also play an active role of advocacy	State civil society collaborate in the policy design and implementation (typical Swiss policy process where policy is pre-structured in the society)	Civil society policy implementer and active advocate, but not relevant in policy making. Importance of migrants communities, diasporic associations, etc
Traditions of civil society in the sector	Professionalised and institutionalised NGOs, post-socialist context, marginal role of charities	Charities	Charities	Social cooperatives, social economy	Social cooperatives, charities	Charity, social economy, BAME

market integration services to CSOs has not been a major trend.

Countries in which the public sector has always played a residual role in delivering public services in the field of labour market integration, as is the case for Greece and Italy, are characterised by dynamics where CSOs take the lead in implementing and often designing services to support the diverse needs of newcomers, as Bagavos and Kourachanis (2021) and Collini (2022), respectively, explain in their articles. In these countries, the residual public sector intervention opens spaces for CSOs to play a major role in facilitating integration in the labour market in a partial co-production process that sees the involvement of civil society actors in both planning and delivering services. This is particularly true for a highly contested issue, especially in countries that have a very high unemployment rate and/or an increase in populism and right-wing governments. In Italy, legislation and policies have had a relevant impact in shaping the current role of CSOs as they are entrusted by the state to design and manage a prominent part of the reception system and integration programmes. However, legislation approved in 2018 under the auspices of a right-wing populist Home Affairs minister had a major impact on CSOs by limiting the number and types of beneficiaries of integration services and reducing funds, forcing CSOs to become primarily the operators of what have become detention centres. While some potential examples of cooperation between the public sector at the local level and CSOs exist, these are generally scattered

and isolated. In Greece, CSOs (and in particular NGOs) have attempted to manage the lack of a governmental policy on migration by organising the majority of services related to integration, while the public sector reacted to the emergency largely through monitoring and funds allocation responsibility.

Another category includes the UK, where, as argued by Calò et al., (2021) in this special issue, civil society often intervenes in the policy implementation of labour market services as a result of a neoliberal process of public retrenchment that began in the Thatcher era and was then never properly redressed by the following administrations. In the field of migration and integration in the labour market, the services delivered by third-sector organisations are limited due to the scarcity of funding and recent years’ public budget cuts. However, they represent one of the very few vehicles of integration for the most vulnerable groups and also play a small role in influencing the design of new services and policies (especially at the central level), representing an example of co-management process. CSOs primarily occupy a space of collaborative influence (aimed at improving the system without taking any political stance) more than service delivery or being partners in designing policy and promoting new services (an exception could be the New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy promoted by the Scottish Government, which potentially offers a space for more effective forms of partnership, although it is still in an early phase of implementation), and thus have limited impact on policy change (Calò et al.,

2021). Thus, although the concept of co-production has been a mantra over the last few years in the understanding of CSO–public sector relations in the UK, this is not mirrored in terms of the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, for whom CSOs mainly occupy a space of collaborative influence more than service delivery or as a partner in designing policy and promoting new services.

Finally, the last category includes Switzerland, and, in the case of this special issue in particular, the case of the Canton of Geneva, an example of co-production, which, as explained by Fernández Guzmán Grassi and Nicole-Berva (2022) in this special issue, is typical for a context where the policy process is normally pre-structured before reaching institutional decision making by a mutual understanding and agreements between social, economic and institutional-political actors (Kriesi, 1995). Most of the relationships between the public sector and the CSOs are contingent on the issue of funding, and most of the programmes are the result of collaboration with public institutions.

The models used above and summarised in Table 2 are useful in better understanding these special issue papers' common themes and in providing an overview of the similarities and differences between national contexts. We conclude this introductory paper by presenting in greater detail the special issue articles.

The Special Issue Papers

Starting with the Czech case, Čada et al. (2021) argue that despite the strong centralisation of the Czech migration policy, the government shows a limited interest in migrants' integration issues. Migration is primarily understood instrumentally as a tool for supporting the economic development of the country, while also serving as an issue to promote a securitisation agenda. In such a context, CSOs play a substantial role in integration services, although they play only a marginal role in policy-making. The provision of services is based on institutionalised and professionalised initiatives rather than on volunteering. Czech migration CSOs are typically highly dependent on funding provided by the state or transnational funding. In such a context of political constraints and fund dependency, civil society meta-organisations (i.e. federations or umbrella organisations) become crucial actors in promoting civil society activities to influence the policymaking process and to protect its members from the risk of political retaliation.

Moving to the Finnish context, Bontenbal and Lillie (2021) demonstrate how CSOs operate alongside official integration services. In other words, CSOs can extend rather than undermine the strong roots of the Finnish

welfare universalism and also act as proper co-producers of services in the field of migrant labour market integration. Such a role of welfare state 'extension' relies on the capacity of the third sector to provide flexible and innovative solutions, thereby reflecting the specific and differentiated demands of newcomers. The operational capacity of CSOs enables the provision of services to those actors who are not entitled to publicly provided support.

Concerning the Swiss case, Fernández Guzmán Grassi and Nicole-Berva (2022) focus on the resilience of CSOs amidst economic and political changes in the Canton of Geneva, Switzerland. They argue that political and economic changes in the migration field provoke CSOs' organisational vulnerability, manifesting as internal challenges to organisations' sense-making, identification of beneficiaries and service provision. Yet, they also illustrate how CSOs negotiate diverse roles in the labour integration of migrants embedded in a dynamic system of interdependence with state institutions and labour market actors. Hence, CSOs are capable of adaptation and response to challenges, showing resilience and success as drivers of migrants' labour market integration.

The case of Greece is discussed in Bagavos and Kourachanis' (2021) paper, which explores the role of CSOs in protecting rights, promoting social inclusion and providing support to a growing number of migrants and refugees. They also discuss the pivotal role that CSOs play in terms of humanitarian aid and provision of basic services in a context of increasing public service retrenchment. In the Greek context, public authorities are responsible for monitoring and allocating European Union funds, but CSOs are the actors required to think, design and implement integration services. However, the overall political framework and the public purpose that should underpin any integration policies are absent, leaving CSOs to provide services with scarce policy recognition and support.

In regards to the UK, meanwhile, Calò et al. (2021) show that austerity measures have particularly affected CSOs working in the migration field, leading to a reduction of services (and specifically those in the field of employability) at a time of increasing migration and therefore increasing needs. The paper argues that CSOs are collaborators of public authorities in integration services, aiming to improve the system without taking any political stance, thereby becoming more partners in the design of policy and new services than proper vectors of policy change.

To conclude, Collini (2022) discusses the Italian case, where CSOs navigate difficult waters amidst a residual, if not obstructive, role of the state in migrants' labour market integration. The state provides funds for a limited number of provisions but simultaneously promotes a restrictive and punitive migration legal framework. Funding is addressed primarily to support broader integration programmes

targeting humanitarian migrants (refugees, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection measures) which exclude most of the other categories of migrants who would still benefit from them. Hence, while sometimes CSOs succeed in creating effective labour market programmes and activities, especially when they partner with local authorities, their action suffers from the lack of a nationwide strategy or an overall supportive policy framework. Hence, CSOs' impact is limited in terms of both the number of beneficiaries and also geo-spatial scope, as they are not homogeneously diffused nor evenly capable across the country's regions.

Concluding Remarks

This special issue introduction intends to provide a roadmap to inspire scholars, practitioners and policymakers interested in the labour market integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to focus their attention on CSOs. In this introductory paper, we have presented a typology of civil society involvement in migrant labour integration that is based upon the relationship between non-profit/societal and public sector organisations. Such ideal-type models are traditional public administration delivery, co-management, co-production with a partial or no role for public sector organisations, and full co-production. In the six countries that the papers of the special issue discuss, the existing relationship between the public sector and the non-profit sector is affected by their specific social, cultural and economic contexts of their labour market, welfare state and attitudes towards migrants' integration. Although different national contexts host different forms of interplay between the public sector and CSOs, which we have summarised into a typology, we understand such typical arrangements in a given context as 'prevailing' but not as unique, given that, for example, the state support is often situational and is expressed through everyday operational practices (Fehsenfeld & Levinsen, 2019) rather than through a stable and 'systemic' alliance between civil society and public actors.

We hope that future studies will advance our analysis of the role of CSOs, thus broadening the focus on other areas of integration and shedding light on the important role that non-profit organisations play in supporting vulnerable yet important people living in our societies. Future studies should then focus on the effectiveness of CSOs in improving the lives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as well as favouring their access to education, housing, and health services. Moreover, exploring whether and how CSOs include and promote the voices of migrants is another important way to enhance our understanding of CSO's impact on migrants' and communities' lives.

Furthermore, future research could explore the tensions existing in some cases between the public sector and CSOs, particularly in a politically contentious field such as migration, producing research that compares and contrasts different contexts.

Finally, studying whether and how CSOs in collaboration or sometimes in contrast with public sector organisations might affect for the good the life of migrants can suggest new ways to improve the services provided, the inter-organisational collaboration developed, and hopefully how to best support people to find sustainable and valuable employment.

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