

# Building Inclusive Futures: Integration Strategies for Third-Country Nationals in Europe

*A Transnational Analysis of Barriers, Best Practices, and Migrant Voices  
Across Eight EU Member States*

*WP2 Research Report of the AMIR Project*



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This report also avoids the term "economic migrant," often seen as reductive. In line with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and scholars such as Maya Goodfellow, we recognise that migratory movements are complex and diverse. Inclusive terms like "migrants" or "refugees and migrants" reflect the varied experiences of people on the move.



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## 1. Introduction

As global migration patterns continue to evolve, the integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) has become a key focus of research and policy development. TCNs often face significant barriers to fully participating in their new communities—barriers shaped by immigration status, cultural background, and socio-economic circumstances. In response, national integration policies aim to address these challenges by fostering inclusion and equality across vital sectors such as education, housing, employment, health, and social services.

The project “**A Peer Mentoring and Capacity Building Integration Strategy to Ensure TCN Inclusion at Regional and Local Level (AMIR)**” is a transnational initiative funded by the European Commission’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF – Project No. 101140907). Coordinated by APG23 (Italy), AMIR brings together partners from across Europe, including ABD (Spain), Subjective Values Foundation (Hungary), EureCons (Germany), Codeca (Cyprus), Forum Réfugiés (France), Föreningen Maracana (Sweden), KMOP (Greece), and ANCI Emilia Romagna (Italy).

AMIR aims to strengthen the social and economic inclusion of TCNs through developing, testing, and evaluating innovative local and regional integration strategies, focusing on employment, housing, and financial literacy—recognised as key pillars for sustainable integration.

One of the project’s core elements is its peer mentoring and capacity-building approach, designed to empower TCNs while equipping local stakeholders and service providers with the tools to create more inclusive environments. Through the development of pilot programmes, AMIR promotes practices that benefit both migrants and host communities, fostering social cohesion and mutual support and understanding.

In the initial phase, the project conducted an in-depth analysis, including a literature review exploring the current conditions and integration strategies across partner countries. The project has also established focus groups and interviews involving migrants, migrant-led organisations, and public agencies working with migrants in education, labour market access, and social integration. These participatory spaces have fostered meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, helped co-design good practices, and informed the project’s strategic direction—especially on issues related to housing, employment, and financial empowerment.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research Design:

This national report adopts a qualitative research design to explore the integration experiences of third-country nationals (TCNs), focusing on employment, housing, and financial literacy. The study aims to document individual-level challenges as well as systemic responses by collecting good practices and implementing focus groups. The findings will inform the development of a capacity-building and peer mentoring programme designed to enhance inclusion strategies at local and regional levels.

A comprehensive literature review was also conducted to frame the research, examining current integration strategies across key sectors—education, employment, healthcare, and social inclusion. It explores how targeted policies address challenges in recognising qualifications, accessing services, and the rights of asylum seekers, recognised refugees, and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, including vulnerable groups and unaccompanied minors. It also incorporates recommendations from migrant associations and the Ombudsman, highlighting both gaps and promising practices.

### 2.2. Sampling Strategy:

The study employed a purposive sampling strategy to ensure diverse representation aligned with the research objectives. Three focus groups were conducted, each consisting of 8–10 participants. These groups included TCNs from various national backgrounds, representatives of migrant associations, and members of local communities or social services. Particular attention was given to including stakeholders actively engaged in migrant education, employment, and community integration. This inclusive approach enabled a multifaceted understanding of integration challenges and responses.

In addition, the research involved mapping at least five good practices per country, prioritising those implemented locally and focusing on the key thematic areas: job integration, housing, and financial literacy. Additional practices addressing broader issues such as health access were also considered relevant.

### 2.3. Data Analysis:

The qualitative data collected through focus group discussions were analysed using thematic analysis. This method enabled the systematic identification of recurring patterns and themes across participant responses, particularly regarding employment access, vocational training, social participation, and systemic barriers. Thematic analysis proved instrumental in capturing the lived experiences of migrants and the social dynamics



that shape their integration. By clustering insights around common themes, the study offers practical guidance for enhancing integration policy practice.

#### **2.4. Ethical Considerations and Limitations:**

The research adhered strictly to ethical standards to protect participant rights and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the data collection and analysis process. Focus group discussions were conducted in a culturally and gender-sensitive manner to foster a respectful and inclusive environment.

While the qualitative approach allows for rich, in-depth insights, the relatively small sample size and context-specific focus may limit the generalisability of the findings. However, the methodology offers a valuable lens into the perspectives, needs, and systemic gaps experienced by TCNs, especially concerning employment, housing, and financial literacy.

### **3. European analysis of the Third National Countries (TNC)' migration population**

Integrating Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) remains a pressing and multifaceted challenge within the European Union. TCNs—individuals residing legally in EU countries without EU or EFTA citizenship—play a vital role in the Union's social and economic landscape. However, many face persistent barriers to accessing employment, housing, financial services, education, and healthcare. Legal uncertainty, language barriers, discrimination, and limited recognition of qualifications often exacerbate these challenges. Children, women, and individuals with health conditions are particularly vulnerable, often encountering the most severe obstacles to full social and economic participation. EU member states have developed a range of integration strategies, but implementation and outcomes vary significantly.

This report explores these dynamics through the experience of eight EU countries involved in the project—Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Sweden—offering a broader perspective on each context's specific challenges and opportunities. Understanding the lived experiences of TCNs is essential for building inclusive, evidence-based policies across the Union. In the following sections, we will closely examine these challenges and opportunities country-by-country, highlighting the specific contexts and integration approaches in each of the eight EU member states.

## 4. National Reports

To ensure consistency across all national contributions, each report has followed the same structure, outlined as follows:

1. Analysis of the Migrant Population (TCNs): A demographic overview of third-country nationals in each country, using national statistics and other reliable sources to provide insight into migrant profiles and trends.
2. National Integration Policies and Measures: Examining each country's integration strategies, policy frameworks, and institutional responsibilities supporting migrant inclusion.
3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process: Identification of the main obstacles migrants face, often shaped by legal and socio-economic conditions.
4. Best Practice Examples: Case studies or initiatives demonstrating effective integration and support approaches.
5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities: First-hand perspectives and testimonies that reflect lived experiences, offering qualitative depth to the report.
6. Concluding Remarks: A summary of key findings and considerations for improving integration.

This standard structure ensures that each national report aligns with the broader objectives of the project while allowing for country-specific insights.





#### 4.1 National Report CYPRUS



This national report was compiled by CODECA (Centre for Social Cohesion, Development and Care).

#### 4.1.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

As of January 1, 2023, Cyprus has approximately 90.455 third-country nationals residing there, which accounts for 9.8% of its population.<sup>1</sup> Cyprus has one of the highest relative shares of foreign-born individuals in the EU, accounting for 26.9% of its total population and one of the most significant proportions of non-EU citizens (24%)<sup>2</sup>. According to the UNHCR Cyprus Fact Sheet<sup>3</sup> published in February 2025, population statistics indicate 43.307 refugees and 29.541 asylum seekers. It also identifies the top three countries of origin for refugees as 20.407 from Ukraine, 14.830 from the Syrian Arab Republic, and 2.599 from Palestine. The foremost three countries of origin for asylum seekers are 14.303 from the Syrian Arab Republic, 3.766 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 2.499 from Cameroon.

Recent trends indicate a notable decrease in asylum applications, dropping from 11,617 in 2023 to 6,777 in 2024<sup>4</sup>. Approximately 20,500 applications are pending at the Asylum Service, and 6,900 appeals await resolution at the International Protection Administrative Court.

In Cyprus, the distribution of third-country nationals (TCNs) across urban and rural areas is closely linked to employment opportunities and regional characteristics. Urban centres, especially Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, and Paphos, attract migrants due to diverse job opportunities in services, construction, and industry.

#### 4.1.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

The Republic of Cyprus has presented its National Action Plan for Integration and Social Inclusion 2024-2026, which the Ministry of the Interior prepared and approved. This plan focuses on integration measures, emphasising housing, employment, skills, health, and education. Additionally, it is implementing the project 'Building Structures for Intercultural Integration in Cyprus' in partnership with the Intercultural Cities Programme and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM)<sup>5</sup>, along with NGOs and migrant associations. Moreover, a toolkit has been developed to measure social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> [Country factsheet 2023: Cyprus](#)

<sup>2</sup> [EU population diversity by citizenship and country of birth - Statistics Explained](#)

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR. (2025, February). Bi-annual fact sheet: Cyprus. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/media/bi-annual-fact-sheet-2025-02-cyprus/>

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR. (2024, December). *Cyprus integration fact sheet*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved March 21, 2025, from [https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2025/02/UNHCR\\_Cyprus\\_Integration-Fact-Sheet\\_2024.12\\_ENG.pdf/](https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2025/02/UNHCR_Cyprus_Integration-Fact-Sheet_2024.12_ENG.pdf/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/structural-reform-support\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/about/departments-and-executive-agencies/structural-reform-support_en)

**Roles of institutions and responsibilities for migrant integration:** The Department of the Deputy Ministry of Migration handles migration issues affecting the daily lives of Cypriot citizens and foreign nationals living in Cyprus. It serves as a primary source of information for all state authorities on Migration Policy and the Integration of Third-Country Nationals Integration<sup>6</sup>. The Asylum Service<sup>7</sup> is responsible for examining applications for international protection in the first instance and coordinating and supervising reception centres' operations for applicants and their families. The Republic of Cyprus has unveiled its National Action Plan for Integration and Social Inclusion 2024-2026<sup>8</sup>, a comprehensive strategy designed to promote the successful integration of migrants through targeted measures in key sectors such as housing, employment, and healthcare.

**Education:** In Cyprus, all children are entitled to free education in public schools, with mandatory attendance at pre-primary, primary, and middle school or up until the age of 15<sup>9</sup>.

**Employment:** Asylum seekers can enter the labour market nine months after submitting their application for international protection, in specific sectors that reflect labour market needs<sup>10</sup>. They are entitled to essential social welfare support once registered with the Public Employment Services as job seekers. Recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are granted full access to the labour market with rights equal to those of Cypriot citizens.

**Allocated funds:** The Republic of Cyprus has allocated €59,127,196 for the 2021-2027 programming period under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)<sup>11</sup>. The managing authority for the AMIF programme in Cyprus is the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior.

#### 4.1.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

Migrants in Cyprus face significant integration challenges, particularly in accessing the labour market, overcoming language barriers, and securing stable housing. These issues are interconnected and significantly impact migrants' ability to achieve economic stability and social inclusion. Language barriers pose a significant concern, hindering migrants' opportunities to obtain better jobs and fully participate in the workforce.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.cy/en/yfypourgeiou-metanastefsis-kai-diethnous-prostasias/>

<sup>7</sup> [ASYLUM SERVICE - Mission](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Cyprus: New action plan for migrant integration - European Commission](#)

<sup>9</sup> The Primary and Secondary Education (Compulsory Attendance and Provision of Free Education) Laws of 1993, as amended. [http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1993\\_1\\_24/full.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/non-ind/1993_1_24/full.html)

<sup>10</sup> [Conseil de l'Europe - brochure A4 portrait](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Funds for migrant integration in Cyprus | European Website on Integration](#)



**Immigration Status:** Asylum seekers face a 9-month waiting period before they can work<sup>12</sup>. They typically live in temporary housing provided by the state or NGOs while their applications are being processed.

**Labour Market Challenges:** Certain challenges can limit TCNs' economic contributions and increase dependency on state support. Asylum seekers can work in specific sectors with documented labour shortages, such as agriculture, construction, and hospitality<sup>13</sup>. Children under 15 are not allowed to work, and the labour department will not approve inappropriate or unsuitable work for individuals aged 15-18<sup>14</sup>. This makes it particularly difficult for unaccompanied minors transitioning to adulthood.

Recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have full access to the labour market, but finding affordable childcare can be a challenge for migrant families<sup>15</sup>, especially for women with younger children below mandatory school age or where employment times and working hours do not align with school or daycare hours<sup>16</sup>. This is particularly difficult for single parents.

**Language barriers:** Services are typically available in Greek and/or English, but TCNs who do not speak either language may struggle to comprehend the available options and processes. Limited proficiency in Greek or English can pose a barrier to employment, particularly in skilled professions, and communication challenges can impede effective interaction with potential landlords and employers<sup>17</sup>.

**Recognition of foreign qualifications:** TCNs can apply to the appropriate centre for the recognition of foreign qualifications to assess and determine their equivalency. This process can be intricate and time-consuming, as further documentation or verification may be required, particularly for qualifications from countries that do not have established agreements with Cyprus or the EU, especially for regulated professions. TCNs wishing

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<sup>12</sup> Inclusive Labour Market: Short guide to working in Cyprus for refugees and asylum seekers. (May 2023). Prepared under the Building structures for intercultural integration in Cyprus project. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/short-guide-to-working-in-cyprus/1680ab88dc>

<sup>13</sup> Inclusive Labour Market: Short guide to working in Cyprus for refugees and asylum seekers. (May 2023). Prepared under the Building structures for intercultural integration in Cyprus project. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/short-guide-to-working-in-cyprus/1680ab88dc>

<sup>14</sup> Inclusive Labour Market: Short guide to working in Cyprus for refugees and asylum seekers. (May 2023). Prepared under the Building structures for intercultural integration in Cyprus project. Retrieved from <https://rm.coe.int/short-guide-to-working-in-cyprus/1680ab88dc>

<sup>15</sup> Angeli, M. (2020). Gender Dynamics across Reception and Integration in Cyprus. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WP6-Report-Cyprus.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Angeli, M. (2020). Gender Dynamics across Reception and Integration in Cyprus. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies. Retrieved from <https://www.glimer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WP6-Report-Cyprus.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR. (2025, February). Bi-annual fact sheet: Cyprus. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/media/bi-annual-fact-sheet-2025-02-cyprus/>

to practice regulated professions in Cyprus must have their qualifications recognised by the relevant professional and/or regulatory authorities<sup>18</sup>.

**Mismatch of skills:** TCNs, including asylum seekers and refugees who hold higher qualifications, may not be able to find jobs within those areas, resulting in underemployment, where their skills are not fully utilised<sup>19</sup>.

#### 4.1.4. Best Practice Examples

Several initiatives support successful integration in Cyprus, focusing on project development, capacity building, and peer mentorship.

##### CIVILHOOD – Greece

- **Focus:** Enhancing the transition of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) to early adulthood through civic education and integration into the labour market.
- **Objective:** Support the inclusion of unaccompanied minors in the labour market by connecting civic education with skills development, while training professionals to promote integration.
- **Target Group:** Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) and professionals supporting UAMs' integration.
- **Funding:** AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund).

##### **Key Practices:**

- Comprehensive professional and vocational training: Tailored programs that provide UAMs with language courses, job readiness initiatives, and employability skills.
- Civic education and social integration: Organised training on rights, responsibilities, and active participation in society.
- Multilingual support: Educational materials offered in nine languages to enhance accessibility.
- Cross-border collaboration: Joint initiatives among five EU countries aimed at developing robust integration frameworks and sharing best practices.
- Stakeholder training: Equipping local authorities, social workers, educators, and other professionals with tools to support UAMs' integration.

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<sup>18</sup> UNHCR. (2025, February). Bi-annual fact sheet: Cyprus. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/media/bi-annual-fact-sheet-2025-02-cyprus/>

<sup>19</sup> UNHCR. (2025, February). Bi-annual fact sheet: Cyprus. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/media/bi-annual-fact-sheet-2025-02-cyprus/>

**Impact:**

- 350 Stakeholders trained across Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Austria, and Slovenia.
- 150 unaccompanied minors empowered with civic and employability skills.
- Creation of three CivilhooD Handbooks: for UAMs, stakeholders, and trainers.
- Improved autonomy, self-confidence, and civic understanding among UAM participants.
- Organisation of a European conference in Athens with over 80 participants, including EU representatives and civil society.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Timing research activities around academic calendars and public health events (e.g., COVID-19) is crucial.
- Need for specialised training addressing psychological support, legal advice, and trauma-informed care.
- Importance of country-specific adaptations in civic education and labour integration approaches.
- **Scalability:** Successfully adapted in Italy, Cyprus, Austria, and Slovenia.

**Intercultural Cities (ICC)**

- **Focus:** Enhancing structures and policies for intercultural integration in Cyprus to foster social cohesion and improve labour market integration for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants.
- **Objective:** Strengthen the ability of national and local stakeholders to promote intercultural integration and access to the labour market for refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants through targeted resources, training, and policy improvements.
- **Target Group:** Focal points at national and local levels include ministries, NGOs, social partners, municipalities, migrant representatives, as well as employers, refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants.
- **Funding:** Co-funded by the European Union through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI), this initiative is carried out by the Council of Europe in collaboration with the European Commission and the Migration Department – Deputy Ministry for Migration and International Protection.

**Key Practices:**

- **Capacity-building at national and local levels:** Training for ministries, NGOs, local authorities, and intercultural network coordinators to enhance service provision and support structures.
- **Resource development:** Creation of three essential handbooks: a guide for employers on hiring refugees and asylum seekers, a handbook for refugees and asylum seekers, and a brief guide to working in Cyprus.



- **Fostering intercultural understanding:** Activities that promote social cohesion through cultural events, education on diversity, and initiatives for political participation.
- **Labour market integration initiatives:** Strengthen partnerships between municipalities and labour offices to improve employment access for migrants and refugees.
- **Data-driven monitoring:** Utilise an evaluation tool to monitor regional integration activities and updates to the Intercultural Cities Index.

#### Impact:

- Enhanced cooperation among municipalities and local labour offices, especially in Famagusta and Limassol.
- Creation and dissemination of handbooks to guide employers and migrant communities in the labour market integration.
- Strengthened regional intercultural networks in Cyprus.
- Enhancing civic engagement and awareness among foreign-born residents through intercultural activities and policy reforms.
- Building the capacity of national and local actors for the upcoming establishment of a new National Authority for Integration.

#### Lessons Learned:

- Urban-rural connectivity is vital to ensure equal access to integration services.
- Intercultural competencies must be integrated into education and leadership training to build trust and foster inclusion.
- Cultural engagement and political participation are key levers for improving social cohesion.
- Sustainability requires long-term strategies and resources; short-term initiatives risk limited impact.

**Scalability:** The project supported the creation of five regional intercultural networks in the districts of Famagusta, Larnaca, Limassol, Nicosia, and Paphos.

#### HelpRefugeesWork – Cyprus

- **Focus:** Supporting the integration of refugees in Cyprus through employment by connecting them with employers, training providers, and organisations that promote inclusion and diversity.
- **Objective:** Facilitate labour market integration for refugees by connecting them with employment opportunities, vocational training, and employer networks, while fostering social inclusion and participation.
- **Target Group:** Refugees, Third Country Nationals (TCNs), and employers in Cyprus.
- **Funding:** Implemented by UNHCR Cyprus in collaboration with Cyprus Refugee Council (CyRC).

**Key Practices:**

- **Digital Employment Platform:** An accessible online portal connecting refugees with job opportunities tailored to their skills and experience.
- **Training and Resources:** Provision of vocational training, webinars, CV writing guidance, interview preparation, and Greek language courses.
- **Employer Engagement:** Training and sensitisation for employers to create structured internships, apprenticeships, and post-placement support.
- **Networking Events:** Organising meetings and workshops to foster direct connections between employers and refugee job seekers.
- **Legal Rights Information:** Dissemination of clear, accessible information about refugees' employment rights under Cypriot law.

**Impact:**

- Over 500 candidates registered and actively seeking employment through the platform.
- 141 training programmes listed, with over 700 referrals to training providers.
- 386 job positions were advertised, resulting in over 600 applications and over 280 shortlisted candidates.
- Created a digital space to foster professional networks and strengthen social cohesion through employment.
- Increased financial independence and societal participation among refugees in Cyprus.

**Lessons Learned:**

- The initial challenges were due to the absence of a prior employment integration model; extensive awareness-raising among employers and stakeholders was crucial.
- Employer reluctance remains a barrier; proactive capacity-building initiatives for employers and the wider community are necessary.
- Awareness workshops and peer mentorship programmes can effectively direct TCNs towards available resources, increasing participation.
- Sustainable integration requires continuously updating training materials, employer outreach, and candidate engagement.

**Scalability:** HelpRefugeesWork was successfully implemented in Cyprus and continues to be a key model for refugee labour market integration nationally. Its design presents strong potential for adaptation in other local and national integration programmes, particularly within similarly sized small- and medium-sized EU countries.



### MIRA – Bulgaria

- **Focus:** Enhancing the labour market integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) by developing tailored training programmes for TCNs and employers, raising awareness of employment procedures, legal frameworks, and promoting social and economic inclusion.
- **Objective:** Bridge gaps between TCNs and employers by providing both groups with the knowledge and tools necessary for employment and entrepreneurship, and support integration through language, cultural, and legal training specific to each host country.
- **Target Group:** Third-Country Nationals (TCNs), Employers, HR managers in Bulgaria, Sweden, Italy, France, Austria, Cyprus, Romania, and Hungary.
- **Funding:** Funded by the AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund), led by the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation (WCIF) with a consortium of 13 organisations, including CSOs, a trade union, a vocational education centre, and a training provider.

### **Key Practices:**

- **Employer Needs Mapping:** Online surveys and interviews were conducted to understand employers' attitudes, challenges, and best practices regarding the employment of TCNs.
- **Handbook Development:** Creation of a comprehensive "Handbook of Best Practices" for employers, published in nine EU languages.
- **Tailored Training Programmes:** Country-specific training designed separately for TCNs and employers to address employability skills, legal employment procedures, self-employment opportunities, and cultural adaptation.
- **Promotion and Outreach:** To share best practices and training resources, a social media campaign, promotional video, and online dissemination activities were conducted.
- **Feedback Collection:** Evaluation surveys are administered after training sessions to gather feedback for improving future initiatives.

### **Impact:**

- Completing the employer needs assessment through surveys and interviews across eight EU countries.
- Development and dissemination of the Handbook in nine languages, enhancing accessibility and knowledge sharing.
- Implementation of tailored training programmes for TCNs and employers adapted to the socio-economic and legal contexts of each country.



- Promotion of entrepreneurship among TCNs, encouraging self-employment as an integration pathway.
- Strengthening employer capacities and fostering inclusive workplace environments across multiple EU member states.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Identifying employers' actual needs and gaps was essential in designing effective interventions; building trust with employers required continuous effort.
- TCNs expressed significant interest in self-employment opportunities, underscoring the necessity for enhanced support mechanisms for entrepreneurial pathways.
- Localised training content and materials were essential to address country-specific legal and economic realities.
- Social media proved to be a powerful tool for disseminating information and reaching both employers and TCNs.

**Scalability:** MIraGE was successfully implemented in Sweden, Italy, France, Austria, Cyprus, Romania, and Hungary. Its design demonstrates strong potential for replication in other EU contexts. The methodology and materials are adaptable for use in Spain, Germany, and Greece.

**ENGAGE –Belgium**

**Focus:** Supporting the labour market integration of Third-Country National (TCN) women by addressing barriers through upskilling workshops, stakeholder capacity building, job shadowing activities, and community engagement initiatives.

**Objective:** Enhance the employability and social inclusion of TCN women while equipping labour market stakeholders with tools and strategies to foster more inclusive working environments.

**Target Group:** TCN women, labour market stakeholders (LMS), local citizens, professionals, NGOs, policymakers, and the general public across nine European countries.

**Funding:** Funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), led by UC LIMBURG with the involvement of ten additional partners.

**Key Practices:**

- **Upskilling Workshops:** Training sessions for migrant women focus on the legal, social, and economic systems of the host country, workplace culture, rights, and soft skills development, fostering empowerment and community building.



- **Capacity Building for Stakeholders:** Workshops that equip employers and professionals with awareness of the challenges faced by TCN women and innovative approaches for labour market integration.
- **Job Shadowing Scheme:** Mentees are paired with business mentors for practical, real-world exposure, skill development, and professional networking opportunities.
- **ENGAGE Open Badges:** A digital certification system enabling participants to validate skills acquired through training and job shadowing experiences.
- **Women's Circles:** Art workshops, structured dialogues, and volunteering activities connecting migrant and local women to foster collaboration, empowerment, and cultural exchange.

#### Impact:

- The Job Shadowing Scheme successfully pairs migrant women with business mentors, resulting in enhanced employability and practical work experience.
- Development and distribution of ENGAGE Open Badges to formally recognise the skills acquired by participants.
- Increased cultural exchange, empowerment, and professional networking through Women's Circle activities and volunteering opportunities.
- Enhanced stakeholder understanding of migrant women's barriers and rights, resulting in more inclusive workplace practices.
- Evaluation results showed positive changes in social integration, employability, creativity, and overall confidence among TCN women.

#### Lessons Learned:

- Language barriers and concerns about anonymity initially hindered participation. Simplified surveys, paper-based options, and verbal feedback improved data collection engagement.
- Stakeholder capacity-building workshops faced logistical challenges and varied levels of engagement; adapting to online formats and focusing on strong business connections helped overcome these issues.
- Household responsibilities and scepticism initially limited TCN women's participation; flexible formats, group discussions, and the creation of safe spaces greatly enhanced empowerment and confidence.
- Mentorship and continued community-building activities proved essential for lasting impact, highlighting the need for structured alumni networks and ongoing communication.

**Scalability:** ENGAGE was implemented across nine EU countries, including Cyprus, Slovenia, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, Spain, and the Netherlands, and can be easily replicated in other local, regional, or national integration programmes.

**National Measures and Challenges** Cyprus offers free public education, language courses, and access to employment for TCNs, asylum seekers, and refugees. However, barriers persist in employment and housing due to immigration restrictions, skill mismatches, affordability issues, language barriers, and discrimination. To tackle these challenges, a peer mentorship program is being developed to raise awareness of available resources in education, employment, and housing. Additionally, capacity-building efforts for stakeholders, employers, and landlords aim to enhance cultural and gender sensitivity, fostering a more inclusive environment through collaborations between TCNs and local communities.

#### 4.1.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

This section presents the results from the focus group discussions held in Cyprus. Participants provided detailed insights into their beliefs, experiences, and perceptions regarding employment, housing, financial literacy, and social integration. Each focus group comprised 6 to 11 participants, representing a balanced mix of individuals from migrant associations, local community members, and professionals from social services and community organisations. The focus groups with migrants included 11 participants from African countries (D.R. Congo, Nigeria, Cameroon), aged 22 to 38 years, consisting of three men and eight women, three of whom are parents. The focus group with the migrant association included six participants representing four organisations supporting migrant integration, with two men and four women, two of whom are European migrants and two are TCN migrants. The focus groups with local communities comprised six members (four women and two men) of the local community, including those from local and regional offices and representatives from companies that employ TCNs.

##### Challenges in Employment

Regarding employment, participants reported various obstacles, including bureaucratic procedures, lack of degree recognition, language barriers, stigma, family responsibilities, and the fact that they often accept short-term jobs, sometimes under unfair conditions.

*“To find your way around the system and gain access to the labour office is somewhat time-consuming and for us quite ineffective if you do not at least speak English....They do not have a lot of available translators to communicate with the officer.” (Migrant Voice)*

Participants reported that the recognition of qualifications is a significant barrier. Despite possessing university degrees and valuable skills, these qualifications are often overlooked in their labour market integration due to their legal status:

*“I came with a master's degree and years of experience, but here, my qualifications were just pieces of paper. I cannot work in sectors where my skills will be well suited” (Migrant Voice)*



Furthermore, another migrant argued that:

*“The university degrees do not matter if you are an Asylum Seeker... you cannot enter the labour market after nine months. However, even as a Recognized refugee, there a lot of obstacles...employers do not accept you easily”*

*(Migrant Voice)*

It was further highlighted that employment opportunities for migrants, particularly for beneficiaries of international protection, are limited to specific sectors. The findings revealed that these sectors primarily consist of cleaning and kitchen roles, emphasising a mismatch between the skills of highly qualified individuals and the opportunities available to them.

*“I am a recognized refugee and I am allowed to work in any sector...but they only direct me to jobs that mostly include, delivery cleaning and kitchen assistant services...I have degree in social sciences, I guess it doesn't make any difference”*

*(Migrant Voice)*

Furthermore, as the literature review indicates, many migrants encounter challenges in validating their university degrees and aligning their qualifications with EU standards.

*“Unfortunately, my degrees are not recognized here in Cyprus.... The process also is very difficult, and I couldn't easily understand it.” (Migrant Voice)*

However, participants conveyed that to secure financial resources and avoid dependence on social benefits, they must seek employment in informal jobs where they may face exploitation.

*“There are not a lot of available work opportunities.... I must find a way to receive money and financial resources.... I am working sometimes in various jobs without proper work contract....” (Migrant Voice)*

They expressed a willingness to work and integrate; however, due to negative experiences some employers have previously had with migrants, there is a degree of reluctance to proceed with the employment of TCNs.

*“Even when the labour office refers us to various work placements.... the employers are very negative with us because they had previous bad experiences, and we became stigmatized.” (Migrant Voice)*

Moreover, all participants agreed that one of the key challenges related to employment integration is the language barrier, which was considered from various perspectives.

*“The employers want you to speak Greek... they do not prefer English, most of us do not speak Greek and is a problem with many employers, even in low status jobs.” (Migrant Voice)*

The language barrier was confirmed by official authorities, as noted by the Citizens' Office and the Labour Office, which directs and refers migrants to job vacancies. However, when they contacted employers, they were informed that speaking Greek was required. Specifically, a community representative confirmed that:

*“The labour our best to fill in the gaps and refer various migrants according to their status and qualifications to officially registered employers.... However, the main reason employers reject these potential candidates is the fact that they cannot communicate in Greek.” (Public Community Representative).*



In a similar vein, a community representative asserted that:

*“Younger migrants who were born here, went to school and learnt the language can secure access to employment easier than more mature migrants...Unfortunately there are not many employers who prefer English-speaking migrants.” (Public Community Representative)*

Additionally, few opportunities for professional language training exist, and there is limited access to information about available training options.

*“Even though we receive many requests from our service users to assist them finding Greek courses...There are not any formal Greek lessons or policies that can provide this important element for integration...Even though there are some co-funded efforts the spots are quite limited.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

Moreover, the participants from civil society organisations further indicated that, although these co-funded Greek lessons exist, their efficacy can be questioned.

*“Even though we have been referred to migrants that have supposedly attended to co-funded language lessons, they are still unable to communicate effectively in Greek.... they cannot follow proper direction during the work duties.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

Moreover, participants highlighted that family responsibilities and transportation present additional barriers that hinder access to the labour market. For female participants seeking employment, limited childcare options for young children pose a significant challenge. Furthermore, available jobs often require hours not aligning with school or after-school daycare schedules. In particular, one female participant reflected on the difficulties of finding accessible and affordable daycare options for single mothers:

*“I am a single mother; I want to work, and I want to provide for my children...Unfortunately I do not have anyone to look after them... I've tried several day care services but they are expensive and far from my house.” (Migrant Voice)*

A participant corroborated the above statement by arguing that:

*“Single migrant parents with children many times report difficulties in accepting an employment opportunity because they cannot send their children to childcare day centres.” (Public Community Representative).*

Additionally, it was noted that transportation can act as a supplementary obstacle. One participant noted that:

*“Moreover, even if they find day care centres for their children, transportation is also an additional obstacle, because they have to make extra routes with the bus as a result they delay attending to their work.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

Furthermore, community representatives indicate that cultural and ethnic differences may hinder access to the labour market.

*“Somali women are quite restricted...apart from the language barrier, cultural characteristics and strict practices such as their attire prevents them from accessing the labour market easily.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

In a nutshell, participants mentioned that they want to work and be active members in the community where they live.

*“We do not want to be inactive doing nothing.... It affects me negatively... I want to feel that I belong as an equal member to this community... we don't want to take benefits...we prefer to work.” (Migrant Voice)*



Additional participants complemented further that:

*“Even though I cannot easily find employment I have asked many times to volunteer anywhere they take me so I can learn the language and the nature of work...” (Migrant Voice)*

### **Challenges in Housing**

Access to adequate housing remains one of the most critical challenges that Third Country Nationals (TCNs) face in Cyprus. Participants consistently identify three interrelated barriers: affordability, landlord discrimination, and language obstacles. Low wages and high rents force many into overcrowded living situations, while pervasive prejudices among landlords and neighbours hinder access to housing. Language barriers further complicate the process, compelling migrants to rely heavily on informal networks and peer support.

Affordability emerges as a primary barrier. Many migrants work in low-paying jobs that do not enable them to afford market rents, often forcing them into shared or substandard housing. This leads to overcrowded conditions that affect health, safety, and dignity.

*“My salary is €700. Rent is €400. How am I supposed to pay electricity, food, bus? I have no choice but to share a room with two others.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“We are six people in a two-bedroom flat. It’s not healthy, it’s not safe, but it’s what we can afford.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“The house is old, full of mold, but the landlord says if we don’t want it, someone else will take it.” (Migrant Voice)*

Such conditions not only compromise well-being but can also contribute to conflicts with landlords or neighbours. The need to overcrowd a property to afford it leads to wear and tear, which further perpetuates negative stereotypes about migrants' respect for property.

Participants reported frequent incidents of direct discrimination by landlords, who often cited nationality, immigration status, or prior “bad experiences” as reasons for rejecting migrants. In some instances, landlords who were initially open to renting faced pressure from neighbours or feared backlash from the local community.

*“The moment I said I was from Cameroon, the landlord said, ‘the flat is not available anymore’—but my friend called right after, and it was still open.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Some landlords say, ‘I’ve had bad experiences with your people.’ What does that even mean? I am not those people.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Even the good landlords are scared. One told me, ‘If I rent to you, my neighbours will complain.’ (Migrant Voice)*

*“When my husband called, they refused. When our Cypriot friend called pretending to rent, they said yes.” (Migrant Voice)*



Due to discrimination and a lack of institutional support, most migrants depend on informal channels to secure housing, friends, acquaintances, or community groups. Language barriers add another layer of dependency and exclusion, making engaging directly with landlords or agencies nearly impossible.

*“I don’t speak Greek, so my friend called the landlord for me. If I call, they hang up.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Everything happens on Facebook. You must know someone who knows someone.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“I got my apartment through someone at church. Without that help, I’d still be homeless.” (Migrant Voice)*

Migrant associations and support organisations frequently intervene to facilitate communication and assist migrants.

*“The NGO helped me translate the contract. I had no idea what I was signing.” (Migrant Voice)*

However, even for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), this has proven challenging. A participant asserted:

*“We act as brokers and mediators...we try to represent them by calling, translating, and even sometimes begging the landlords to proceed with the lease. It’s somewhat exhausting and frustrating” (Public Community Representative)*

### **Financial literacy**

A significant barrier is the limited access to formal financial services, which is often linked to legal status and documentation requirements.

*“Most refugees and asylum seekers have difficulties accessing financial institutions such as banks... This is mainly due to their status and incomplete paperwork....it limits their capacity to engage in sustainable livelihoods.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

As one other participant mentioned:

*“Lack of documentation or official residency status and Strict KYC (Know Your Customer) requirements by banks make it very difficult for migrants.” (Migrant Association Representative)*

It can be argued that this hinders their ability to save securely, build credit histories, or access loans for personal or entrepreneurial purposes. Moreover, migrants without bank accounts encounter challenges in meeting their financial obligations. As one participant noted:

*“The bank delayed the opening of my account, and I couldn’t pay for the rent and utility bills.” (Migrant Voice)*

This leads to increased risks of eviction, unpaid bills, and deepening poverty, making them heavily reliant on third parties for survival. Participants emphasised the importance of formal training in understanding effective resource management to better support migrants in organising and distributing their limited resources.

*“There is a notable absence of financial education programs tailored to the specific needs of migrants in Cyprus.” (Public Community Representative)*





One other participant added that:

*"A multifaceted approach must be implemented, to facilitate financial inclusion.... the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate financial education programs are important to foster social inclusion." (Public Community Representative)*

### **Community & social issues**

Participants reported a mixed experience regarding acceptance by the local community. Younger Cypriots were viewed as more inclusive, while older or more conservative locals were considered less accepting. Experiences varied from acts of kindness to overt discrimination and even racial tensions and violence. One participant asserted that the younger generation could be described as open-minded, flexible, and more willing to interact with migrant communities.

*"The younger people seem more open.... As a migrant you can mingle with them easily... I've had some very friendly conversations at my university and at local events." (Migrant Voice)*

Furthermore, it was explained that younger people are generally more curious and open to learning and interacting with diverse populations.

*"Some locals try to learn about our culture. That makes me feel more accepted." (Migrant Voice)*

However, these incidents caused negative emotions, leading to unfavourable experiences. For instance, one participant reflected on an experience that incited discomfort emotions:

*"I was on the bus, and people got up and moved away from me. I wasn't even sure what I did wrong." (Migrant Voice)*

To further support this perspective, several local representatives emphasised that, in recent years, migration has increasingly been instrumentalised by the media, generating fear and hostility among the public. Specific incidents involving migrants were disproportionately highlighted and framed negatively, reinforcing stereotypes and social tension. As one community representative noted:

*"After some negative images portrayed by the media, local people were very afraid of the migrants... many neighbourhoods today are reluctant to accept migrants as their neighbours." (Public Community Representative)*

Furthermore, participation in community activities remains limited and often relies exclusively on civil society initiatives. While some participants recounted positive experiences, they also emphasised the inconsistent availability of these opportunities and the widespread lack of awareness surrounding them.

*"Some NGOs organise events where we can interact with locals and other migrants. However, these events are very few and limited." (Migrant Voice)*

Most participants indicated they were unaware of socialisation activities or peer mentoring support services. As one migrant expressed:

*"Many of us don't even know these programs exist. Unless someone tells you, you're in the dark." (Migrant Voice)*

Additionally, language barriers emerged as a persistent challenge across all integration aspects. One participant noted:

*“Language is a big issue. Even when I want to join, I can’t understand what’s happening.” (Migrant Voice)*

#### **4.1.6. Concluding Remarks**

Enhancing migrant integration in Cyprus necessitates a holistic approach that addresses employment, housing, financial literacy, and social inclusion. Although significant progress has been made, such as Greek language programs and anti-racism policies, practical implementation and communication improvements can foster a more inclusive society.

##### **Employment**

- Streamline the recognition of non-EU qualifications and provide clear employment pathways for TCNs.
- Offer structured and accessible Greek language courses tailored to migrants' schedules.
- Expand employment referral systems to align with migrants' skills.
- Enhance childcare access and work flexibility to support parents, particularly women and single parents.
- Train employers on inclusive hiring practices and migrant rights.

##### **Housing**

- Promote anti-racism campaigns to foster inclusive communities.
- Develop affordable housing schemes through public-private partnerships.
- Provide cultural mediation, translation services, and multilingual rental guides.
- Strengthen NGO support as housing intermediaries.

##### **Financial Literacy**

- Introduce multilingual financial education programs that cover budgeting, saving, and rent management.
- Establish peer financial mentors to foster economic independence.

##### **Social Inclusion**

- Expand community engagement programs, such as intercultural festivals and volunteering.



- Develop peer mentoring initiatives to connect new migrants with experienced community members.
- Promote and raise awareness of multilingual social activities through NGOs.

A peer mentorship program will equip migrants with vital skills in cultural orientation, language, digital literacy, and interpersonal skills, supporting social competence in line with the EU's lifelong learning framework. Fostering practical support and cultural understanding will empower migrants to navigate employment, housing, and public services, strengthening community cohesion and resilience.



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## 4.2. National Report FRANCE



Forum Réfugiés compiled this national report.



#### 4.2.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

National Statistics<sup>20</sup> estimates that immigrants<sup>21</sup> comprised 10.7% of the total population in 2023, while foreign nationals<sup>22</sup> constituted 8.2%. Asylum seekers and refugees are represented in both categories. In 2023, the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) registered 142,649 asylum applications, representing an 8.7% increase compared to 2022. Of these applications, 20.8% were filed by women and 22% by unaccompanied minors. Applicants primarily came from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Türkiye, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Guinea. A total of 44,560 asylum seekers were granted international protection<sup>23</sup>.

In 2024, OFPRA registered 153,596 asylum applications (combining first-time with subsequent asylum applications plus statelessness applications), a 7.7% increase compared with 2023. 70,225 asylum seekers were granted international protection,<sup>24</sup> 49,3% (combining first-instance OFPRA decisions with the asylum court of appeals decisions). Ukraine was the second asylum nationality, as many beneficiaries of temporary protection have been seeking a more stable administrative situation in France<sup>25</sup>.

In 2023, for continental France, a large majority of asylum applications were submitted in the Île-de-France region (almost 14,000 for Paris alone) and around major urban centres such as Lyon (4,170 applications) and Strasbourg (nearly 4,000 applications). In overseas territories, Guyana has been receiving an increasing number of Haitian asylum seekers over the last two years due to the humanitarian crisis. Mayotte remains among the leading receiving territories overseas, with 3,000 applications in 2023<sup>26</sup>.

In 2024, 20,000 beneficiaries of international protection were hosted in the national reception system for asylum seekers. Ukrainian and Haitian nationals, who rank among the top three for refugee status, are nearly absent from the statistics on exits from this system. Ukrainian nationals have benefited from a specific reception and accommodation system, which closed in early 2025. Haitian nationals have primarily relocated

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/3633212>

<sup>21</sup> Immigrants are individuals born abroad as non-French citizens, who now reside in France

<sup>22</sup> Foreign nationals are individuals residing in France with a foreign nationality or with none

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/libraries/pdf.js/web/viewer.html?file=/sites/default/files/2024-07/Rapport%20d%27activit%C3%A9%202023%20de%20l%27Ofpra\\_0.pdf](https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/libraries/pdf.js/web/viewer.html?file=/sites/default/files/2024-07/Rapport%20d%27activit%C3%A9%202023%20de%20l%27Ofpra_0.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Some protection decisions granted in 2024 may respond to asylum applications filed in previous years

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/actualites/publication-des-premieres-donnees-de-lasile-2024-a-lofpra#:~:text=En%202024%2C%20pr%C3%A8s%20de%20153,demandes%20de%20statut%20d'apatride.>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.lacimade.org/droit-dasile-premier-bilan-2023/>



to America's overseas territories, such as Guyana, Martinique, and Guadeloupe, where they seldom receive public accommodation support<sup>27</sup>.

#### 4.2.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

National integration policies target foreign nationals who wish to settle permanently in France, including long-term residents and international protection beneficiaries. Focused on the French language, access to housing, and employment, these measures were implemented late in the asylum and migration process and excluded asylum seekers, foreign students, or exiles residing in France under short residence permits. They are conceived at the national level and deployed by decentralised services (Préfectures) in a top-down manner.

**The Republican Integration Contract is the cornerstone of French integration policies.**

A contractual approach to integration has been established since 2003, beginning with the reception and integration contract, and since 2016, the Republican Integration Contract. It is concluded between foreign nationals admitted for residency and the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII). Through recent national reforms on immigration and integration, this contract has become increasingly prescriptive regarding access to rights, adding more obligations for the signatories. Attending classes and passing French language and civic tests have become compulsory for issuing residence permits.<sup>28</sup>

Types of documentation	Mandatory signature of the Republican Integration Contract	Targeted or required level	Test for the issue of a residence permit
Refugee status / subsidiary protection / stateless status	Yes	A1 (written and spoken) Civic training	No
Multiannual residence permit (4 years)	Yes	A2 (written and spoken) Civic exam	Yes
Residence permit (10 years): Spouse of a French national, parent of a French child, ...	Yes	B1 (written and spoken) Civic exam	Yes
Citizenship	Yes	B2 (written and spoken) Civic exam	Yes

After a preliminary interview assessing language levels and learning needs, signatories are assigned specific hours for French lessons. All participants must attend a four-day civic training session to learn about a

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.lacimade.org/bilan-2024-du-dispositif-national-daccueil/>

<sup>28</sup>



“portrait of France” and national legislation concerning health, employment, parenthood, and housing. In 2023, 127,876 third-country nationals signed the Republican Integration Contract, with 38,119 receiving international protection<sup>29</sup>. The prescription rate for language training is higher for refugees than for other third-country nationals. Refugees face the most significant challenges in learning French among third-country nationals signing the contract. Their stay is shorter than that of non-refugee migrants (a trend accentuated by the reduction of asylum delays), and they are more likely to be allophones.<sup>30</sup>

### **The AGIR programme: a local one-stop-shop approach for refugees’ integration.**

Launched gradually in France from 2022 onward, AGIR (Global and Individual Refugee Support) has become the national reference programme for refugee integration. It draws inspiration from Forum Réfugiés’ “Accelair” programme, which supported refugee integration in the Rhône between 2002 and 2023.<sup>31</sup> Co-funded by the General Directorate for Foreigners in France and the AMIF fund, AGIR was initially designed as a one-stop shop for local refugees. Local associative operators have two mandates:

- 1) Providing global and individualised support in accessing rights, housing, and employment for up to twenty-four months. It concludes under two cumulative conditions: the person secures permanent housing and participates in training leading to qualifications or employment.
- 2) Supporting the coordination of local stakeholders, strengthening regional networks and raising awareness of non-specialised integration stakeholders (public employment service, local landlords, local businesses, departmental council, etc) about refugees’ specific needs and rights.

Refugees eligible for the programme must have been granted protection in the current or previous year. They have to be signatories to the Republican Integration Contract and must live in the *département* where the programme is deployed. Since July 2024, national budget restrictions have led to an essential overhaul of entry criteria. Henceforth, refugees already in employment or housing or not recognised as ‘vulnerable’ by the French Office of Immigration and Integration can no longer benefit from the AGIR programme. For 2025, the national average target has been reduced from 40,000 to 25,000 beneficiaries<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Cour des Comptes, 11.02.2025, “Tasks, funding and State control of associations involved in immigration and integration policy” (Les missions, le financement et le contrôle par l’Etat des associations intervenant au titre de la politique d’immigration et d’intégration). <https://www.ccomptes.fr/fr/publications/les-missions-le-financement-et-le-contrôle-par-letat-des-associations-intervenant-au>

<sup>30</sup> Département des statistiques, des études et de la documentation, Direction générale des étrangers en France, 16.01.2024, “First years in France of immigrants, main findings of the longitudinal survey on the integration of newcomers, ELIPA 2, 2023-2024” (Les premières années en France des immigrés, L’essentiel de l’enquête longitudinale sur l’intégration des primo-arrivants, ELIPA 2, 2023-2024). <https://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Etudes-et-statistiques/Etudes/Enquete-Longitudinale-sur-L-Integration-des-Primo-Arrivants-ELIPA-2>

<sup>31</sup> Forum réfugiés, 2020, “Supported by Accelair... what’s next?, (Accompagnés par Accelair, et ... après ?). <https://www.forumrefugies.org/s-informer/publications/rapports/806-etude-accompagnes-par-accelair-et-apres>

<sup>32</sup> Forum réfugiés, March 20th, 2025, “Integration: the AGIR programme’s ambitions hampered by budgetary constraints” (Intégration, l’ambition du programme AGIR freinée par les contraintes budgétaires)

### Temporary accommodation centres

Formalised in 1973, temporary accommodation centres were the only global integration scheme before AGIR that targeted vulnerable refugees. Entirely run by associations, these centres provide vulnerable refugees with accommodation for up to nine months. Enhanced social support targets their independence and integration, focusing on legal and administrative aspects, social and sanitary support, language training, assistance for employment, training or resuming academic studies, parenthood and children's schooling support, sports and cultural activities, and access to permanent housing.

### 4.2.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

#### Systemic administrative failures leading to rights violations and consequences of integration

Following France's recognition of their asylum status, refugees' residence permits are pending the reconstitution of their civil status by OFPRA (birth certificate, marriage certificate, family booklet). The current average waiting time is ten months, beginning from the favourable decision on the asylum application. In the meantime, residency is covered by a provisional certificate of instruction issued online by the *préfecture*. Online bugs, misspellings, inconsistent issuance durations, and uneven recognition of its legal value create obstacles in the integration process, as testified by migrant voices:

*"I had to wait 11 months to get my residence permit, due to delays in issuing my birth certificate. In the meantime, I was residing under a provisional certificate of instruction. At that time, I was working at the airport and I needed a badge. That badge had to be renewed every three months, depending on my provisional certificate of instruction. One day, my boss required a permanent residence permit. Activating by badge every three months was too expensive for him. I had to quit my job." (Migrant Voice)*

A recent report by the French Ombudsman<sup>33</sup> highlighted massive breaches of users' rights since all procedures have been digitised on the Digital Administration of Foreign Nationals (ANEF) website. In a survey report, the national associative network *Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité*<sup>34</sup> shows that:

- **58%** of respondents in the network indicated that the refugees in question have **lost their basic social entitlements** due to the website malfunctioning.

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<https://www.forumrefugies.org/s-informer/publications/articles-d-actualites/en-france/1641-integration-l-ambition-du-programme-agir-freinee-par-les-contraintes-budgetaire>

<sup>33</sup> Défenseur des droits, Rapport "L'Administration numérique pour les étrangers en France (ANEF) : une dématérialisation à l'origine d'atteintes massives aux droits des usagers", December 11st, 2024 [https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/2024-12/ddd\\_rapport\\_ANEF\\_20241127.pdf](https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/2024-12/ddd_rapport_ANEF_20241127.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Fédération des acteurs de la solidarité, Enquête, "Personnes étrangères : accès aux droits entravé, insertion empêchée", October 2024 <https://www.federationsolidarite.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Personnes-etrangeres-Acces-aux-droits-entrave-insertion-empechee.pdf>



- **45%** stated that refugees concerned had lost their **working rights** due to the same administrative hurdles, as illustrated by the testimony above.

*“In a legal case brought by French human rights NGOs, the highest administrative court ruled that ‘the sole status of refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection and the provisional certificate of instruction issued by the Préfet pending the provision of the civil status documents required to draw up the document allow the persons concerned to exercise the essential rights and freedoms attached to their status’<sup>35</sup>. (Migrant Voice)*

Professional integration of beneficiaries of international protection: a generalised glass ceiling and specific peripheral hurdles for women

*“If I had to explain to a friend how to find a job in France, I would tell them to look for something in catering or construction sites [...] I unsuccessfully applied for a training programme to pass a pharmacy assistant exam, and yet, I am a doctor”. (Migrant Voice)*

*“I was granted protection in Guyane [...] When I got here, in Paris, I had to do it all by myself. I left my country with a master degree level. Yet in France, I had to be trained for the same job I was already qualified for, but this time with a much lower level. I started this training in Guyane, but I had to start it all over again in Paris.” ”. (Migrant Voice)*

*“I work four hours a day as a cleaner for a company based here, in Lyon [...] Back home, I used to work in a grocery shop, which was good. But here, you have to be fluent in French to do this job [...] My dream is to become a doctor and open my own GP practice. I would be able to cure people who struggle with French as I used to, and who speak the same languages as me: Somali and Arabic.” ”. (Migrant Voice)*

Despite being granted international protection several years ago, none of the participants in the three focus groups in Paris, Montpellier, and Lyon had the jobs they aspired to. Among the many hurdles identified, the first is the language barrier, as the Republican Integration Contract targets an A1 level for beneficiaries of international protection. This low level deters employers, including for short-staffed jobs mentioned in Mr. J.’s testimony, since these positions require a good understanding of health and safety rules. For French speakers or individuals who have reached a sufficient level of French to start working, these short-staffed professions remain the primary, if not the only, option for securing an income and achieving their independence. The final major hurdle is the recognition of competencies, professional experiences, and diplomas. While the ENIC NARIC centre is competent for recognising diplomas obtained outside of the EU, several diplomas remain excluded because they are regulated professions that require registration with an Order, Institute, or Chamber, such as medical and paramedical professions. <sup>36</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> Conseil d’Etat, January 10th, 2025, n°495916, 495917  
[https://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur\\_ce\\_2025-01-30\\_etat-civil-ofpra.pdf](https://www.gisti.org/IMG/pdf/jur_ce_2025-01-30_etat-civil-ofpra.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) France, January 2025, “Improving recognition of qualifications of refugee healthcare professionals in the Europe Union, a comparison of European practices”

Consequently, social support for professional integration is often oriented toward several steps: short-term, medium-term, and long-term.

The local multidisciplinary working group in Cantal targeted specific and intertwined hurdles women face along their professional integration path.

- 1) **Childcare:** Cultural habits and codes often designate women as the primary caregivers, particularly when children are very young. Issues related to the availability of public childcare spots hinder women's participation in French language courses, training, and the workforce market.
- 2) **Intercultural representations of mobility and roles in family life:** In Cantal, public authorities and local associations report that refugee women struggle to navigate public spaces and feel free to come and go. Their professional opportunities often depend on their husbands' approval.
- 3) **Social downgrading:** Among various profiles, many refugee women were economically independent in their countries of origin, working in skilled and highly skilled professions. Local actors are often powerless to address their social and professional challenges.
- 4) **Learning French in more challenging conditions:** In Cantal, the local French learning platform teaches many 'alpha' individuals (non-French speakers who cannot read or write, even in their native language), a majority of whom are women. Training must, therefore, adapt to the learners' obligations (half-days and provision for childcare at the training site). The platform also notes the learners' difficulty capitalising on their reading and writing progress due to waiting periods between training courses. For months, women have been once again confronted with social isolation and the inability to practice and maintain their skills. All local stakeholders are concerned about revising the public contract for French language courses. As of July 2025, all French classes from A1 to B2 level will be entirely digitalised and accessible through an app, excluding individuals already experiencing illiteracy or learning difficulties and requiring additional support.

#### 4.2.4. Best Practice Examples

##### “All-Terrain French as a Foreign Language” - Forum Réfugiés - Cantal France

- **Focus:** Enhancing the French learning process for professional purposes.
- **Objective:** Reinforce French learning activities for professional integration and empower women refugees through single-gender workshops.
- **Target Group:** All individuals granted international protection in the Cantal département.
- **Funding:** €34,200 from the Departmental Directorate for Employment, Labour, Solidarity, and Population Protection in 2024.

##### **Key Practices:**

- Collective French workshops focused on shared language training needs, such as writing a motivation letter and a CV.
- One-on-one training: 8 hours of reinforced support to master specific professional vocabulary.
- Single-gender workshops on gender-based violence, domestic violence, parenting, sexual education and reproductive health.

##### **Impact:**

- Single-gender workshops encourage women (who are less likely to learn French in a family setting) to learn the language, strengthen social ties, and address essential needs that are usually difficult to discuss.
- Cultural activities offered in other programmes, such as visiting the theatre or the museum, are more popular.

##### **Lessons Learned:**

- Refugee women require tailored support, and language courses serve as a crucial first step.
- French classes should address refugees' immediate needs during their integration process, such as specific vocabulary relevant to their professional fields.
- Given the critical need for support in learning French, this initiative must be strengthened and supported by a permanent budget.

##### Accessing Housing - AGIR programme - Forum réfugiés - Rhône, France

- **Focus:** Accessing Housing
- **Objective:** Supporting refugees in accessing independent and permanent housing.



- **Target Group:** Beneficiaries of international protection in Rhône benefiting from the AGIR programme
- **Funding:** Co-funded by the French central administration (DGEF) and the European Union (AMIF)

#### Key Practices :

Refugees in the AGIR programme receive social support :

- Submission of social housing applications
- Matching housing offers from local partners with the needs of refugee households (type of housing, accessibility, health needs, and resources).
- Submitting refugees' applications to the local housing allocation committee
- Supporting refugee households to move in
- Supporting refugees in understanding their rights and obligations as tenants and managing their budgets.

#### Impact:

- In 2023, 42 leases were signed by refugees supported by the AGIR programme Rhône.
- 52 individuals accessed long-term housing.
- After entering the AGIR programme in Rhône, refugees gain access to housing within an average of three months (2023).

#### Lessons Learned:

- Administrative obstacles significantly impede access to housing rights.
- Refugees leaving the AGIR programme encounter difficulties in securing adequate social support from local actors who lack specialisation in immigration laws and refugee rights.
- The July 2024 AGIR guidelines and insufficient communication between central administration and local levels have negatively affected the referral of refugee families to AGIR.

#### The OCADI initiative (Organisation and Coordination of Integration Stakeholders) - Forum Réfugiés - Allier, France

- **Focus:** Local partnership on integration
- **Objective:** Reinforce partnerships by providing local integration stakeholders with a forum for discussion and exchanging practices based on a bottom-up approach.
- **Target Group:** all local stakeholders involved in integration activities, including local authorities, associations, landlords, employers, and others, in Allier département.

**Key Practices:**

- Local forums are organised in three main cities of the département three times a year to discuss identified issues common issues through face-to-face meetings
- Annual departmental meeting during Integration Week (every October) to address integration challenges faced by human trafficking survivors.

**Impact:**

- 27 meetings organised at the municipal level.
- Two local conferences were organised during the Weeks of Integration.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Based on the goodwill of its participants, the OCADI initiative emphasises the importance of creating a permanent partnership forum, regardless of emergency contexts and local conditions agendas
- Challenges in coordinating specialised and non-specialised local actors regarding refugees' rights.

**Job integration - AGIR programme - Forum réfugiés, Ardèche, France**

- **Focus:** Accessing employment
- **Objective:** Support refugees in accessing training that leads to qualifications or employment.
- **Target Group:** beneficiaries of international protection in Ardèche who are participating in the AGIR programme

**Key Practices :**

- Individual support for job and training searches (identifying and orienting towards relevant local stakeholders, preparing for applications and job interviews, etc.)
- Developing and strengthening partnerships with local employment stakeholders (such as public employment services and local employers).

**Impact:**

- Between January and November 2024, 48 refugees signed contracts and commenced work.
- 62.5% were isolated, 25% were family units, 10.42% were single parents, and 68.75% were men.
- The main employment sectors include hotels and restaurants, industry, maintenance, agriculture, and retail in Ardèche in 2024.



**Lessons Learned:**

- A global commitment from local employment stakeholders is crucial to ensure the local network meets the job search needs of refugees.

**SILLAT - starting and resuming studies in France - Paris, Lille, Lyon - France**

- **Focus:** Academic studies
- **Objective:** Assist refugees in starting or continuing their academic studies in France.
- **Target Group:** All exiles (regardless of their documentation) are in Paris. In Lyon, refugees and asylum seekers.

**Key Practices & Activities:**

- Information sessions for asylum seekers or refugees wishing to resume studies (scholarship, housing, French lessons)
- Mentor supervision to assist students in sharing their projects and identifying resources.
- Thematic workshops to prepare exiles for academic life, familiarise them with the graduation system, tests, and campus life.
- In Lyon, a local guide was created to assist in identifying support for preparing for French language diploma exams.

**Impact:** In 2023, 85 students received support in their academic journey in Lyon, with 15 benefiting from dedicated individual assistance.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Lack of information regarding the accessibility of the French academic system for exiled students.
- Exiled students face difficulty reaching the required B2 level in French to enrol.
- Students struggle to obtain a diploma equivalent. The European Qualification Passport for Refugees, coordinated by the Council of Europe and ENIC NARIC, represents a good practice for recognising academic studies. It must be supported and acknowledged by all educational and professional stakeholders in the countries where it is implemented.



#### 4.2.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

The decision was made to use the three focus groups to collect diverse testimonies from refugees and confront them with communications from public agencies gathered through research, participation in conferences on integration, and public publications. All the focus groups were organised with refugees from different cities, backgrounds, and varying integration programmes. Ten refugees - seven men and three women - participated in focus groups in Lyon, Montpellier, and Paris between February and March 2025. They discussed common topics: learning French, accessing employment, securing independent housing, and overcoming administrative hurdles.

**In Paris**, the focus group gathered six participants (five men and one woman), all refugees from the LGBTQI+ community and members of a local NGO dedicated to supporting the integration of LGBTQI+ refugees. Most of them come from French-speaking countries, graduated in their countries of origin (for instance, in law or medicine), and describe themselves as committed activists advocating for LGBTQI+ refugees in Paris. Despite their knowledge of French, this group emphasised the professional ‘glass ceiling’ effect and the experience of social downgrading.

*“There is a recurring theme: even when you have the right diploma or training required for jobs of interest, you’re always going to be offered short-staffed jobs, such as personal care [...] In the past few years, asylum seekers have been sent to towns away from Paris, where there are no jobs. Yet finding work is easy if you follow training or have a manual job. But if you have a diploma and want to work in your field of competence and interest, everything is blocked. That’s why we become activists.” (Migrant Voice)*

They also emphasised a gap in information and support between the asylum process and their refugee status.

*“When you become a refugee, you are told that you have the same social and economic rights as the French people. But nobody tells you how to access them: you are on your own.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“When I was in the reception centre for asylum seekers, life was much easier. Each asylum seeker was helped by a social worker. Now, social workers tell me that I’m already well integrated, since I can speak French fluently and I graduated in medicine in my home country. They assert that everything is going to be easy for me, so I don’t need social support. However, I am still struggling to find a job, because of specific regulations on diplomas.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“My mental health has been declining since I was granted refugee status.” (Migrant Voice)*

**In Montpellier**, two participants (both men) shared their testimonies from the national integration AGIR programme, managed by Forum réfugiés. Despite the support from specialised social workers in the AGIR programme, they recounted their experiences with administrative hurdles and the impact these hurdles had on their daily lives.

*“I had to wait for two years for my appeal before the national court of asylum to be heard. In the meantime, I had no access to the State medical aid, I was working in catering and my back was very painful. But without the State medical*



*aid, I couldn't go to the hospital. Obtaining refugee status meant that I could go to the hospital and ease my back pain. As I couldn't get treated before, so I had to undergo heavy treatments.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“After getting asylum in France, I went to Germany to get married. I didn't have my residence permit yet, so I traveled with my certificate of extension of the processing of the application. This certificate allows refugees to move around the Schengen area, and yet I got arrested and detained for five hours at the German police station. I got released when they realised that I was travelling legally. This certificate and the renewance are very tricky. It depends on the Préfectures : some renew it for three months, others for a month. With every renewance, you have to send it to every administration and public service, and it's very tiring. You can't find work with a temporary document because employers look for someone in the long run. And you can't find a house. No real estate agent or landlord is willing to rent a property upon this certificate. Even I end up not believing in the value of this certificate.” (Migrant Voice)*

**In Lyon**, both participants were women from non-French-speaking countries. They had previously stayed in asylum seeker reception centres and lived in temporary accommodation centres for the past few months after receiving asylum. They have made significant progress in French, enabling them to converse in French during the focus group, and have been working since obtaining asylum. Despite their French proficiency and wages, they face similar obstacles in accessing permanent housing.

*“You can't find a house on your own in France. You need support from social workers and town halls. I have been working since August 2022 and I still can't find a house. Sometimes, I wonder if I should stop working because I have no offer for social housing”. (Migrant Voice)*

*“If you're a single woman, without children (as in my case, my children are back home and I applied for family reunification), social housing offers are scarcer. If you are alone, you don't get priority for social housing. In the asylum seekers reception centre, my social worker used to encourage me to find a job in order to get a house. So with her help, I found a job. Now, I am working but I still got nothing. The administration says I have stayed too long at the temporary accommodation centre, I have to vacate the place for someone else within the next three months.” (Migrant Voice)*

#### 4.2.6. Concluding Remarks

Based on the developed elements, several recommendations can be made to enhance refugee integration pathways and improve best practices.

**Ensure effective access to the right to learn French from the asylum stage onward.** Unlike some European neighbours, such as Germany, the French reception system does not provide the right to language courses during the asylum application stage<sup>37</sup>. Key findings from focus groups, the multidisciplinary group, and research emphasise that the later the learning process begins, the more difficult it becomes. When asylum seekers become refugees, the French learning process and job search both become accessible and therefore overlap. Regarding training content, recommendations were made to individualise classes and adapt them

<sup>37</sup> [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/12/05/accueil-des-migrants-les-pouvoirs-publics-devraient-envisager-l-apprentissage-du-francais-comme-un-droit-et-non-comme-un-devoir\\_6432079\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2024/12/05/accueil-des-migrants-les-pouvoirs-publics-devraient-envisager-l-apprentissage-du-francais-comme-un-droit-et-non-comme-un-devoir_6432079_3232.html)

to specific professional needs: target vocabulary relevant to a job sector or profession, to remove obstacles to employability.

Additionally, compensating refugees for their apprenticeship would reinforce their independence. The need for individualised and adapted French classes also entails face-to-face training. A complete dematerialisation will exacerbate learning difficulties and the exclusion of illiterate individuals or those who do not master digital tools.

**Provide concrete, accessible, and appropriate options to address online administrative malfunctions and minimise rights violations.** A complete dematerialisation of public services can lead to breaches of fundamental rights. Following recommendations from the French Ombudsman, migrants should have the opportunity to carry out any procedure through a non-dematerialised channel without preconditions. Préfectures (administrative services) should also update their websites to enhance the information related to procedures provided to users. Automated processes should enable users to report problems directly online.

**Issue refugees their permanent residence permits independently of the reconstitution of their civil status.** Refugees possess automatic residence rights. Although the administrative authority (the Préfecture) is responsible for issuing the necessary documentation, it does not determine whether to issue the permit. In this regard, and to ensure effective and immediate access to the rights associated with this status, the préfectures should issue the license without awaiting the asylum office's reconstitution of civil statuses, as noted in a recent and non-binding instruction from the Home Affairs Ministry to the Préfectures. This instruction should be binding to harmonise practices and guarantee access to rights throughout France.

**Strengthen support for the integration of the most vulnerable refugees- those in need of psychological and medical assistance, victims of human trafficking and violence, young people under 25, disabled refugees, isolated women, etc.** In line with the initial ambitions of the AGIR programme, integration public policies should be accessible to all refugees, regardless of their vulnerability or accommodation situation. Additionally, the most vulnerable individuals, such as young people under 25 who do not receive any basic social income (with an active solidarity income available for those without resources from the age of 25) or women facing multiple and interconnected challenges, should benefit from reinforced support.

**Enhance human and financial resources, along with training for all social stakeholders, to ensure the reception and support of refugees.** Expert organisations like Forum réfugiés assist refugees in their integration process. Once this support ends, refugees must rely on mainstream social services, which face challenges due to a lack of resources and expertise in immigration law. Their training should be a cornerstone of public integration policies France.



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### Focus Group Reports and Testimonies

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## 4.2.8. Organisations that contribute

- Forum réfugiés
- France Terre d’asile
- Croix-Rouge française
- Arc essentiel



#### 4.3. National Report GERMANY



EureCons

Förderagentur GmbH

This national report was compiled by Eure Cons Förderagentur GmbH,



#### 4.3.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

On December 31, 2023, Germany hosted approximately 13.9 million migrants. Among these, 5,113,875 were citizens of other European Union (EU) member states, indicating that the remaining 8.78 million were third-country nationals (TCNs), i.e., individuals from non-EU countries<sup>38</sup>. At the end of 2023, Germany had issued approximately 5.7 million residence permits to non-EU citizens<sup>39</sup>. The primary countries of origin were Turkey, Syria, and Afghanistan. Significant numbers also originated from Syria and Ukraine, reflecting recent geopolitical events. In 2023, Germany recorded 1,133,700 entries of third-country nationals, a decrease of 41.3% compared to the previous year<sup>40</sup>. As for the employment of TCN, EU Blue Card holders came from India (33,000), Russia (10,000), and Turkey (8,000)<sup>41</sup>.

1,932,509 individuals moved to Germany in 2023, while 1,269,545 left the country. The significant decrease in net immigration is primarily attributed to the reduced number of refugees from Ukraine. In 2022, over 1.1 million Ukrainian refugees arrived in Germany due to the ongoing Russian war. However, in 2023, this figure dropped to approximately 276,000. Consequently, immigration of foreign nationals decreased by 29.8%, while emigration rose by 7.4%. Approximately one-third (32.7%) of all immigrants arrived from European Union (EU) member states (2022: 24.6%)<sup>42</sup>. Meanwhile, 19.5% of immigrants came from Asian countries, 4.9% from Africa, and 4.2% from the Americas, Australia, and Oceania combined<sup>43</sup>. Refugees from Ukraine are not required to apply for asylum in Germany and are instead admitted without a visa under Section 24 of the Residence Act. In 2023, 203,245 individuals were granted a corresponding residence title. Additionally, 108,500 third-country nationals were issued residence titles for family reunification purposes (2022: 93,960, an increase of 15.5%), 72,400 received residence titles for employment purposes (2022: 73,065, a decrease of 0.9%), and 58,775 were granted titles for educational purposes (2022: 60,395, a reduction of 2.7%). Furthermore, 191,356 immigrants were German nationals (2022: 184,753, an increase of 3.6%).

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/BerichtsreihenMigrationIntegration/Freizuegigkeitsmonitoring/freizuegigkeitsmonitoring-jahresbericht-2023.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/BerichtsreihenMigrationIntegration/Freizuegigkeitsmonitoring/freizuegigkeitsmonitoring-jahresbericht-2023.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)

<sup>39</sup> Eurostat at [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence\\_permits\\_-\\_statistics\\_on\\_stock\\_of\\_permits\\_at\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_the\\_year](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_-_statistics_on_stock_of_permits_at_the_end_of_the_year)

<sup>40</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4)

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.germany-visa.org/news/419000-labour-migrants-were-working-in-germany-at-the-end-of-2023/>

<sup>42</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4)

<sup>43</sup> This section is based on the country of origin or destination of the migrants, not on their nationality. Thus, for example, immigration from EU countries may also include third-country nationals who move to Germany from these countries. For migration of EU nationals to Germany, see the section on EU internal migration.



Gender distribution among immigrants is nearly balanced, with men comprising 49.7% and women 50.3%<sup>44</sup>.

On December 31, 2024, Germany's foreign population was approximately 14,061,640 individuals, reflecting a modest increase from 13,895,865 at the end of 2023<sup>45</sup>. The leading countries of origin for third-country nationals in Germany as of December 31, 2024, were Turkey (1,544,480 individuals), Ukraine (1,334,005), Syria (975,060), Afghanistan (442,020) and the Russian Federation (302,315)<sup>46</sup>. Geographically, immigrants are predominantly concentrated in urban areas. For instance, Offenbach has the highest proportion, with 43% of its population being immigrants, followed by Pforzheim (39%), Heilbronn (37%), Frankfurt (36%), and Ingolstadt (33%)<sup>47</sup>. These urban centres retain more employment opportunities and have established migrant communities, making them attractive destinations for newcomers.

As of 1 January 2023, Germany's population included approximately 7.7 million third-country nationals, representing about 9.1%. By mid-2024, asylum seekers, refugees, and those permitted to enter Germany reached approximately 3.5 million, an increase of 60,000 compared to 2023<sup>48</sup>.

In 2023, Germany issued approximately 69,000 EU Blue Cards to highly qualified non-EU workers, emphasising the importance of attracting skilled labour. In March 2024, Germany implemented the new second stage of the Skilled Immigration Act to facilitate the immigration process for skilled workers from non-EU countries. This act introduced a points-based system and expanded opportunities for family reunification<sup>49</sup>.

#### 4.3.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

Germany's integration policies have evolved significantly over the decades, reflecting its transition into a multicultural society. The country adopted its first integration plan in 2007, aiming to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of immigrants. Recent efforts have focused on enhancing employment and vocational training opportunities for migrant newcomers<sup>50</sup>. The country has also implemented measures to promote

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<sup>44</sup> [Statistisches Bundesamt](#)

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html>

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html>

<sup>47</sup> [Statistisches Bundesamt](#)

<sup>48</sup> <https://ewfrf.org/en/2024/10/06/4418/>

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/skilled-immigration-act>

<sup>50</sup> Governance of migrant integration in Germany at [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-germany\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-germany_en)

immigrants' socio-economic inclusion, particularly strengthening jobs and vocational training opportunities. Recent developments, among others, include:

- **Skilled Workers' Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz):** Enacted in July 2023, this law revamped Germany's immigration system to attract skilled and educated workers. It introduced a points-based immigration system, expedited application processing, simplified the recognition of foreign qualifications, and decreased the minimum salary threshold for EU Blue Card holders. Additionally, it created a job-seeker visa and eased industry transitions for immigrants.
- **Integration Courses Enhancement:** In November 2024, Germany adopted a new ordinance to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of integration courses. The revised courses are tailored to individual learning needs, taking into account participants' educational backgrounds and learning speeds. The government also secured funding to continue these courses in 2025, emphasising the importance of imparting language skills and core values to immigrants.<sup>51</sup>
- **Support for Foreign Graduates:** In December 2023, Germany introduced initiatives to facilitate the transition of foreign graduates into the German labour market. The FIT Programme provides personalised support throughout the academic journeys of international students. At the same time, the Profi Plus Programme helps foreign graduates adapt their qualifications to meet the requirements of the German labour market. Both programs are funded with €120 million through 2028<sup>52</sup>.
- **Integration through Vocational Training:** The "Integration through Training" initiative encourages young people from migrant backgrounds to pursue vocational training within companies. It also motivates entrepreneurs with a migrant background to provide training opportunities, fostering a more inclusive workforce<sup>53</sup>.

As noted from the information above, Germany's approach to migrant integration is multifaceted, involving national strategies, collaborative efforts across various institutional levels, and targeted measures in key sectors such as education, employment, health, and social inclusion. This comprehensive framework aims to facilitate the successful integration of international protection beneficiaries and other legal residents from third countries. The institutional framework for integration is multifaceted:

- **National Level:** The Federal Government sets overarching integration policies and funds various programs.

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<sup>51</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/EN/2024/11/kabinett-integrationskurse.html>

<sup>52</sup> <https://monitor.icef.com/2023/12/germany-announces-new-labour-force-integration-initiatives-for-foreign-students-and-graduates/>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/vocational-training-and-work.html>



- **Regional (State) Level:** States implement federal policies, tailoring them to regional contexts and needs.
- **Local (Municipal) Level:** Local authorities and municipalities implement integration measures, frequently cooperating with non-governmental organisations and community groups to tackle specific local challenges.

Integration measures encompass several key areas:

- **Education:** Language courses and educational support programs are offered to enhance linguistic proficiency and academic integration.
- **Employment:** Initiatives aim to enhance access to the labour market, including recognising foreign qualifications and vocational training programs.
- **Health:** Efforts are made to ensure migrants access healthcare services, including mental health support.
- **Social Inclusion:** Programs promote community engagement and cultural exchange to foster social cohesion.

Financial allocations for integration have evolved in response to migration trends. For instance 2024, increased government spending on unemployment benefits reached €29.7 billion, partly due to the influx of migrants<sup>54</sup>. This reflects the dynamic nature of funding, which adapts to the socio-economic landscape and the needs of both migrants and host communities.

#### 4.3.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

Migrants in Germany encounter various challenges that may hinder their integration. The challenges related to this research are as follows:

- **Immigration Status:** Immigration status poses a challenge for third-country nationals, as it influences access to work, social services, legal security, and integration opportunities. Temporary or uncertain status creates instability, preventing migrants from fully contributing to their host society. Individuals with such status often face restrictions on employment, education, and social services, hindering integration. Asylum seekers, for instance, may initially be unable to work or face job limitations even after approval, which restricts their financial independence. While the Skilled Workers' Immigration Act seeks to attract professionals,

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/how-migration-germany-is-fuelling-election-debate-economy-2025-02-12/>

bureaucratic barriers limit access to quality jobs. The lengthy process of obtaining permanent residence or asylum status generates uncertainty, delaying economic and societal integration. Migrants frequently encounter inconsistencies in applying immigration rules, leading to confusion and administrative errors that negatively impact their status and integration.

- **Housing:** Housing remains a significant challenge for non-EU immigrants in Germany due to high demand, discrimination, legal restrictions, and the limited availability of affordable housing. Women and families encounter particularly substantial obstacles in accessing the housing market. Limited savings and the difficulty of saving for housing costs, combined with high agency fees and inflated rental prices, create significant barriers to securing stable housing. The housing crisis is exacerbated by a shortage of available properties and general mistrust from landlords, who may worry about potential decreases in property value when renting to migrants. The ongoing housing crisis in Germany, especially in major cities like Berlin and Munich, results in a limited supply of rental properties. This intensifies competition for available units, making it even more challenging for families, particularly those from non-EU countries, to find a home. Renting in Germany generally requires tenants to demonstrate their ability to consistently pay rent, often through proof of employment or a stable income. Migrants with uncertain immigration status or those who have not resided in the country long enough may struggle to meet these requirements, lowering their chances of securing a home.

Non-EU nationals, particularly those who are not yet fluent in German, may encounter difficulties communicating with landlords or comprehending rental agreements. Landlords might use language proficiency as a pretext for discrimination, presuming that migrants will struggle to understand the lease terms or will be difficult to interact with. In some instances, landlords may harbour cultural prejudices, believing that non-EU nationals will not respect the community's cultural norms or the property itself. This results in a reluctance to rent to migrants or families from certain countries. Therefore, the issue of discrimination in the housing sector is particularly pronounced. Some landlords may be hesitant to rent to migrants, fearing that their properties could depreciate in value or become more challenging to lease.

Discrimination in housing for third-country nationals in Germany manifests through racial, ethnic, and economic biases, language barriers, and systemic exclusion from desirable neighbourhoods. These discriminatory practices restrict migrants' access to stable housing, especially those with temporary status or uncertain immigration futures.

- **Labour Market and Skills:** In Germany, there are notable differences in the labour market participation and unemployment rates between third-country nationals (non-EU immigrants) and native-born individuals

(Germans). Third-country nationals (non-EU immigrants) in Germany face higher unemployment rates, lower wages, and more barriers to accessing vocational training and education compared to native Germans. Their challenges include limited language skills, difficulties in recognising foreign qualifications, temporary immigration status, and discrimination in the labour market. As a result, many non-EU nationals are overrepresented in low-skilled jobs and have less job security. In contrast, native Germans generally experience higher employment rates, better wages, and greater access to career development opportunities, benefiting from stable immigration policies and support systems. Female third-country nationals, in particular, face even more significant challenges in the labour market due to compounded gender and migration-related barriers.

Many non-EU nationals, particularly those in temporary or low-skilled positions, face exploitation due to poor working conditions and low wages. They are often overrepresented in sectors such as construction, agriculture, hospitality, and domestic work, where pay and job security are minimal. Wage theft is a common form of exploitation, with workers frequently not receiving their full pay or not being paid on time. Migrants may be reluctant to report such issues due to their vulnerable legal status, language barriers, or fear of retaliation.

#### 4.3.4. Best Practice Examples

##### Kombi Career Counselling Project

- **Focus:** It is part of the Integration through Qualification (IQ) network, which aims to help migrants recognise and leverage their existing skills for the German labour market.
- **Objective:** Support integrating individuals with foreign qualifications into the German labour market by offering career counselling and competency assessments as part of the IQ (Integration through Qualification) program network.
- **Target group:** Migrants, Individuals with foreign qualifications, TCNs.
- **Funding:** Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)

##### **Key Practices and Activities:**

- Competency assessment.
- Qualification recognition.
- Language training.
- Job market guidance to help individuals with foreign qualifications successfully integrate into the German workforce.

- Tailored assistance to address challenges and offer further support.

### **Impact (Short and Long terms):**

#### **Short-Term Results:**

- **Enhanced Recognition of Foreign Qualifications:** Participants noted improved acknowledgement of their qualifications in the German labour market.
- **Increased Job Readiness:** The project provided tailored support and training to prepare individuals for employment.
- **Language Skills Enhancement:** Participants enhanced their language skills, essential for workplace integration.
- **Access to Employment Opportunities:** The project helped participants connect to job opportunities.

#### **Long-Term Results:**

- **Sustained Employment and Career Advancement:** Many participants secured stable employment and advanced careers.
- **Economic Integration:** The project fostered the economic integration of participants into German society.
- **Social Inclusion:** Participants noted increased social inclusion as they engaged actively in the workforce.
- **Ongoing Contribution to the Labour Market:** The project enhanced the labour market by integrating skilled workers.
- **Sustained Skills Development:** Ongoing skills development was promoted among participants, supporting their long-term employability.

**Lessons learned:** Engaging employers proved challenging, as some hesitated to acknowledge foreign qualifications. The project emphasised the significance of ongoing labour market research and cultural orientation to align services with industry needs. Key lessons included:

- The need for holistic support,
- Strong employer networks,
- Long-term integration, highlighting the value of personalised assistance and employer partnerships for successful integration.

**Scalability:** Local adaptations may include:

- Adapting to Local Qualification Recognition,

- Aligning with Local Labor Market Needs,
- Compliance with Local Legal Frameworks.

### Wohnprojekt Augsburg

- **Objective(s):** Promote social integration; Create cooperative and community-oriented housing; Support sustainable urban development; Foster cultural exchange; Provide support for vulnerable groups; Reduce social exclusion; Achieve long-term social cohesion.
- **Target group:** TCNs and vulnerable groups.
- **Funding:** Municipal funding from the City of Augsburg; German federal and state (Bavarian) government programs, aimed at social housing, migration, and integration; EU grants; Partnerships with NGOs and Social Enterprises; church-related organizations (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)).

### **Key Practices:**

- Transitional housing comprises 175 units with a maximum duration of six years.
- Comprehensive assessments by social services to identify eligible beneficiaries.
- Individualised support plans tailored to beneficiaries' needs. Individualised housing plans were created with input from multidisciplinary teams.
- Regular monitoring and follow-ups to ensure progress toward autonomy.

### **Impact:**

- Online guide with instructions and regulations<sup>55</sup>
- Augsburg accommodates up to 1,256 asylum seekers across various temporary collective accommodations in 2024, including 12 state-administered facilities.
- Additionally, the Grand Hotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg houses up to 60 individuals, including nine refugee families awaiting asylum processing.
- Improved collaboration between public and private housing sectors.

### **Lessons learned:**

- Importance of Partnerships: Successful projects require robust collaboration with local authorities and private partners to ensure financial stability and effectively navigate bureaucratic challenges.
- Adaptability to Legal Frameworks: Early discussions and flexibility in adapting to legal frameworks are essential for smooth implementation.

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<sup>55</sup> <https://cms.integreat-app.de/pdf/f4d94b491a/Integreat%20-%20English%20-%20Living.pdf>

- **Sustainability through Participation:** Engaging residents in self-management and employing participatory models fosters long-term sustainability.

**Scalability:** It can be adapted to other regions by adjusting to local legal frameworks, cultural contexts, resources, and housing conditions. Key adaptations include alignment with local regulations, financial models, and community-building approaches while fostering partnerships with local stakeholders for successful implementation.

### **Migranet Plus in the Funding Program IQ – Integration Through Qualification**

- **Objective:** Enhance the labour market integration of migrants and refugees in Germany by improving their qualifications, providing employment support, and facilitating access to job opportunities as part of the broader IQ Network initiative to support migrant integration through qualification recognition, language support, and employment assistance.
- **Target group:** TCNs, refugees, individuals with foreign qualifications, long-term unemployed migrants, and low-skilled workers.
- **Funding:** The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Union through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus).

#### **Key Practices:**

- Foreign Qualification Recognition
- Language support
- Job Placement and Training Programs
- Social Integration Services
- Personalised Guidance
- Partnerships with Employers and Stakeholders

**Impact:** Since this is an ongoing project, the expected impact is:

- Enhanced employability
- Stronger social networks, improved integration into local communities, and enhanced opportunities for migrants to participate fully in society

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Establishing strong cooperation with local authorities is essential for navigating bureaucratic and legal hurdles.
- Complex Legal Landscape.



- Evaluating the project's long-term social integration and outcomes remains challenging, requiring refined metrics and methods to capture the initiative's full impact.

**Scalability:** It is adaptable to other regions or cities, but it requires adjustments to local legal frameworks, cultural contexts, and resources.

It is adaptable to other urban contexts. Success depends on strong public-private partnerships, robust data collection, and active community participation.

#### **Neustart IM Team (NEST)**

- **Objective(s):** Provide stable housing for refugees; Support integration through assistance with authorities, education, and employment; Foster community engagement; Offer mentorship; Promote long-term success.
- **Target group:** TCNs, Refugees, and Local communities.
- **Funding:** The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (BMI), the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (INTB), and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) are collaborating with civil society partners, including UNHCR, the German Caritas Association, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, and the German Red Cross.

#### **Key Practices:**

- Stable Housing Support
- Personalised Mentorship: Connect refugees with mentors who provide practical guidance and emotional support to help them navigate local bureaucracies, understand the job market and education opportunities, and access social services.
- Community Engagement and Collaboration
- Continuous Integration Support
- Financial Sustainability: Use community-based fundraising to ensure the initiative remains financially sustainable, supporting long-term refugee integration efforts.
- Results-Focused Approach: Monitor and measure outcomes related to refugee integration improvement, enhanced self-sufficiency, and strengthened community cohesion, reflecting the active role of residents in welcoming and supporting refugees.

**Impact:** 2019–2021: 149 individuals formed 27 mentoring groups, aiding in the resettlement of 118 refugees. In 2022, four additional mentoring groups facilitated the arrival of 21 refugees. In 2023, support was provided to 200 refugees.

**Lessons learned:**

- Community engagement is crucial.
- The initiative has encountered challenges, including high participation requirements for mentoring groups, such as obtaining housing and financial commitments, which have restricted the number of refugees receiving assistance.

**Scalability:** By concentrating on these fundamental areas, the NesT model can be effectively tailored to various regions and countries, facilitating refugee integration and promoting community cohesion.

**Initiative Für Flüchtlinge Augsburg (IFFA)**

- **Objective:** to provide diverse support for refugees and migrants by assisting with integration, language acquisition, and accommodation; organising exchanges of experiences and information on various topics; offering seminars and webinars on integration and the labour market; promoting social participation; and implementing joint projects with national and international organisations.
- **Target group:** Refugees, Migrants, TCNs
- **Funding:** No funding

**Key Practices:**

- Finding housing
- Labour market integration
- Reducing Social isolation
- Focus groups and workshops to address challenges like discrimination and build confidence.

**Impact:**

The initiative has supported over 300 families and 200 individuals through various forms of assistance, including help with:

- Accommodation
- Document completion
- Interpreting
- Everyday needs
- Support for raising children and young people.
- More than 50 seminars and webinars were held to aid refugees' integration.



**Lessons learned:** The initiative's lack of financial resources leads to a performance far below its potential. Since the initiative is not legal, receiving direct financial support or financial resources as part of a project is also impossible.

**Scalability:** This project can be easily implemented in any region and country. The activities of this initiative have been met with positive approval in Germany, Europe, and even various places around the world. It is emphasised that this civil society movement, consisting of volunteers, represents a special example that deserves recognition.

#### 4.3.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

Focus groups were organised to gather insights from migrants, representatives of migrant communities, professionals involved in migrant reception and integration, and members of grassroots volunteer organisations supporting migrants. These discussions highlighted the key challenges faced during the integration process, shared positive experiences, and identified potential solutions to improve integration pathways.

##### Finding Stability through Career Guidance

*"When I arrived in Germany, I had a degree in mechanical engineering, but I didn't know how to get my qualifications recognised. The process seemed overwhelming, and I felt lost. The Career Counselling program changed everything for me. They helped me understand the steps I needed to take, guided me through the paperwork, and even provided job interview coaching. Today, I am working in my field, and for the first time since leaving my country, I feel like I have a future." (Migrant Voice)*

##### Overcoming Housing Barriers

*"When my family and I arrived in Augsburg, we struggled to find an apartment because many landlords refused to rent to refugees. We stayed in a crowded shelter for months. Then we found WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg. They offered us a safe home in a shared housing project where we could live independently but still have support. My children now have stability, and we have made friends with German neighbors who have helped us integrate." (Migrant Voice)*

*"That apartment was not allocated to someone because the person came from another country, had a different skin colour or simply had a different name. A few years ago, a colleague of ours from Munich was looking for an apartment in Augsburg and was turned down. The landlord told him that he couldn't get the apartment because he was black." (Public Community Representative)*

##### The Power of Community Sponsorship

*"I was selected for the program, and a group of German volunteers supported me from the moment I arrived. They helped me find housing, enrol in language courses, and introduced me to their friends. Before, I was afraid I would be*



*alone in a new country, but now I feel like I belong. My sponsors became like family to me, and I hope one day I can help newcomers the way they helped me." (Migrant Voice)*

### **Breaking Barriers in the Labor Market**

*"I had years of experience in IT, but my foreign qualifications were not immediately recognised in Germany. I had to start from scratch. Through this initiative, I received training on how to navigate the job market here. They also helped me improve my technical German skills. Now, I have a full-time job at a German tech company. I still face challenges, but I feel more confident about my future." (Migrant Voice)*

### **Supporting Refugees Through Housing**

*"Many people in Germany don't realize how hard it is for refugees to find a decent place to live. When we started our project, we wanted to create an inclusive housing solution where Germans and migrants live together, share experiences, and support each other. It's not always easy – there are cultural differences – but I've seen friendships form, and I believe this kind of housing model helps integration happen naturally." (Public Community Representative)*

### **Volunteering to Welcome Newcomers**

*"When I first signed up for the support program, I didn't know what to expect. Helping a refugee settle in seemed like a big responsibility. But it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The man we sponsored has become a friend. Seeing how much he has achieved in just one year – learning German and finding a job – makes me proud. Integration isn't just about policies; it's about personal connections." (Migrant Association Representative)*

### **Bridging the Gap in Employment**

*"At first, we were hesitant to hire employees with foreign qualifications because we weren't sure how they matched our standards. But after working with the initiative, we realized that many highly skilled migrants are an asset to our company. We've since hired several employees through the program, and they have brought fresh perspectives and dedication to their work." (Public Community Representative)*

### **Building a Support Network**

*"Integration isn't just about learning the language – it's about feeling at home. We organize events where refugees and locals can meet, share meals, and support one another. I have seen how small gestures, like helping someone fill out a form or practicing German over coffee, make a big difference. Some of the people I've met through this initiative have become lifelong friends." (Public Community Representative)*

### **Common Themes and Lessons from the Testimonials**

#### **The Importance of Guidance and Counselling**

*"Programs like KomBI and MigraNet Plus help migrants understand job opportunities and gain recognition for their qualifications" (Migrant Voice)*



*“Without career guidance, many skilled migrants would remain unemployed or in low-wage jobs” (Migrant Voice)*

### **The Role of Housing in Integration**

*“WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg demonstrates how inclusive housing solutions can reduce homelessness and promote intercultural friendships” (Public Community Representative)*

*“Access to stable housing is a crucial first step in rebuilding lives” (Migrant Voice)*

### **The Power of Community and Sponsorship**

*“Neustart im Team (NesT) shows that when locals take an active role in welcoming newcomers, integration is smoother and more successful” (Public Community Representative)*

*“Personal relationships and mentorship provide emotional and practical support” (Migrant Association Representative)*

### **Employment as a Key Factor for Inclusion**

*“MigraNet Plus and employer engagement show that when companies are open to hiring migrants, they gain valuable talent” (Public Community Representative)*

*“Training programs that address language barriers and qualification recognition are essential” (Migrant Voice)*

### **Volunteering Strengthens Social Ties**

*“Organizations like IFFA prove that integration is a two-way process. When locals and migrants engage with each other, trust and understanding grow” (Migrant Voice)*

The voices of migrants and local community members illustrate the successes and challenges of integration in Germany. While policies and programs provide the necessary framework, personal connections, community support, and employment opportunities truly drive successful integration. These testimonials show that, with the right support systems, migrants can contribute to and enrich their new communities, and residents can play a vital role in fostering inclusivity.

#### 4.3.6. Concluding Remarks

Germany's integration landscape highlights the importance of holistic, multi-level strategies that combine policy frameworks with grassroots initiatives. Successful programs such as KomBI Career Counseling, WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg, MigraNet Plus, NesT, and IFFA demonstrate that career guidance, inclusive housing, employer engagement, community sponsorship, and local volunteer efforts are key integration drivers.

Key insights from these best practices that could inform European integration strategies include:

- Tailored career support improving access to employment and skill recognition;
- Affordable and inclusive housing is critical for long-term stability.
- Community-driven initiatives fostering social cohesion.

To enhance policy coherence, EU nations should:

- Simplify qualification recognition processes to improve migrant employment rates.
- Expand community sponsorship models to strengthen local engagement.
- Increase funding for language, education, and housing initiatives to address persistent issues and gaps.



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- EureCons Förderagentur GmbH, *Focus group with Migrant Organizations and Centres – 23 of January 2025*
- EureCons Förderagentur GmbH, *Focus group with Homes– 28 January 2025*
- EureCons Förderagentur GmbH, *Focus group with Migrants– 10 and 14 February 2025*

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#### 4.3.8. Organisations that contribute

- Tür an Tür
- Diakonie Augsburg
- Augsburg Municipality
- IFFA
- Grand Hotel Augsburg
- Mr. Andreas Jäckel, Member of Bavarian Parliament, Member of the Committee on Labour and Social Affairs, Youth and Family Affairs; Member of the Committee on Public Service Affairs.





#### 4.4. National Report GREECE

KMOP compiled this national report



KINDLING A BETTER **WORLD**

#### 4.4.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT)<sup>56</sup>, the resident population of Greece on January 1, 2024, was estimated to be 10,400,720 persons (5,096,893 males and 5,303,827 females), which represents a decrease of 0.1% compared to the population on January 1, 2023, which amounted to 10,413,982 persons. The same authority published data on the estimated net migration in 2023, which was 42,658 persons, corresponding to the difference between 118,816 immigrants and 76,158 emigrants,<sup>57</sup>. In comparison, the net migration in 2022 was estimated at 16,355 persons (96,662 immigrants and 80,307 emigrants).

The International Migration Outlook Report, published by the OECD<sup>58</sup> in November 2024, indicates that in 2023, 11.3% of the Greek population was foreign-born (approximately 1.2 million, with 54% being women). The primary countries of origin for these third-country nationals (TCNS) in Greece were Albania (48%), Georgia (7%), and Russia (5%).

According to the same report, in 2023, the number of first asylum applicants increased by 99% to approximately 58,000. The majority of applicants came from Syria (14,000), Afghanistan (8,800), and the West Bank and Gaza Strip (6,700). The most significant increase since 2022 involved nationals from Syria (9,600), while the most significant decrease was seen among nationals from Pakistan (-600). Of the 40,000 decisions made in 2023, 62% were positive. The Migration & Asylum Data 2024 Report, published by the Mediterranean Migration & Asylum Policy Hub<sup>59</sup> in February 2025, states that by the end of 2024, applications for international protection in Greece reached 73,687, marking the highest number since 2019. Syria and Afghanistan continue to be the prominent nationalities, alongside a notable increase in applications from Egyptian nationals, indicating a shift compared to previous years. The same report also notes that the number of beneficiaries of international protection (refugees with a residence permit) has risen by nearly 30,000 compared to 2023, bringing the total to 83,895.

Finally, according to the Key Findings on 2024 Protection Monitoring of Refugees in Greece published by UNHCR<sup>60</sup> in March 2025, the top five nationalities of refugees are Palestinian, Syrian, Afghan, Cameroonian,

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<sup>56</sup> <https://www.statistics.gr/documents/20181/b248e72c-2917-bdae-1d15-98d22787adb7>

<sup>57</sup> It should be noted that immigration data also includes persons living in Greece on 1.1.2024 requesting international or temporary protection.

<sup>58</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024\\_50b0353e-en/full-report/greece\\_133f5ab7.html](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024_50b0353e-en/full-report/greece_133f5ab7.html)

<sup>59</sup> <https://med-ma.eu/publications/unpacking-greeces-2024-migration-asylum-report-data-and-trends/>

<sup>60</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115178>

and Iranian. Nearly two out of three refugees expressed their intention to stay in Greece for the following year, similar to 2023.

#### 4.4.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

To promote migrant inclusion, Greece adopted its third National Strategy for the Social Integration of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.<sup>61</sup> In 2021, this replaced the previous 2019 strategy for TCNS. The new strategy aligns with Greece's legislative framework and focuses on four pillars: Pre-integration of asylum seekers:

1. Social integration of beneficiaries
2. Protection from violence, exploitation, and abuse
3. Monitoring the integration process

According to the European Commission's report from June 2024<sup>62</sup> on migrant integration governance in Greece, migrants can access services that promote integration, such as language courses, job preparation, and soft skills training, which are offered by local and national authorities and NGOs. However, Greece lacks a unified integration program for all TCNs, with services primarily focused on beneficiaries of international protection.

The HELIOS programme<sup>63</sup>, funded by AMIF and the national budget, has supported 45,221 beneficiaries as of November 2023. Since July 2019, it has offered housing support, integration courses, and job readiness services. Additionally, Migrant Integration Centres (MICS)<sup>64</sup> offer one-stop-shop services through local municipalities, supporting protection beneficiaries and legally residing TCNS.

Minor children of asylum seekers and protection beneficiaries can access Greece's public education system under similar terms to nationals. Attendance is documented and does not affect residency rights<sup>65</sup>.

Following the June 2023 elections, Greece introduced new migration priorities, including labour migration, border control, and integration. The new Migration Code (Law 5038/2023)<sup>66</sup>, effective March 2024, streamlines processes, extends residence permits from two to three years, links them to employment, and sets annual admission caps based on labour needs. A new permit (Article 193, Law 5078/2023) allows

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<sup>61</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NATIONAL-STRATEGY-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-greece\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-greece_en)

<sup>63</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/programma-helios/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/kentra-entaxis-metanaston/>

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/poliglosos\\_odigos\\_gia\\_tin\\_ekpaideusi.pdf](https://www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/poliglosos_odigos_gia_tin_ekpaideusi.pdf)

<sup>66</sup> <https://migration.gov.gr/en/enarxi-ischyos-kai-efarmogis-toy-neoy-kodika-metanasteysis-n-5038-2023/>

irregular TCNS with job offers to regularise their stay. A time-limited regularisation program ran until December 2024, with over 19,600 applications submitted.

Greece approved 167,925 seasonal positions for 2023–2024 to address labour shortages, including 20,000 through bilateral agreements with Egypt and Bangladesh. Recent legislation also allows residence permits for employed TCNS for up to three years.

Finally, the National Strategy supports pre-integration efforts, such as Greek language courses and cultural programs, including the “Multaka: Intercultural Tours in Athens” (2022–2023)<sup>67</sup>, which promotes social cohesion and migrant inclusion.

#### 4.4.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

Despite the actions taken over the past five years and efforts to compensate for the lack of an inclusive integration plan, significant gaps and ambiguities remain, presenting challenges to the comprehensive integration of TCNS. Specifically, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)<sup>68</sup> defines the country’s approach as ‘equality on paper’, emphasising that while migrants in Greece enjoy fundamental rights, they lack equal opportunities. The most significant obstacles arise in education and political participation (which fall beyond the scope of this report). At the same time, access to the labour market is characterised as ‘slightly favourable’.

According to the findings of the UNHCR 2024 report<sup>69</sup>, the primary challenges that refugees face include:

- Obtaining the legal documentation to live and work in Greece is particularly important for opening a bank account. To open an account, you must acquire a social insurance registration number (AMA) and a social security number (AMKA).
- The top five needs and challenges that respondents felt were inadequately addressed were employment, accommodation, financial assistance, Greek language courses, and education.
- Half of the respondents were unemployed, mainly due to a lack of legal work opportunities, challenges in obtaining documentation, insufficient childcare for children, or difficulties finding job opportunities.
- The top three obstacles to living independently are the high cost of housing, unemployment, and language barriers.

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<sup>67</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024\\_50b0353e-en/full-report/recent-developments-in-migrant-integration-policy\\_994ef46a.html#boxsection-d1e38013-270adebf0a](https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024_50b0353e-en/full-report/recent-developments-in-migrant-integration-policy_994ef46a.html#boxsection-d1e38013-270adebf0a)

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.mipex.eu/greece>

<sup>69</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/115178>

- Lastly, one in four refugees has faced obstacles in accessing health care services.

Drawing on the December 2024 Policy Paper on Refugee and Migrant Integration in Greece<sup>70</sup> written by Pantazi Psatha on behalf of the Hellenic Foundation of European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), a synopsis of the main challenges in the integration process regarding the labour market and education entails the following elements:

- Temporality of employment contracts, persistent disparities in employment opportunities, and contract stability between migrants and nationals hinder the holistic integration of refugees and migrants into the labour market.
- High unemployment rates and barriers such as competition with Greek-speaking candidates significantly impact this integration challenge. This issue is particularly pronounced for third-country nationals, whose unemployment rate is even higher.
- Based on the new legislative arrangements, access to the labour market is feasible solely by submitting an ERGANI registration certificate<sup>71</sup> by the employer of third-country nationals (TCNs) to the National Social Security Entity (EFKA). However, this process can deter employers who may lack the necessary knowledge or support to navigate it while posing administrative hurdles for refugees and migrants.
- In education, in contrast to access to the labour market, the situation for refugees and migrants in Greece is rated as "slightly unfavourable," according to MIPEX mentioned above. A report from the Greek Council of Refugees describes access to primary and secondary levels of compulsory education as "another hurdle-filled" area<sup>72</sup>.
- According to the Greek Ombudsman's on-site inspections<sup>73</sup>, several factors prevent children from attending school regularly despite legal provisions making education mandatory. One key challenge is transportation, as many children live in remote areas or camps far from schools, making regular attendance difficult. Another issue is the inadequacy of resources such as trained personnel, which usually complicates the inclusion of refugee and migrant children in a formal classroom. Shortcomings regarding available logistical infrastructure were also identified in some facilities, while the lack of funding from the Ministry of Education was also a significant obstacle.

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<sup>70</sup> <https://www.eliamep.gr/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Policy-paper-174-EN-Pantazi-Psatha-final.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.gov.gr/en/ipiresies/epikheirematike-drasterioteta/elektronikos-phakelos-epikheireses/anaggelia-proslepses-ergane-e3>

<sup>72</sup> Agapi Chouzouraki, 'Without papers, there is no life: Legal barriers in access to protection for unaccompanied children in Greece' (Greek Council for Refugees and Save the Children, 2023) < [https://gcr.gr/wp-content/uploads/No\\_paper\\_no\\_life.pdf](https://gcr.gr/wp-content/uploads/No_paper_no_life.pdf) >

<sup>73</sup> See The Greek Ombudsman, 'The Challenges of Migratory Flows and Refugee Protection: Refugee Conditions and Procedures' (The Greek Ombudsman, 2024)



- These obstacles often lead to higher dropout rates and limited participation in education for refugee and migrant children (ibid). Notably, the Greek Ombudsman identified and documented many of these issues as early as 2021 (ibid), yet they remain largely unresolved. Addressing these systemic challenges is essential to ensuring meaningful access to education for all children.

#### 4.4.4. Best Practice Examples

##### HELIOS – Hellenic Integration Support for Beneficiaries of International Protection

**Focus:** Providing comprehensive support for the social integration and independent living of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece.

**Objective:** Facilitating the integration of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection through targeted interventions in housing, education, employment, and cultural orientation.

**Target Group:** Beneficiaries of international protection aged 16 and older who are not enrolled in formal education and are registered in the HELIOS programme.

**Funding:** Initially co-financed by the European Commission under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) from June 2019 to December 2021, it is funded through Greece's national budget. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in Greece implements the programme.

##### **Key Practices:**

- **Integration Training Centres:** Provide informal education that emphasises Greek language learning, cultural orientation (Greek and European civilisation), life skills, and professional competencies to boost employability.
- **Employment Support:** Includes individual job counselling and the organisation of job fairs. Notably, a Job Fair held in Lesbos in July 2024 attracted 452 participants and resulted in 219 job offers.
- **Housing Support:** Assists beneficiaries in obtaining independent housing, a core component of the programme's integration model.
- **Digital Platforms:** The UNHCR-supported ADAMA platform bridges the gap between refugees and the Greek labour market by connecting job seekers with employers and promoting private sector engagement.

**Impact:** By November 2023, HELIOS had supported 45,221 beneficiaries. The programme significantly improved participants' access to employment and independent housing, enhancing their integration outcomes.

**Lessons Learned:** A holistic integration approach—linking housing, employment, and education—effectively supports beneficiaries' transition to independent living. The active involvement of municipalities and private sector actors is critical to sustaining outcomes.

**Scalability:** The HELIOS programme's modular and multi-sectoral structure allows for replication or expansion at both national and EU levels. Its strong emphasis on collaboration between public authorities, NGOS, and the private sector makes it a transferable model for other integration contexts.

### **IncluCities – Improving TCN Integration in Small and Medium-Sized Cities**

**Focus:** Enhancing the integration of third-country nationals (TCNS) into the labour market and local communities in small and medium-sized cities, starting with a pilot implementation in the Municipality of Levadia.

**Objective:** To enhance the social and economic inclusion of migrants by promoting employment, entrepreneurship, social cohesion, and active participation in local community life.

**Target Group:** Third-country nationals living in Levadia, such as job seekers, aspiring entrepreneurs, and community members needing integration support.

**Funding:** Funded under the broader IncluCities project (2020–2023), coordinated by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), with co-funding from the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).

#### **Key Practices:**

- **Labour Market and Business Opportunities Analysis:** Mapping local employment trends and identifying sectors appropriate for migrant integration and entrepreneurship.
- **Business and Community Networking:** Establishing connections between migrants, local companies, and civil society organisations to promote collaboration and job opportunities.
- **Volunteer and Mentoring Networks:** Mobilising local volunteers and peer mentors to support newcomers and promote mutual learning.
- **Migrant Panels and Integration Council:** Creating participatory bodies that amplify migrant voices and support inclusive policymaking.
- **Employment and Entrepreneurship Programmes:** Supporting decent work and self-employment initiatives that are tailored to the needs of migrants and the realities of the local market.

**Impact:** The initiative enhanced labour market access and civic engagement among TCNS in Levadia, strengthened collaboration between municipalities and migrant communities, and fostered innovative practices in local integration governance. A notable result was the creation of a structured Integration Council, enabling sustained dialogue and action planning.

**Lessons Learned:** Community-based integration models are effective when grounded in local labour market insights, inclusive decision-making, and solid stakeholder partnerships. Regular feedback and flexibility in implementation are essential for addressing emerging challenges.

**Scalability:** IncluCities provides a replicable model for small and medium-sized cities aiming to integrate migrants through targeted employment initiatives, participatory governance, and peer learning. The core practices—labour market analysis, business engagement, mentoring, and inclusive governance—can be tailored to various local contexts across Europe.

### **Migrant Integration Centres (M.I.C.) – Local Hubs for Migrant Support and Inclusion**

**Focus:** Providing comprehensive, community-based support to third-country nationals (TCNs), asylum seekers, and beneficiaries of international protection at the municipal level across Greece.

**Objective:** To promote the social inclusion and integration of migrants through accessible services that address legal, social, psychological, educational, and employment-related needs.

**Target Group:** Third-country nationals, including asylum seekers and recognised refugees, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations such as women, children, and persons with special needs.

**Funding:** Financed through a combination of national and EU funds. The centres operate under **Law 4368/2016** and are integrated within the Community Centres of local municipalities.

#### **Key Practices:**

- **Multidisciplinary Services:** M.I.C. offer legal counselling, psychosocial support, intercultural mediation, and assistance with administrative procedures (e.g., access to social benefits, housing applications, documentation).
- **Language and Cultural Education:** Provision of Greek language courses and cultural orientation sessions to support communication and adaptation.
- **Intercultural Activities:** Organisation of events and initiatives that foster mutual understanding, social cohesion, and engagement between migrants and host communities.
- **Employment Support:** Guidance and referrals for job opportunities, vocational training, and integration into the local labour market.
- **Partnership and Referral Networks:** Active collaboration with local services, civil society organisations, and institutions to ensure comprehensive, coordinated support.
- **Specialised Services:** Tailored assistance for vulnerable groups, including targeted support for women and children.

**Impact:** M.I.C. have become an essential entry point for integration services in Greek municipalities. The Athens M.I.C., for example, has significantly improved access to psychosocial care, legal support, and administrative assistance for thousands of TCNs, contributing to better living conditions and community engagement.



**Lessons Learned:** Localised, integrated service delivery ensures faster, more effective responses to migrants' needs. Multidisciplinary teams and partnerships with local stakeholders enhance outreach and impact, especially for vulnerable populations.

**Scalability:** The M.I.C. model is highly adaptable and scalable to other municipalities in Greece and beyond. Its community-based approach, embedded in municipal structures, makes it a replicable model for inclusive local governance and migrant integration.

### **Skills Recognition Tool – Enhancing Refugee Employment through Competency Mapping**

**Focus:** Supporting the labour market integration of recognised refugees through a pilot tool designed to assess and validate skills and match them with suitable employment opportunities.

**Objective:** To facilitate the job placement of approximately 1,000 recognised refugees in Attica and Central Macedonia by identifying their existing competencies and aligning them with labour market needs.

**Target Group:** Recognised refugees residing in Greece, particularly in the regions of Attica and Central Macedonia, seeking employment and requiring formal recognition of prior skills.

**Funding:** Implemented by the Hellenic Manpower Employment Organisation (OAED), with technical input from the World Bank's Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice. Public-private collaboration and civil society involvement are key elements of the initiative.

#### **Key Practices:**

- **Skills Assessment:** Introduction of a digital and structured process for mapping refugees' professional skills and qualifications.
- **Job Matching:** Alignment of assessed skills with available employment opportunities in targeted regions.
- **Institutional Collaboration:** Strong coordination between public bodies (such as OAED) and civil society organisations to ensure accurate skill recognition and effective outreach.
- **Pilot Implementation:** Deployment in two key regions—Attica and Central Macedonia—with an employment target of 1,000 job placements for refugees.

**Impact:** While the initiative represents a promising step toward structured skills recognition and labour integration, its overall impact remains difficult to evaluate due to limited public data on implementation progress, employment outcomes, and lessons learned from the pilot.

**Lessons Learned:** The pilot underscores the importance of inter-institutional collaboration in refugee integration efforts. Civil society engagement is particularly valuable in reaching refugee populations and providing insight into their skill sets and employment aspirations.



**Scalability:** With further development, systematic monitoring, and transparent reporting, the Skills Recognition Tool holds strong potential for expansion to other regions and groups. It could be a scalable national model to facilitate labour market access for refugees and other migrants.

#### 4.4.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

The following first-hand accounts, gathered through focus groups with migrants and local community members, illuminate the lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, and hopes of those on the integration journey. Specifically, two in-person focus groups were conducted with third-country nationals (five women and four men), and one online focus group was held with local community members (three women and two men). These sessions occurred in January and February and involved 14 participants.

**Greece as a transit country:** Migrants face numerous barriers in the integration process, which are often shaped by legal and socio-economic factors. Drawing on the focus groups conducted, one key challenge is Greece's perception as a transit country. Many migrants view it as a temporary stop rather than a destination for long-term settlement, partly due to the lack of a comprehensive integration policy and limited political will. This perception, shared by migrants and the host society, creates systemic obstacles in all areas of integration.

**Bureaucratic and legal challenges:** Immigration status further complicates migrants' access to services. Bureaucratic hurdles, such as difficulties obtaining essential documents like social security numbers (AMKA) and insurance registry numbers (AMA), restrict their access to healthcare, employment, housing, and social services.

*"My problem is getting a job and my papers. I want to work, but I can't find a solution for my documents. I'm new here, and I don't know anything—I feel like a blind man." (Migrant Voice)*

The overlap of responsibilities between government agencies leads to delays, while changes in the legal framework add further complexity. This often contributes to feelings of exclusion and uncertainty.

*"If the answer from the services is delayed, I feel unwelcome. I understand that they don't want me here, that they want me to leave," (Migrant Voice)*

*"I have an appointment for an interview, but with the situation in Syria, everything is frozen. I don't know if the interview will take place or when it might happen. This uncertainty has caused me psychological distress because I have no idea what will happen or when." (Migrant Voice)*

Institutional discrimination and stereotypes contribute to exclusion, and the transition from reception to integration is often poorly managed, leaving migrants unprepared for long-term settlement.



**Housing challenges:** Housing represents another significant challenge. High rental prices impact both long-term residents and newcomers, but migrants face additional financial and legal barriers when securing rental contracts or applying for housing benefits. This often results in overcrowded living conditions. Prejudice from landlords further limits housing options, contributing to the concentration of migrant populations in specific neighbourhoods and reinforcing marginalisation.

*“When they find out we are Arabs, they immediately say no. And if they realize it when they see us in person, they suddenly claim the rent is too expensive.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Many landlords do not want immigrants or refugees, especially men”, while another mentions they often ask migrants whether “they have money to pay, where they are from etc.” (Public Community Representative)*

The lack of affordable housing programs exacerbates marginalisation, often forcing individuals into overcrowded or unsafe living conditions. Refugees are particularly vulnerable, with some confined to closed reception facilities for extended periods. The discontinuation of programs like HELIOS (mentioned above), overcrowding in shelters, and the eviction of refugees upon obtaining legal status all increase the risk of homelessness. These housing challenges, residency permit requirements, and language barriers exclude many migrants from stable housing. These issues create a sense of temporariness, insecurity, and segregation, as both migrants and locals are pushed to areas away from employment opportunities and community activities.

**Challenges in Employment:** Access to the labour market is also fraught with challenges. Migrants are often limited to manual, seasonal, or undeclared jobs due to documentation issues, language barriers, and lack of access to education. Labour exploitation is common due to migrants' vulnerable positions, including limited time in the country, lack of social networks, and language barriers. There is an institutional gap that allows for exploitation, as well as a lack of awareness among TCNs regarding their rights.

*“In their job search, they often face racism, stereotypes, and critical comments—sometimes due to something as simple as their accent in Greek. Beyond access to employment, securing a pension is also a major struggle. Even when working legally, they receive meagre pensions, lower than those of the local population. There is both institutional exploitation and a lack of awareness among TCNs themselves about their rights.” (Public Community Representative)*

Language barriers remain one of the most significant challenges migrants encounter in their job search.

*“The only problem I have is the Greek language. It’s good that I know Arabic and English, but if I knew Greek, I would have more options in the job market.” (Migrant Voice)*

Discriminatory hiring practices and stereotypes further restrict job opportunities.

*"It is common for them to attend an interview, but once asked where they are from, they ultimately aren't hired." (Public Community Representative)*

Delays in renewing residency documents can result in job loss or missed opportunities. Many migrants voiced their frustration over being unable to find work despite their eagerness and ability.

*"I don't care where or in what job I work, whether it's here in Athens or on the islands—I just want a job. I don't want to ask for money; I want to work, to contribute, and to earn what I deserve." (Migrant Association Representative)*

Many migrants are unaware of their labour rights and legal processes, and employers often exploit their precarious status, leading to informal work and contract violations. While some initiatives exist to inform them, practical challenges arise -for example, informational sessions are often scheduled during working hours, making attendance difficult. Additionally, migrants struggle to find reliable job-seeking channels, usually relying on word-of-mouth within their communities, though social media has been helpful.

The mismatch between migrants' skills and available jobs, compounded by a lack of vocational training and language programs, confines many to low-skilled, unstable roles, perpetuating poverty and exclusion.

Women, particularly single mothers, face additional barriers, including limited childcare support and gender-based discrimination.

*"I can only look for jobs that offer work-from-home options because my son has many school holidays and vacations, and I need to be at home. Last summer, I sent him to Tunisia for two months because I had to work from the office. In my current job, I earn less because I had to find a solution for childcare." (Migrant Voice)*

*"Migrant and refugee women are also caregivers at the same time, making it harder for them [to participate in the workforce] or having much freedom of movement." (Migrant Association Representative)*

Muslim women, in particular, experience additional discrimination due to wearing the hijab.

*"They have also made comments about my hijab. Before meeting me, they say everything is fine, but when they see me, they change their minds and say something different. My sister even removed her hijab to get a job." (Migrant voice)*

Locals acknowledge the same barriers migrants mentioned, such as legal, institutional, and language challenges, issues in housing and employment, gaps in education, widespread discrimination, and the significance of a national integration strategy.

*"The absence of a national strategy as a key issue, leaving the responsibility for integration largely on individuals and migrant communities themselves." (Migrant Association Representative)*

Moreover, employers are often not adequately equipped or trained to support diverse nationalities and cultures, leading to migrants primarily finding employment in NGOs with inclusive policies or socially conscious employers. Employers who have hired migrants highlight their strong work ethic, motivation, and eagerness to learn and contribute. Migrants working in organisations that serve these communities provide

valuable insights into cultural sensitivities. Businesses' leadership and operational culture also play a significant role, while establishing connections with migrant communities is essential.

*“Employer reluctance often isn’t due to ill intent but rather ignorance—something that diminishes when they engage with these individuals.” (Public Community Representative)*

**Challenges related to financial literacy:** Finally, financial literacy seems to constitute a significant hurdle for migrants, who struggle to access financial services due to legal uncertainties, bureaucratic complexities, and discrimination.

*“I want to open a bank account, but I keep facing difficulties. Every employer requires one, so I work for a few days and then leave for another job because they all ask for the same thing. I’ve been trying for three months now, but it’s very difficult—even though I have a VAT number, a social security number, and a residence permit.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Financial literacy is provided almost exclusively through communities, family, and personal contacts and not through e.g. the banks themselves, which do not provide the necessary information.” (Public Community Representative)*

The constant changes in asylum procedures create uncertainty, making it difficult for migrants to secure stable employment or financial independence. There is a pressing need for financial literacy programs and legal guidance to help migrants navigate these challenges, understand their rights, and access essential services, to prevent their economic exploitation and social exclusion.

#### 4.4.6. Concluding Remarks

Despite recent legislative developments concerning labour market integration, Greece lacks a standardised integration programme for all TCNs. Integrating migrants remains a complex challenge that requires comprehensive and coordinated efforts across various sectors. Key challenges, such as Greece's role as a transit country, bureaucratic barriers related to immigration status, limited access to housing, language obstacles, labour market discrimination, and difficulties with financial literacy, hinder successful long-term integration. These challenges often create feelings of insecurity, marginalisation, and exclusion for migrants, further reinforcing their vulnerable status.

To address these challenges, practices like the HELIOS program, which aims to provide housing and integration support, offer valuable lessons. Key insights from these practices emphasise the significance of developing sustainable housing solutions, ensuring access to legal and social services, and closing the gap between migrants and the labour market through targeted training and support. Programs integrating legal counselling, vocational training, language courses, and social integration activities can empower migrants to participate actively in their communities, fostering social cohesion and economic stability.

Recommendations for enhancing migrant integration may include:



- **Comprehensive Integration Policies:** Establish clear, long-term integration strategies that extend beyond temporary housing solutions to encompass all aspects of migrants' lives, including employment, education, social services, and housing.
- **Improved Access to Services:** Streamline bureaucratic processes to ensure migrants can easily obtain necessary documentation, including social security numbers and work permits, thus enabling access to healthcare, housing, and employment opportunities.
- **Affordable Housing Programs:** Expand affordable housing initiatives and establish safeguards to prevent discrimination in housing markets. Programs should also assist refugees in transitioning from reception centres to permanent housing solutions, thus avoiding prolonged confinement in overcrowded shelters.
- **Labour Market Integration:** Invest in vocational training, language programs, and initiatives that acknowledge foreign qualifications to assist migrants in entering the labour market and accessing better job opportunities. This should involve creating pathways for women and other marginalised groups to overcome gender-based and socio-economic challenges and barriers.
- **Education:** Key obstacles such as transportation issues, inadequate resources and trained personnel, and insufficient funding from the Ministry of Education must be prioritised. Improving logistical infrastructure, ensuring that schools are equipped with trained educators and support staff, and addressing the transportation difficulties faced by children living in remote areas or camps can significantly reduce dropout rates and enhance regular school attendance. Additionally, increasing funding for educational programs targeting migrant and refugee children will ensure a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Finally, programs integrating language courses, legal counselling, and vocational training can equip migrants with the tools they need to engage actively in their communities, promoting social cohesion and economic stability. Language courses, in particular, play a crucial role in enabling migrants to communicate effectively, navigate their new environment, and enhance their opportunities for success.
- **Financial Literacy and Legal Support:** Offer targeted financial literacy programs and legal advice to migrants to help them understand their rights, access financial services, and achieve economic independence. This will also help protect them from economic exploitation and facilitate their inclusion in the formal economy



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KMOP - Kentro Merimnas Oikogeneias Kai Paidiou





#### 4.5. National Report HUNGARY



Szubjektív Értékek Alapítványt compiled this national report

#### 4.5.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

Hungary has traditionally served as a transit country rather than a primary destination for migrants due to its geographical position in Central Europe. However, its role in migration dynamics has evolved over the past decade. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH)<sup>74</sup>, Hungary's population in early 2024 stood at approximately 9.6 million, with around 590,000 foreign-born residents. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) estimated about 610,000 international migrants in Hungary by mid-2024, representing approximately 6.4% of the total population. (UN DESA)<sup>75</sup>.

Among the foreign-born, Third Country Nationals (migrants) — individuals from non-EU countries — account for roughly 7.5% of the foreign-born population. Migration to Hungary is primarily driven by labour and educational opportunities. Significant migrants come from Ukraine, China, Serbia, Vietnam, and the Middle East. In 2023, the leading nationalities of immigrants included Ukrainians (38,400), Chinese (9,800), and Serbians (7,200). (KSH)<sup>76</sup>.

The migrant population is mainly concentrated in Budapest and major urban centres such as Debrecen, Győr, and Szeged, while rural areas have fewer migrants. The age profile primarily comprises working-age adults (18–45), and the gender ratio is pretty balanced. However, it is slightly skewed toward males because of labour market demands in construction and manufacturing. Following the war in Ukraine, Hungary has welcomed over 2.6 million Ukrainian refugees since 2022, but only about 35,000 have remained under the EU Temporary Protection Directive.<sup>77</sup>.

Despite restrictive asylum policies, Hungary continues to receive a modest number of asylum applications — only 46 in 2023, primarily from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Constructing a border fence and dismantling transit zones reflect Hungary's hardened border policy.

#### 4.5.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

Hungary's approach to integration is shaped by its restrictive migration framework and emphasis on national sovereignty. The key legislative instruments include the 2007 Asylum Act and the 2013 Immigration and

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<sup>74</sup> Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). (2023). *Statistical data on migration and population in Hungary*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksh.hu/>

<sup>75</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). (2024). *International migrant stock 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/>

<sup>76</sup> Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). (2023). *Statistical data on migration and population in Hungary*. Retrieved from <https://www.ksh.hu/>

<sup>77</sup> UNHCR Hungary. (2024). *Hungary operational update 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/>

Nationality Act, regulated under the Hungarian Fundamental Law. These laws govern asylum, residence, and work permits. Institutionally, the Ministry of Interior oversees migration and integration, with regional offices handling individual cases. However, Hungary lacks a comprehensive and inclusive national integration policy. Instead, integration responsibilities have been outsourced mainly to NGOS and EU-funded initiatives. The 2021–2027 National Migration Strategy<sup>78</sup> emphasises labour migration and economic growth but contains limited provisions for long-term social integration. Hungary scored poorly on the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)<sup>79</sup>, particularly in anti-discrimination, access to education, and political participation.

#### Key Integration Areas:

- **Education:** Public education is officially available to TCN children, though access to Hungarian language support and adaptation programs is limited. NGOs like the Artemisszió Foundation<sup>80</sup> help bridge this gap.
- **Employment:** Work permits are strictly regulated and tied to employer sponsorship. Recognising foreign qualifications is cumbersome, and migrants are often limited to low-skilled sectors. Initiatives such as the Menedék Association's<sup>81</sup> job placement programs aim to address these challenges.
- **Health:** While basic healthcare is available to recognised refugees, undocumented migrants or those on short-term permits often face exclusion. Language barriers and a lack of multicultural training among health professionals increase the difficulty.
- **Social Inclusion:** There are no government-led measures. NGOS typically drive programs promoting intercultural dialogue or combating discrimination. Integration funding remains minimal, with priority given to border protection. While some EU AMIF (Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund) support is available, it is inconsistently utilised.

#### 4.5.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

Migrant integration in Hungary remains difficult due to legal, socio-economic, and institutional barriers. Restrictive immigration policies, limited access to public services, and social exclusion dominate the landscape. Government policies prioritise security and border control over integration, creating significant obstacles for migrants and refugees to build stable lives.

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<sup>78</sup> EU Migration Integration Portal. (2025). *Governance of migrant integration in Hungary*. Retrieved from [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-hungary_en)

<sup>79</sup> MIPEX. (2020). *Migrant Integration Policy Index*.

<sup>80</sup> <https://artemisszio.hu/en/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://menedek.hu/en/project/accessin>

## Immigration Status and Legal Barriers

Hungary's migration framework has undergone reforms to tighten border controls and restrict asylum access.

- **Restrictive asylum system:** Stringent criteria make obtaining refugee or subsidiary protection status<sup>82</sup> difficult.
- **Closure of transit zones:** Since 2020, access to asylum has been severely restricted<sup>83</sup>.
- **Bureaucratic hurdles:** Lengthy and complex procedures delay residence and work permits. Residency permit laws for migrants are constantly changing, and options for settling in require highly skilled job offers or specific degrees. Family reunification is only available for permanent residency holders or citizens of the EEA; even students cannot bring their children to join them in Hungary.

**Impact:** Migrants without secure status have restricted access to healthcare, housing, education, and social services benefits.

## Labour Market Barriers

Migrants encounter significant barriers in accessing the labour market:

- **Employer-dependent permits:** Work authorisation often ties migrants to one employer, increasing vulnerability.
- **Skills mismatch:** Foreign qualifications are often not recognised, forcing skilled migrants into low-wage jobs.
- **Language barriers:** Migrants depend on NGO-funded programs. Poor Hungarian skills limit access to employment, healthcare, education, and services. Hungarian fluency is required for most professional employment, leaving migrants to seek job offers limited to customer service, so that they can use their language as a strength.

## Housing Challenges

Affordable and stable housing presents a significant challenge:

- **Limited social housing:** Non-EU migrants are largely excluded from government housing.

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<sup>82</sup> UNHCR Hungary. (2024). *Hungary operational update 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/>

<sup>83</sup> UNHCR Hungary. (2024). *Hungary operational update 2024*. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/>

- **Discrimination:** Landlords often reject migrants based on nationality or race
- **High rental costs:** Housing prices are unaffordable compared to migrant incomes.

**Impact:** Migrants rely on informal rentals, experiencing instability and lacking legal protections.

Despite the valuable efforts of the third sector to enhance migrants' access to legal aid, housing, and employment, integration challenges persist. Civil society organisations emphasise that structural reforms are urgently needed. They recommend simplifying legal procedures for residency and asylum, creating clear and accessible pathways to secure legal status, and recognising foreign qualifications to better match migrant skills with labour market needs. Expanding vocational training opportunities and developing multilingual services would further support migrants' employment prospects. In the housing sector, strengthening anti-discrimination enforcement and increasing the availability of affordable housing options are critical. To address language barriers, civil society urges establishing free, accessible Hungarian language education programs linked to employment and integration pathways. Finally, organisations such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee<sup>84</sup> and Menedék Association<sup>85</sup> stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive national integration strategy that actively includes migrant voices in policymaking to ensure long-term inclusion and social cohesion.

#### 4.5.4. Best Practice Examples

Below is a synthesis of effective practices and programs that promote migrant integration in Hungary. It focuses on key themes such as employment, housing, legal aid, mental health, and community support. The good practices report highlights these themes in further detail.

##### Access to Services and Information

###### ACCESSIN Project

- **Focus:** Improve access for Third-Country Nationals (TCNS) to essential services (employment, housing, healthcare, education, and social support).
- **Objective:** Bridge information gaps and build service provider capacity.
- **Target Group:** Migrants, refugees, asylum seekers.
- **Funding:** EU Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).
- **Key Practices:**
  - Multilingual brochures and “Know Your Rights” guides.

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<sup>84</sup> Hungarian Helsinki Committee. (n.d.). *Legal aid and rights advocacy for migrants*. Retrieved from <https://helsinki.hu/en>

<sup>85</sup> <https://menedek.hu/en/project/accessin>



- Training for service providers (including teachers and healthcare workers).
- Cultural competence modules.
- **Impact:** Better access to rights and services; stronger CSO-public cooperation.
- **Lessons Learned:** Language support and culturally sensitive services are essential.
- **Scalability:** Easily replicable through standardised materials and modules.

## Employment and Entrepreneurship

### MlraGE Project

- **Focus:** Integrating TCNS into labour markets.
- **Objective:** Train TCNs and employers for faster labor market integration.
- **Target Group:** Third-Country Nationals, employers.
- **Funding:** EU Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF).
- **Key Practices:**
  - Modular training covering job search, self-employment, and taxation.
  - Training sessions for employers on legal and cultural integration.
  - Resources and tools for career support and business startups.
- **Impact:** More than 100 trained in Hungary; some became peer mentors; increased self-employment and mentoring.
- **Lessons Learned:** Ongoing employer engagement and flexible delivery methods are key.
- **Scalability:** Modular training structure suits various EU regions.

### WICP – Women in Creative Power

- **Focus:** Empowering migrant women through entrepreneurship.
- **Objective:** Empower migrant and refugee women through self-employment and creative entrepreneurship.
- **Target Group:** Migrant and refugee women, TCNS, local women.
- **Funding:** Erasmus+ Programme.
- **Key Practices:**
  - Eight-Stage Mentorship program.
  - Tandem training for creativity and socio-cultural skills language.
- **Impact:** Over 90 participants trained; entrepreneurship manual created.
- **Lessons Learned:** Flexible, personalised mentoring improves engagement.
- **Scalability:** Mentorship model and training manual are easily adaptable.



### Mira Intercultural Community – Artemisszió Foundation

- **Focus:** Supporting migrant integration through peer mentoring.
- **Objective:** Promote social integration through peer mentoring.
- **Target Group:** Migrants and refugees.
- **Funding:** Not specified
- **Key Practices:**
  - One-on-one mentorship for navigating services and administration.
  - Social events for community building.
  - Volunteer training and support.
- **Impact:** Increased confidence, better service access, and stronger local connections.
- **Lessons Learned:** Consistent support builds trust and promotes integration.
- **Scalability:** The volunteer-based model is cost-effective and replicable.

### Housing and Care Programs

- **Focus:** Providing social support and other support that includes help in housing.
- **Objective:** Assist vulnerable groups with integration and housing.
- **Target Group:** Homeless individuals, low-income families, refugees, and migrants.
- **Funding:** Kalunba Charity, Hungarian Red Cross, and Next Step Organisation.
- **Key Practices:**
  - Rental housing support
  - Mentoring
  - Community engagement.
- **Impact:** 100+ families housed; homelessness reduced.
- **Lessons Learned:** Strong landlord partnerships and holistic support matter.
- **Scalability:** Expandable to other cities facing housing crises.

Other institutions are constantly offering support for migrant integration:

### Menedék Association - Hungarian association for migrants

- **Objective:** Enhance the employability of migrants and refugees.
- **Key Practices:** Hungarian + vocational training. CV workshops, interview coaching. Employer collaboration for job placement.
- **Impact:** 65% secured stable employment; more than 500 individuals trained.



#### Hungarian Helsinki Committee [for Legal Aid and Rights Advocacy](#)

- **Objective:** Ensure migrant and refugee rights through legal representation.
- **Key Practices:** Free legal aid in asylum procedures. Training for professionals on migration law. Policy advocacy at national and EU levels.
- **Impact:** Over 3,000 asylum seekers supported; policy impact recognised.

#### Cordelia Foundation for Mental Health and Trauma Support

- **Objective:** Support psychological recovery and integration of trauma-affected migrants.
- **Key Practices:** Culturally adapted individual and group therapy. Training for trauma-informed care. Partnerships with hospitals and shelters.
- **Impact:** 2,500+ migrants were treated, and mental health awareness was improved.

Hungary's successful practices in migrant integration underline the importance of community-based support, employment opportunities, and legal protections. Despite challenges like restrictive migration policies and public attitudes, civil society organisations continue to play a crucial role- indeed, the only role- in supporting migrants. Future efforts should focus on scaling successful models and ensuring sustainable funding for integration programs.

### 4.5.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

Three focus groups were conducted to explore the experiences of the local community regarding migrant integration, particularly in employment, housing, financial literacy, and community engagement. The first focus group included representatives from Migrant Associations and organisations that work with migrant communities. A total of nine participants (three men and six women) from seven organisations took part, two of whom were migrants themselves. The group offered rich organisational perspectives on the challenges and successes observed in supporting migrant populations.

The second focus group engaged local community members, including residents, service providers, and employers. This group consisted of six participants, evenly split between men and women (three men and three women). Notably, three participants were migrants. The participants included three service providers (a real estate agent, a self-employment consultant, and a business consultant), one resident who volunteers as an intercultural mediator, and two employers from the hospitality sector (a restaurant and a hotel).

The third focus group consisted of Third Country Nationals (TCNs), with 10 participants (6 women and four men) from diverse national backgrounds: Jordan (3 participants), Palestine (1 participant), Indonesia (1 participant), Chile (1 participant), Tunisia (1 participant), and Kenya (1 participant). Most participants arrived in Hungary initially as students, particularly through the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship program. Their





ages ranged approximately from 24 to 38 years. Since then, the participants have transitioned into various roles, including employment at international companies, teaching positions, entrepreneurship, and service industry work. Their experiences offered crucial firsthand perspectives on Hungary's social and economic integration process.

**Securing a job is never easy for migrants, even after gaining experience.**

*"I worked as a volunteer after my internship. My supervisor finally convinced the boss to hire me, but I did all the work because I was the first foreigner to be employed." (Migrant Voice)*

*"Our clients face rejections not just for high-skilled jobs but for hospitality roles too. Recognition of qualifications is still a huge problem." (Migrant Association Representative)*

**Migrants often face distrust from landlords and housing market challenges.**

*"You can pay 12 months in advance, if this is okay for you, you can come view the apartment. With a baby, it was even harder." (Migrant Voice)*

*"I am lucky because our friend met this great landlord 6 years ago, and we are all passing this apartment from one person to another. Hungarians can be great, but it is sometimes luck." (Migrant Voice)*

*"Some landlords don't want to pay the taxes, so they do not complete with our programs where we help in housing." (Migrant Association Representative)*

*"Prices near the center for housing are crazy. Not all migrants have flexible jobs to look for houses far away from the center, so there are always these conflicts. But for sure, they need to look away from the center." (Migrant Association Representative)*

*"Many landlords reject migrants due to stereotypes. This isn't just about race—it's about misinformation and fear." (Public Community Representative)*

*"Hungarians need a lot of time to develop trust. Once trust is there, they can be very helpful, and this is how we help people in finding apartments." (Public Community Representative)*

**Language barriers and negative attitudes make daily life more difficult for migrants.**

*"I tried to learn the language, and I could see that when I say two or three extra Hungarian words, Hungarians are nice to me." (Migrant Voice)*

*"I don't know how I am expected to support myself and my family, and have the time to learn a language that is so hard." (Migrant Voice)*

*"I was at a governmental office and one of the workers stood up and screamed, 'If you do not speak Hungarian, leave and only come back with a translator,' he said it in perfect English." (Migrant Voice)*

**Migrants lack clear information about their rights and financial management.**

*"This is the first time I know that foreigners are eligible for benefits. I thought, like the loans, I have to have permanent residency." (Migrant Voice)*



*"We are looking into making a financial literacy program because we were shocked by those receiving allowance from a program coming after one week saying that they have finished it." (Migrant Association Representative)*

**Public attitudes toward migrants change depending on political and social narratives.**

*"We saw kind people during COVID who helped us, and it seemed for us that they liked those who are not tourists because in Budapest tourists are not really liked." (Migrant Voice)*

*"At the beginning of the war on Ukraine, everyone wanted to help because the government was helping. Then the government started to express how much the war was draining Hungary and is the reason for inflation. People started not liking Ukrainians and became more discriminatory." (Public Community Representative)*

*"Even Americans are now finding it hard to retire here in Hungary because of the unclear legal pathways, and since there is no permit that they can apply for, foreigners of all nationalities are being targeted." (Public Community Representative).*

#### 4.5.6. Concluding Remarks

Hungary's evolving role from a transit to a partial destination country highlights the growing importance of effective migrant integration strategies. However, the integration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) remains challenged by restrictive immigration policies, limited access to public services, high barriers to employment and housing, and widespread social exclusion. Migrants face difficulties securing legal status, accessing the labour market due to skills mismatches and language barriers, and finding affordable, discrimination-free housing. The experiences captured through focus groups reveal persistent distrust, bureaucratic hurdles, and misinformation within the housing, employment, and public service sectors.

Despite these challenges, civil society organisations are critical in addressing systemic gaps. Initiatives from civil society demonstrate that community engagement, peer support, legal aid, mental health services, and gender-inclusive strategies significantly enhance integration outcomes. Mentorship programs, skill-building workshops, empowerment activities for migrant women, trauma-informed therapy, and legal assistance have strengthened migrants' capacities to adapt, find employment, and navigate local systems. Nevertheless, these efforts are constrained by the lack of a comprehensive national integration framework and sustainable government support. Future strategies must prioritise simplifying legal processes, recognising foreign qualifications, combating discrimination in housing and employment, expanding free Hungarian language education, and ensuring stable funding for civil society initiatives. Importantly, migrant voices must be meaningfully included in policymaking processes. Strengthening cooperation between the government and civil society, scaling successful models, and promoting community-based support structures are essential steps toward building an inclusive and resilient Hungarian society where all residents, regardless of origin, can fully contribute and thrive.



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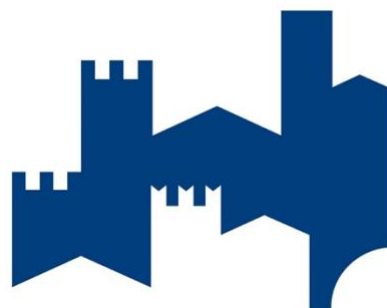
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#### 4.6. National Report ITALY



EMILIA  
ROMAGNA  
**anci**

This national report was compiled by Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) and Anci Emilia Romagna.



#### 4.6.1. Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

As of January 1, 2024, Italy had 5,307,598 foreign residents, representing 9% of the total population. Over 70% of these individuals were non-EU citizens. The gender distribution is balanced, with women making up 50.5% of the foreign population. Approximately 34.2% of the foreign population lives in the Northwest (around 1.8 million people), with the highest concentration of foreigners. Meanwhile, 32% of foreigners reside in municipalities with over 100,000 inhabitants (more than 12% of the total population), while 10.8% live in towns between 50,000 and 100,000 (8.8%). The average age of the foreign population is 36.8 years (compared to 47.6 years for Italians). Minors represent 19.5% of the non-EU population, particularly among North African communities (25.6%), with the Egyptian community reaching 28.9%. Romania remained the leading country of citizenship among foreign residents, accounting for 20.4% of the total. Albania and Morocco followed this, each representing 7.9% and 7.8%, respectively. The Chinese community made up 5.9%, and the Ukrainian community 5.2%. Other significant communities included those from Bangladesh, India, Egypt, Pakistan, and the Philippines 34. 2023, Italy issued 330,730 new residence permits, down 26.4% from the previous year. Permits for asylum fell by 47.6% (from over 200,000 in 2022 to around 106,000 in 2023), mainly due to the reduction in temporary protection permits for Ukrainians (from 149,000 to 21,000)<sup>86</sup>. Italy hosted 298,296 refugees in 2023 (5 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants), mainly from Ukraine (164,667), Nigeria (19,664), Afghanistan (16,825), Pakistan (14,537), and Mali (12,880). There were 147,000 asylum seekers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Egypt, and 3,000 stateless individuals<sup>87</sup>. A livello territoriale, la Lombardia è la regione con la quota più elevata sul totale dei nuovi permessi per protezione internazionale (oltre il 20%), seguita dall'Emilia-Romagna (10,2%)<sup>88</sup>.

66,317 migrants arrived in Italy by sea in 2024, down 57.9% from over 157,000 in 2023. Most arrivals were from Bangladesh (almost 66,000), followed by Syria (12,500), Tunisia (7,700), Egypt (4,300), and Guinea (3,500)<sup>89</sup>. 130,000 asylum applications were filed in Italy in the first nine months of 2024, mainly from Bangladesh, China, Sri Lanka, Morocco, India and Peru. Land arrivals also declined; in the first six months of 2024, there were 3,400 arrivals compared to 5,600 in 2023. Conversely, asylum applications increased: 130,000 asylum applications were filed in Italy in the first nine months of 2024, primarily from citizens of

<sup>86</sup> [https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REPORT-CITTADINI-NON-COMUNITARI\\_Anno-2023.pdf](https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REPORT-CITTADINI-NON-COMUNITARI_Anno-2023.pdf)

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.centroastalli.it/rifugiati-in-italia-2/#:~:text=Al%2031%20luglio%202024%2C%20la,MSNA%20%E2%80%93%20minori%20stranieri%20non%20accompagnati.>

<sup>88</sup> [https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REPORT-CITTADINI-NON-COMUNITARI\\_Anno-2023.pdf](https://www.istat.it/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/REPORT-CITTADINI-NON-COMUNITARI_Anno-2023.pdf)

<sup>89</sup> <https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/4095/-66300-gli-arrivi-via-mare-nel-2024-almeno-1700-le-vittime>

Bangladesh (with a notable 59% rise in requests compared to 2023), China, Sri Lanka, Morocco, India, and Peru<sup>90</sup>.

In 2023, there were 2.374 million foreign workers in the Italian labour market, accounting for over 10% of total employment. The employment rate for foreign men was 75.6%, and for foreign women, it was 48.7%, compared to 69.9% for Italian men and 53% for Italian women. The North absorbed 61.7% of foreign workers (62.8% of employed foreign women), the Center 24.7%, and the South 13.6%. Only 8.7% of foreign workers were employed in skilled jobs<sup>91</sup>.

#### 4.6.2. National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

The National Coordination Table, established at the Ministry of the Interior, includes representatives from various ministries, regions, provinces, municipalities, and other stakeholders. In 2017, it developed the National Integration Plan focused on beneficiaries of international protection. The 2025–2027 National Integration Plan is currently being drafted<sup>37</sup>. The plan is structured into nine key areas of intervention, each aimed at facilitating the integration of beneficiaries:

- Promoting understanding and collaboration among various religious communities to foster social inclusion.
- Ensuring the learning of the Italian language and access to the education system.
- Offering professional training opportunities to enhance migrants' skills and facilitate their entry into the labour market.
- Guaranteeing that beneficiaries can access healthcare services.
- Facilitating access to stable and adequate housing.
- Supporting procedures that enable family members to reunite, reinforcing stability and well-being.
- Providing clear information on rights, duties, and available services, assisting beneficiaries in navigating the Italian system.
- Implementing measures to prevent and combat discrimination, promoting equality.
- Encouraging beneficiaries' participation in civic and social life, fostering a sense of belonging.

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<sup>90</sup> <https://www.ismu.org/presentazione-trentesimo-rapporto-sulle-migrazioni-2024-comunicato-stampa-17-2-2025/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://www.cnel.it/Comunicazione-e-Stampa/Notizie/ArtMID/1174/ArticleID/4645/PRESENTATO-RAPPORTO-CNEL-CITTADINI-STRANIERI-IN-ITALIA>

The plan is financed mainly through European funds, including the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), European Social Fund (ESF), and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Specific national funds include:

- National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services – Administered by the Ministry of the Interior, it provides direct funding for reception and integration projects.
- Fund for Migrant Integration – Supports pilot integration projects, cultural mediation services, and language assistance training.

The National Integration Plan is implemented through the Reception and Integration System (SAI), the cornerstone of Italy's inclusion policies. The Ministry of the Interior manages the SAI, coordinating the network of local authorities involved in reception and integration. The SAI provides structured and personalised services, including housing, employment guidance, language training, and access to healthcare and social services, all aimed at promoting the autonomy and integration of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors (UAM), and beneficiaries of international protection 37.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policies coordinates active labour market policies and promotes the social inclusion of migrants through:

- Promoting sports as a means for dialogue, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination.
- Socio-professional integration programs for unaccompanied minors and young adults' migrants.
- Supporting migrant entrepreneurship.
- Projects focused on activating individual socio-professional integration grants for vulnerable individuals legally residing in Italy.
- Urban inclusion initiatives aimed at third-country nationals in socially vulnerable urban areas with a high concentration of foreign residents<sup>92</sup>.

The Ministry of Education has introduced specific programs for students with a migrant background and unaccompanied minors, funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), to promote school inclusion and enhance language skills. These programs are aimed at fostering a supportive learning environment for all students and include:

- Italian language enhancement programs and basic skills training aim to ensure effective integration and reduce school dropout rates.

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/politiche-di-integrazione-sociale/pagine/default>



- Initiatives for unaccompanied minors to facilitate their quicker and more effective integration into the school system<sup>93</sup>.

#### 4.6.3. Key Challenges in the Integration Process

- **Immigration Status:** The type of residence permit greatly influences access to services and job opportunities. Migrants with temporary permits, such as those for asylum applications, often encounter barriers in accessing essential services, which limits their socio-economic integration. Moreover, the bureaucratic complexity and lengthy processing times for obtaining protection can exacerbate these challenges. Another issue is the frequent changes in immigration regulations, creating uncertainty for migrants and stakeholders. This research also found that, while front offices offer information and assistance, it is often inadequate or inconsistent. In some instances, the information from these offices contradicts what is given by immigration offices, leading to confusion and making it hard for migrants to obtain the correct information when needed. This misalignment and the lack of clear and timely information increases the risk of administrative errors and missed opportunities for legal and social integration.

- **Housing:** The findings of this research indicate that access to the housing market is particularly challenging for women and families. The lack of savings and difficulty setting aside funds for housing-related expenses, coupled with high agency costs and inflated rental prices, create significant obstacles to obtaining stable housing. The housing crisis is worsened by a shortage of available properties and a general mistrust among landlords, who may fear a decline in their property value if rented to migrants.

The issue of discrimination in the housing sector is especially apparent. Some organisations consulted in this research reported that migrants struggle to secure housing even with permanent work contracts. An anti-discrimination office documented instances where migrants were denied apartment viewings or where advertisements explicitly stated, 'Italians only' or 'no foreigners.' A significant obstacle is the disconnect between the social and housing sectors. The real estate industry is often unaware of the reception system or how it operates. Once reception concludes, support ceases—despite a continued need. This urgency pushes migrants into precarious or exploitative housing situations, increasing the risk of falling into illegal networks.

Migrants encounter additional challenges due to language barriers and bureaucratic complexities, which may compel them to accept unstable housing conditions. There is also a need to raise awareness among migrants regarding maintaining housing conditions to avoid conflicts with landlords and secure long-term solutions.

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<sup>93</sup> [https://www.mim.gov.it/inclusione-e-intercultura?utm\\_source](https://www.mim.gov.it/inclusione-e-intercultura?utm_source)

- **Labour Market and Skills:** Immigrants experience significantly higher unemployment rates than Italian citizens. According to a 2023 report<sup>94</sup> from the Ministry of Labour, the unemployment rate among immigrants stands at 14%, while for Italians, it is 7.8%. This disparity is also evident in job quality, with many immigrants compelled to accept precarious or underpaid employment. Unemployment is particularly pronounced among immigrant women, who often face dual discrimination based on gender and ethnic background.

Language represents one of the primary barriers immigrants encounter when accessing the labor market. Another significant challenge is the recognition of qualifications and work experience obtained abroad. Many immigrant professionals, including doctors, engineers, and teachers, cannot pursue their professions in Italy due to the complexity and expenses associated with recognition procedures. This protracted process discourages highly skilled migrants, compelling them to accept jobs that do not align with their qualifications.

Discrimination and prejudice remain entrenched issues that restrict employment opportunities for immigrants. According to a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), approximately 30% of immigrants in Italy reported experiencing workplace discrimination in the last five years. Discrimination can take various forms, including refusal to hire based on ethnic background and occupational segregation, wherein immigrants are relegated to lower-skilled and lower-paid positions.

A grave concern is the widespread phenomenon of caporalato (illegal labour intermediation) and labour exploitation, especially in the agricultural and construction sectors. Migrants, often in irregular situations, are recruited by intermediaries (caporali) who impose severe working conditions, extremely low wages, and long hours, sometimes under threats of violence or deportation. According to a 2023 report from Caritas, around 180,000 immigrants are estimated to be employed under exploitative conditions in agriculture alone. The exploitation is aggravated by the absence of effective oversight and the vulnerability of undocumented migrants, who are apprehensive about reporting abuses due to the risk of expulsion.

#### 4.6.4. Best Practice Examples

We have collected six good practices focused on access to housing and residential autonomy for migrants, considering that consultations with stakeholders and focus groups have highlighted this as the most problematic aspect of migrant integration in Italy.

##### REGISTER OF WELCOMING FAMILY, ITALY

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<sup>94</sup> Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali. (2023). *Rapporto annuale sulla presenza dei migranti*. <https://www.lavoro.gov.it>



**Objective:** Promote a culture of hospitality and integration, support migrants and refugees through hosting and mentoring, and foster social inclusion and autonomy. Additionally, it also aims to establish a formal register of hosting families.

**Target group:** Migrants, minors, and individuals in vulnerable situations (e.g., the elderly, homeless individuals)

**Funding includes the** FAMI 2019 project titled “From Experiences to Model: Family Hosting as a Path to Integration” alongside local resources.

**Key Practices:**

- Establishment of an online register, accompanied by public announcements to recruit hosting families and potential beneficiaries.
- Assessment of suitability for hosting or mentoring, including motivations and competencies
- Profiling of hosts and beneficiaries, followed by matching based on mutual affinities and needs
- Online training for participants to prepare them for hosting and mentoring, emphasizing the avoidance of power imbalances.
- Monitoring and weekly communication with project teams to address challenges or provide additional support.
- Evaluation of outcomes after 6-9 months of hosting or mentoring.

**Impact:**

- There were over 800 offers to host families during the Ukrainian crisis. There was a 20% increase in refugees securing work contracts after mentoring and housing support.
- Enhanced autonomy through mentoring, with 33% of refugees improving their overall well-being, 63% enhancing their Italian language skills, and 84% developing better territorial navigation and access to services.
- A positive impact on social cohesion, as volunteers offer moral guarantees for housing contracts and provide financial assistance, including deposits for rental agreements.

**Lessons learned:**

- Effective communication campaigns- whether online, through local media, or in presentations at reception centers- significantly increased participation.
- Public endorsements from local authorities enhanced trust and credibility.
- Continuous monitoring and customised support were essential for achieving successful outcomes.

**Scalability:** Local adaptations may include:



- Identifying specific target groups according to local needs (e.g., students, vulnerable populations).
- Leveraging existing community networks and public-private partnerships for implementation.

### **HOUSING TRANSITION PROGRAMME, BOLOGNA**

**Objective:** To assist individuals and families in transitioning from emergency accommodation to permanent housing and autonomy by providing affordable housing, tailored support plans, and social integration pathways.

**Target group:** Individuals and families receiving support from Territorial Social Services, including those transitioning from SAI reception systems, low-income households, and vulnerable groups.

**Funding:** Local government and public funding programs.

#### **Key Practices:**

- Transitional housing consists of 175 units, allowing a maximum stay of six years.
- Thorough evaluations by social services to determine qualified beneficiaries.
- Personalised support plans designed for the needs of beneficiaries. Customised housing plans are developed with input from multidisciplinary teams.
- Regular monitoring and follow-ups are essential to ensure progress toward autonomy.

#### **Impact:**

- All 175 transitional housing units are fully occupied.
- More than 100 families are currently on the waiting list for transitional housing.
- Successful transitions from emergency accommodation to private housing.
- Enhanced collaboration between the public and private housing sectors.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Early intervention and personalised support plans are crucial for achieving successful transitions.
- Collaborating with private landlords and real estate agents can expand housing options.
- Financial education and housing literacy are essential for long-term autonomy.

**Scalability:** It adapts well to other cities. Success relies on obtaining funding, establishing partnerships, and tailoring the model to local housing needs and contexts.

### **HOUSING PLAN – BOLOGNA**

**Objective:** Address the housing crisis, reduce energy poverty, tackle housing discrimination, and support sustainable urban development through innovative housing solutions.

**Target group:** Low-income households and individuals experiencing housing discrimination.

**Funding:** Local government funding, national housing initiatives, and PON and PNRR funds.

#### **Key Practices:**

- Development of social housing complexes and collaborative housing projects designated for migrants, students, and vulnerable groups.
- Establish an Agency for Social Renting and create a Metropolitan Housing Observatory to monitor and guide policies.
- Incorporating arginalized groups through anti-discrimination policies
- Integration of urban regeneration, energy efficiency, and social cohesion objectives.
- Annual public housing assemblies to gather community input and ensure accountability.

#### **Impact:**

- 25,000 individuals are housed in 12,000 public housing units.
- Energy retrofits for 700 public housing units lowered energy costs for vulnerable families.
- Planned social housing complexes will accommodate over 1,000 residents.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Collaborative governance that includes public, private, and third-sector stakeholders leads to more effective implementation.
- Investments in energy efficiency lower long-term costs for vulnerable households and enhance sustainability.
- Annual assemblies and the observatory promote transparency and community engagement.

**Scalability:** It is flexible for other urban contexts. Success relies on strong public-private partnerships, comprehensive data collection, and active community engagement.

### **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION SUPPORT DESK (SPAD) - BOLOGNA**

**Objective:** Tackle and counter discrimination by offering support to victims, increasing awareness, and advocating for systemic changes to guarantee equal access to housing, services, and public resources.

**Target group:** Victims and witnesses of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, identity, disability, and age

**Funding:** Local Government funding

#### **Key Practices:**

- **Listening and Orientation Function:** Victims and witnesses can report discrimination via physical desks, phone, WhatsApp, email, or an online form. Case managers evaluate and direct individuals to appropriate services.
- **Support for Victims:** Legal and psychological assistance, conflict mediation, and personalised guidance for each case.
- **Information and Awareness:** Multilingual promotional materials, public events, and social media campaigns.
- **Training:** Anti-discrimination training for SPAD staff, municipal employees, and social service providers.
- **Discrimination Observatory:** Collects and analyses data to produce annual reports and guide future efforts. actions.

#### **Impact:**

- Between November 2022 and December 2023, 44 cases of discrimination were reported, 56% of which were based on race or nationality.
- Institutional discrimination constituted 37.5% of cases.
- Key results include eliminating discriminatory rental advertisements and increasing awareness among real estate agencies.

- Public service enhancements in areas such as housing and permit issuance.

**Lessons learned:**

- A multidisciplinary approach improves victim support and drives systemic change.
- Community engagement and awareness campaigns are essential for tackling discrimination at the grassroots level.
- Gathering and analyzing data are crucial for identifying trends and enhancing interventions.

**Scalability:** The SPAD model can be adapted for other municipalities by leveraging partnerships with local organizations and establishing dedicated anti-discrimination observatories.

**HOUSING TUTOR – Bologna**

**Objective:** Enhance housing autonomy for SAI beneficiaries by introducing specialised housing tutors who offer guidance from the start of the reception process and promote collaboration with private landlords and stakeholders in the housing sector.

**Target group:** Beneficiaries of the SAI system

**Funding:** Funded as part of the SAI programme.

**Key Practices:**

- Formation of 11 housing tutors through workshops centered on profiling and stakeholder engagement, and operational tools.

Development of:

- A manual for stakeholders (SAI system, real estate, banks).
- Profiling sheets to evaluate beneficiaries' economic, social, and housing conditions aspirations.
- A list of stakeholders for establishing partnerships (e.g., real estate agencies, banks).

Housing tutors provide individual and group support, including:

- Literacy regarding housing-related topics.
- Financial education includes understanding rent, bills, and savings.
- Assistance with house hunting, gathering feedback, and managing expectations management.
- Collaboration with landlords and agencies for matching and contracts is essential.

Focus groups and workshops that tackle challenges like discrimination and foster confidence.

**Impact:**



- In 2024, CIDAS supported 116 individuals, 15 single-parent families, and six complete families, achieving 54 successful exits.
- Enhanced collaboration with landlords led to new private rental agreements.
- Focus groups and workshops fostered the beneficiaries' confidence and reduced barriers to accessing housing.
- Enhanced incorporation of housing literacy into SAI's language and cultural training.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Early integration of housing literacy fosters confidence.
- Collaboration with landlords, including guarantees such as rent contributions, fosters trust.
- Focus groups and workshops reduce social isolation and stigma.

**Scalability:** The practice's structured method, which combines early intervention, specialised roles, and co-design, renders it adaptable to other regions.

**FAMI INTARSI** (Union of Val di Savio Municipalities (Lead), Municipalities of Reggio Emilia, Parma, Ferrara, Modena, and others)

**Objective:** Improve services for asylum seekers and refugees moving out of reception systems, fostering independence in housing, employment, and access to essential services.

**Target group:** Families and individuals transitioning from reception systems (SAI/CAS), mainly focusing on single-parent households and families with children.

**Funding:** FAMI Fund 2014-2020

#### **Key Practices:**

Comprehensive support services and tailored support plans, including:

- Practical training (e.g., obtaining a driving license, completing job applications, filing a tax return).
- Housing assistance (active searches, rental payments, property management support).
- Employment guidance and financial assistance education.
- Integration tutors for language learning and social skills inclusion.

Multidisciplinary teams, including social workers, psychologists, cultural mediators, and legal experts). Close collaboration with local services to avoid duplication





#### Impact:

- 56 families (280 individuals) were supported with housing and employment services.
- Eight multidisciplinary teams tested integrated care models.
- Enhanced understanding of service delivery among stakeholders.

#### Lessons learned:

- The significance of sustainable, targeted project designs.
- Collaborative governance models improve outcomes.
- Tailored support plans prevent one-size-fits-all solutions and enhance effectiveness.

**Scalability:** Small modifications in methodology and governance can assist other regions in addressing similar needs. effectively.

### 4.6.5. Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

The five focus groups brought together diverse participants, including migrants with both recent and long-term experience in Italy, such as young adults and families from Nigeria, Liberia, and Tunisia, and a representative from a migrant association of Argentinians in Italy. Additionally, professionals engaged in migrant reception and integration participated, including staff members from family homes run by Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII and representatives from intercultural centres active across the Emilia-Romagna region. This composition ensured various perspectives, combining personal narratives with institutional and community-based expertise on integration pathways. These accounts focused on the main challenges faced in the integration process, positive experiences and potential solutions to enhance integration pathways.

#### Migrants encounter distrust from landlords and market dynamics while searching for housing.

*“Excessive housing prices, a scarcity of available accommodations, and real estate agency fees make the path toward housing independence extremely difficult for migrants. Moreover, there is a problem of landlords' distrust, for example, due to fears of property devaluation. (Public Community Representative)*

*“Many people prefer to leave a house empty rather than rent it to foreigners”. (Migrant Voice)*

*“Even though I have a stable job, I find it very difficult to find housing.” (Migrant Voice)*

*“Landlords are more interested in renting to tourists. (Migrant Voice)*

*When I went to real estate agencies, they asked if I was a student, telling me that the accommodations were only available for students. (Migrant Voice)*

*Several friends who called or visited real estate agencies were dismissed immediately without even having the chance to show their contracts or references—they were immediately told “no”. (Migrant Voice)*



*We have experienced a lot of distrust toward migrants, especially if they are Muslim and have young children. It is even more difficult for women and families to access the housing market. (Migrant Association Representative)*

*It would be desirable to adopt a common strategy on the housing emergency that involves everyone (not just migrants), in order to avoid a “war among the poor” and to guarantee an inclusive collective process. (Public Community Representative)*

**In the journey toward independence, fostering connections with the local community and establishing a sense of place is often important and essential.**

*It is crucial to create connections with local people, also through volunteering. Building community and relating to others is very helpful for integration. (Public Community Representative)*

*It's not easy to find a house alone because guarantees are needed—guarantees I don't have—and I need the help of Italians. There is often mistrust toward foreigners, so I need support from Italians. (Migrant Voice)*

*I found a home thanks to an Italian family. They acted as intermediaries with the landlords and provided guarantees. (Migrant Voice)*

*The time I spent in a family home was invaluable. Thanks to this Italian family, I improved my Italian a lot and built a network of contacts that eventually, after about three years, helped me find a rental solution. Without the support of this Italian family, who still help me today, especially with my son's medical care, I couldn't imagine my life in Italy. (Migrant Voice)*

**The employer often takes an active role in helping the migrant find housing and achieve their goals stability.**

*My husband was able to buy a house thanks to his employer, who helped him with the mortgage and the required guarantees. (Migrant Voice)*

*I work as a construction laborer. My employer offered a house for rent to me and other colleagues at an affordable price. I don't think I'll leave this job because finding a house without my employer's help would be very difficult. (Migrant Voice)*

**There is significant mutual support within migrant communities, which often functions as a form of micro-welfare.**

*Migrants often guide other migrants and share job opportunities. (Public Community Representative)*

*I found a job thanks to a fellow countryman who had been living in Italy for a long time. He introduced me to his employer. I also found housing through a compatriot. Before meeting them, I was in a difficult situation, getting into debt to pay for Airbnb accommodation and unable to find a job. (Migrant Voice)*

*Providing a meeting place for women has been helpful, allowing for experience-sharing and encouraging an emulation process—women who saw others succeed in becoming autonomous wanted to follow the same path. (Public Community Representative)*



### **Migrants possess limited savings, complicating financial planning long-term.**

*Saving is challenging, especially considering that many people come from rural contexts. (Public Community Representative))*

*For cultural reasons, it is difficult to imagine long-term planning; people live in the present and deal with problems as they arise. (Public Community Representative))*

*Most of the money I earn is sent to my family in my home country. The rest goes to paying off debts I owe back home—debts I took from a bank and an acquaintance to pay for the journey and my first months in Italy when I couldn't work. (Migrant Voice)*

### **Bureaucratic processes and insufficient information often obstruct access to local opportunities.**

*A family applied for state subsidies but, not being eligible, ended up in debt. (Public Community Representative))*

*We planned certain paths that later turned out to be inaccessible, for example, housing access in reception projects. (Public Community Representative))*

*I want to apply for a university scholarship, but I need a SPID (digital identity), and I don't know how to get one. (Migrant Voice)*

*To manage the renewal of my residence permit and the documents needed to access local services, I have to take days off work. This happens often because these documents have short validity periods, and many documents are required to obtain the residence permit. (Migrant Voice)*

### **Local networks of citizens and volunteers often play a crucial role in addressing the reception system's shortcomings, especially in assisting with bureaucratic processes.**

*The migrant reception system lacks sufficient personnel to assist migrants with bureaucratic processes, such as obtaining a residence permit. It is therefore necessary to raise awareness among local networks to provide such support. (Public Community Representative)*

*I met an elderly Italian couple who help me with the bureaucracy related to my residence permit and accompany me to the immigration office. (Migrant Voice)*

### **The present needs of migrants frequently clash with their expectations about migration journey.**

*We often had to work on the need to downsize life projects and understand the context of arrival in Italy, particularly regarding study and work. It's like being born again and learning everything from scratch. (Public Community Representative)*

*I really liked the job I did in my home country, and the work I found here in Italy doesn't satisfy me. But I'm aware I need to adapt. (Migrant Voice)*

*I have a degree, and I'd like to understand how to have it recognized here or to continue my studies at university. But it seems very complex, and I haven't figured out how to do it. Since I work every day, I don't have time to dedicate to this possibility. Also, I can't afford a period without income. (Migrant Voice)*

#### 4.6.6. Concluding Remarks

Integration is not only a personal journey for migrants but also a reflection of a society's capacity for inclusion, equity, and resilience. Italy's experience shows that when migrants are provided with the tools to succeed—secure housing, fair employment, supportive communities, and a sense of belonging—they contribute meaningfully to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of the country.

A coordinated, intersectional, and community-based strategy is essential to transforming promising practices into structural change. By reinforcing trust, reducing inequalities, and investing in the potential of all residents, Italy can build a more inclusive and cohesive society for present and future generations.

The following policy recommendations outline key areas where action is needed to improve migrants' integration outcomes and promote social inclusion cohesion:

##### Legal Status and Bureaucracy

- Streamline the procedures for issuing and renewing residence permits to reduce waiting times and ensure continuity of rights.
- Enhance consistency and coordination among local offices to minimize conflicting information and administrative errors.
- Enhance legal and bureaucratic support services, including peer-to-peer assistance and community-based navigators.

##### Employment and Skills

- Promote the acknowledgment of foreign qualifications and work experience.
- Implement training programs for employers on migrant inclusion and anti-discrimination.
- Promote inclusive and active labour market policies, with a special focus on migrant women and young people.
- Support access to quality, stable jobs through targeted vocational training and mentorship programmes.

##### Housing



- Develop comprehensive housing strategies that engage public, private, and third-sector stakeholders to expand affordable housing options.
- Offer rent guarantees, financial literacy assistance, and mediation services to enhance landlord trust and aid tenants' autonomy.
- Implement anti-discrimination policies in the housing market and raise penalties for exclusionary practices.
- Establish local housing observatories to monitor discrimination and promote equity access.

### **Anti-Discrimination Measures**

- Strengthen the role and visibility of anti-discrimination offices, ensuring their presence in all major cities.
- Support community campaigns to combat xenophobia and raise awareness about migrants' rights contributions.
- Fund organisations led by migrants and community centres act as support and reporting empowerment hubs.

### **Language and Education**

- Offer free Italian language courses designed for different learning levels and schedules, including options for working adults and parents.
- Connect language learning with civic and cultural orientation to enhance integration and a sense of belonging.
- Offer accessible training on digital tools and services, including digital identity and online public administration platforms.

### **Information and Support**

- Create multilingual information channels to ensure migrants can access accurate, timely, and relevant information support.
- Promote local networks of volunteers and civil society actors that help navigate services and entitlements.
- Incorporate financial education and tenant literacy into reception and integration programs.

### **Social Inclusion and Participation**



- Foster opportunities for migrants to engage in community life, volunteer, and participate locally governance.
- Encourage collaborations between municipalities and migrant associations to co-design services and policies.
- Recognise and support the informal welfare roles fulfilled by migrant communities in housing, employment, and emotional well-being support.

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- Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, *Focus group with Migrants– 12 and 19 March, 2025*
- Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, *Focus group with Intercultural Centres – 5 of February 2025*
- Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, *Focus group with Group Homes– 11 febbraio 2025*
- Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII, *Focus group with Reception and Integration System coordinators, 9 of December 2025*

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#### 4.6.8. Organisations that contributed

- [Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII](#)
- [Famiglie accoglienti](#)
- [Municipality of Bologna](#)
- [Piano per l'abitare](#)
- [Sportello Anti Discriminazione](#)
- [ASP, Bologna](#)
- [Refugees Welcome Italy](#)
- [CIDAS Cooperativa Sociale](#)



- [CIAC Onlus](#)
- [Progetto MOI](#)
- [SAI Sistema Accoglienza Integrazione](#)
- [Centri Interculturali Emilia Romagna](#)
- [Argentina Per Il Mondo](#)
- [Associazione Arcobaleno](#)
- [Progetto INTARSI](#)





#### 4.7. National Report SPAIN



GRUPO

ABD

ABD compiled this national report.

#### 4.7.1 Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

Spain has historically been a key destination for migrants from various regions, including Latin America, Africa, and Eastern Europe. Its location, historical ties, and economic opportunities enhance its appeal. According to Spain's National Institute of Statistics (INE)<sup>95</sup>, the population stood at 48.6 million in January 2024, with 8.8 million foreign-born residents. UN DESA<sup>96</sup> estimates that there were 8.9 million international migrants in mid-2024. Among these, third-country nationals (TCNs) – non-EU nationals – account for approximately 14.9% out of 18.2% of the foreign-born population in Spain's total population as of January 2024.

According to UNHCR<sup>97</sup>, in 2023, asylum seekers mainly arrived via the Western Mediterranean and Northwest African maritime routes. A significant increase in sea arrivals was noted, primarily from Senegal and Mauritania; however, only 39% of these arrivals registered as asylum seekers. The Office for Asylum and Refugees (OAR) resolved 96,251 international protection cases in 2024, reflecting a 4.2% increase. Spain is the EU's second-largest recipient of international protection, following Germany. Most applicants came from Venezuela (66,134), Colombia (40,140), and other countries such as Mali and Senegal. Latin America remains a key region of origin, with strong historical ties to Spain. Africa, particularly Morocco, also contributes significantly, with many arriving through Ceuta and Melilla. Eastern European countries like Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine are also notable sources of migration, often for labour opportunities.

Latin America remains a vital region of origin with strong historical connections to Spain. Africa, particularly Morocco, also plays a significant role, with many entering through Ceuta and Melilla. Eastern European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Ukraine are also prominent sources of migration, often seeking labour opportunities. According to INE.es, the leading nationalities of immigrants in the fourth quarter of 2023 were Colombian (42,600), Venezuelan (27,300), and Moroccan (25,800). Migrants in Spain are primarily concentrated in urban areas, notably Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville. Although rural areas host fewer migrants, they are more prevalent in agricultural sectors, particularly among those from Morocco, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Eastern Europe.

According to the Catalan Data Institute<sup>98</sup>, Barcelona's migrant population has increased to 24.56% in 2024. The top ten nationalities include Italians (including Italian-Argentiniens), Colombians, Pakistanis, Chinese,

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<sup>95</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). (2024). *Población extranjera en España: Datos 2024*. Madrid: INE.

<sup>96</sup> [https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?focus=profile&i=stock\\_abs\\_female\\_&t=2024&cm49=724](https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?focus=profile&i=stock_abs_female_&t=2024&cm49=724)

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2023>

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.idescat.cat/poblacioextranjera/?geo=mun:080193&nac=a&b=12&lang=es>

Peruvians, French, Hondurans, Moroccans, Venezuelans, and Argentinians. A noticeable shift towards Latin American migration is evident.

The migrant population comprises working-age adults, with young adults (ages 18-35) being particularly prominent. The most recent data from Spain's National Statistics Institute (INE) shows that the average age of the Spanish-born population is 44.3 years old, compared to the average age of the foreign-born population (migrant), which is 36.1 years old<sup>99</sup>. There has also been an increase in unaccompanied minors, especially from Africa. It is important to note that the gender distribution shows a balance, although occasionally, the percentage of female migrants in Spain is slightly lower. According to UN DESA<sup>100</sup>, 2025 data recorded at the Migration Data portal indicated 4.6 million female migrants at mid-year 2024.

#### 4.7.2 National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

Spain's migrant integration policies aim to support the social, economic, and cultural inclusion of third-country nationals (TCNs) and individuals with international protection. The integration framework is structured at the national level, with implementation at regional and local levels. The Spanish Constitution (1978)<sup>101</sup> establishes equality and non-discrimination as fundamental principles, while Art. 149.1.2 assigns immigration and asylum competencies to the state, whereas autonomous communities manage social services, education, and healthcare. This division can create administrative conflicts, particularly in the case of unaccompanied minors.

Spain's integration policies are guided by the Spanish Strategy for Citizenship and Integration (EECI, 2007) and the Law on Foreigners (Ley de Extranjería), which ensure access to healthcare, education, and social protection. The Integration Plan for Refugees (2021) provides language courses, legal aid, and employment support, typically lasting up to two years. The Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion against Racism and Xenophobia (2023-2027)<sup>102</sup> was recently introduced.

The Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration oversees integration policies, while autonomous communities (e.g., Andalusia, Catalonia, and the Basque Country) implement localised programmes. It is worth noting that NGOs, such as the Spanish Commission for Refugee Assistance (CEAR), play a crucial role in service delivery, demonstrating the collaborative and supportive nature of Spain's integration efforts. Spain

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<sup>99</sup> <https://www.ine.es>

<sup>100</sup> [https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?focus=profile&i=stock\\_abs\\_female\\_&t=2024&cm49=724](https://www.migrationdataportal.org/international-data?focus=profile&i=stock_abs_female_&t=2024&cm49=724)

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-1978-31229>

<sup>102</sup> [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-spain\\_en](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-spain_en)

is part of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism<sup>103</sup> (NIEM), scoring 61.4 out of 100, which indicates moderate support for refugee integration. The Spanish Forum for the Social Integration of Immigrants promotes participation in integration efforts.

Integration policies concentrate on four key areas:

- **Education:** Access to public education, language assistance, and intercultural programmes.
- **Employment:** Vocational training, job placement, and recognition of foreign qualifications. The Spanish Public Employment Service (SEPE) collaborates with employers and migrants to facilitate entry into the labour market.
- **Health:** Universal access to healthcare, with comprehensive coverage for refugees.
- **Social Inclusion:** Anti-discrimination efforts, intercultural dialogue, and community participation.

Spain has considerably increased its migration budget, with €814 million allocated in 2022, reflecting a 29% rise. The National Migration Policy (2021-2024) further aligns Spain's integration measures with EU regulations and directives<sup>104</sup>.

#### 4.7.3 Key Challenges in the Integration Process

The integration of migrants in Spain remains complex due to legal, socio-economic, and institutional barriers. Key challenges include immigration status, access to housing, and entry into the labour market, often resulting in marginalisation and unequal opportunities. Additionally, the division of integration competencies between national and regional governments further complicates the process.

**Legal Reforms and Immigration Status:** Spain has introduced reforms, such as the new Immigration Regulation, to improve migrant integration. This aims to:

- Adapt policies to Spain's labour market and demographic needs.
- Align national laws with EU directives.
- Facilitate access to employment for migrants, allowing them to work immediately without needing additional work authorisation.

However, in practice, many migrants still face bureaucratic obstacles, slow processing times, and limited access to stable employment due to language barriers, the recognition of qualifications, and institutional

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<sup>103</sup> <https://cads.gencat.cat/ca/alianca/compromisos/cidob-niem>

<sup>104</sup> [https://www.emnspain.gob.es/documents/392158/519567/00\\_emn\\_41st\\_Quarterly\\_final\\_March2023\\_0.pdf/7012ebc4-baa6-d55c-0125-79a465db77a5?t=1681457871827](https://www.emnspain.gob.es/documents/392158/519567/00_emn_41st_Quarterly_final_March2023_0.pdf/7012ebc4-baa6-d55c-0125-79a465db77a5?t=1681457871827)

discrimination. In 2022, the "Arraigo por Formación" reform enabled undocumented migrants with two years of residence to enrol in vocational training, but institutional barriers persisted.

**Key challenges in the integration process relevant to this research:**

**Labour Market Barriers:** Migrants in Spain face several difficulties, such as:

- Slow work permit processing due to administrative backlogs.
- Precarious jobs with low wages and instability.
- Non-recognition of foreign qualifications forces skilled migrants into underemployment.
- Workplace discrimination, particularly against non-EU nationals.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs ) advocate for faster permit processing, qualification recognition, and stronger labour protections. The Barcelona Discrimination Observatory<sup>105</sup> (2023) has urged better enforcement of anti-discrimination measures and inclusive employment policies to ensure equal pay and career opportunities.

**Housing Challenges:** Affordable housing represents a significant obstacle for migrants, especially in Madrid and Barcelona, due to:

- High rental costs coupled with low wages.
- Discrimination by landlords and agencies adversely impacting migrants from Africa and Latin America.
- Restricted access to financial assistance for housing.

Organisations like the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR) and the Ombudsman's office<sup>106</sup> advocate for stronger anti-discrimination policies, rental subsidies, and inclusive housing initiatives.

**Language Barriers:** Spain recognises five co-official languages alongside Spanish (Castellano) and Spanish Sign Language in specific regional contexts:

- **Catalan (Català)** – Co-official in Catalonia, the Balearic Islands, and Valencia (where it is known as Valencian).
- **Galician (Galego)** – Co-official in Galicia.

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<sup>105</sup> <https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/oficina-no-discriminacio/sites/default/files/BarcelonaDiscriminationReport2023.pdf>

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.defensordelpueblo.es/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Defensor-del-Pueblo-Informe-anual-2022.pdf>

- **Basque (Euskera)** – Co-official in the Basque Country and parts of Navarre.
- **Aranese (Aranès)** – Co-official in the Val d'Aran (Catalonia).

In addition, the findings of this research have also identified barriers such as financial management, mental health issues, and institutional racism, among others.

In these regions, both Spanish and the regional language are utilised in administration, education, and daily life, with the native language often taking precedence. For instance, in Catalonia, Catalan serves as the primary language in many sectors, making migrant integration more complex compared to areas where only Spanish is spoken.

#### 4.7.4 Best Practice Examples

For the best practice deliverable, we conducted five interviews: **ABD** (Food project – Barcelona), **Los Molinos** (Madrid), **Karibu** (Madrid), **CODESPA** (Spanish scope), and **Provivienda** (Spanish scope). These programmes demonstrate effective integration strategies across employment, housing, and financial empowerment, emphasising community-based, gender-sensitive, and sustainable approaches. Most programmes have evolved, adjusting to social and economic changes.

##### Takeaways & Best Practices for Integration:

- **Community Engagement & Peer Support:** ABD and Los Molinos established strong intercultural support networks. For example, Los Molinos implemented peer mentoring for job seekers and single mothers.
- **Gender-Inclusive Strategies:** Los Molinos challenged traditional gender roles to enhance women's participation in the workforce. In Karibu, housing was prioritised for refugee women and single mothers.
- **Financial Independence & Economic Inclusion:** CODESPA provided migrants with essential financial skills for economic stability. Los Molinos partnered with a national bank and offered financial education through their volunteer programme.
- **Housing Stability as a Foundation for Integration:** Karibu's housing programme ensured access to temporary accommodation while receiving education and job training. In the case of Provivienda, they delivered an anti-discrimination initiative to combat systemic barriers to housing access.
- **Job-Seeking Strategies:** ABD, Los Molinos, and Karibu have robust employment integration projects that extend beyond supporting the primary breadwinner, focusing on sustainability and innovation.



### **Food Relations (ABD) – Spain**

- **Focus:** Employment integration through food sustainability and collective empowerment.
- **Objective:** Employment integration of migrant and refugee women in the food sector through intercultural cuisine and entrepreneurship.
- **Target Group:** Unemployed migrant and refugee women and local women in precarious employment.
- **Funding:** €19,431.25 from Barcelona City Council.

#### **Key Practices:**

- Professional intercultural and community cuisine training: Cooking workshops focusing on sustainability, healthy diets, and reducing food waste.
- Peer mentoring, where women share recipes and develop mutual support networks.
- Training in the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) and collective entrepreneurship.
- Personalised Job Support: Individual itineraries tailored to skills assessment

#### **Impact:**

- 15 migrant/refugee women completed professional training.
- 90% improved self-esteem, motivation, and social ties.
- 79% enrolled in additional training programs.
- 300+ people engaged in intercultural community events.
- Two “Fusion Menus” were created for sale and cultural events.

#### **Lessons Learned:**

- Need for more direct job placement support.
- Stronger legal pathways for work authorisation are required.

**Scalability:** Successfully replicated in Italy, Germany, Greece, and other parts of Spain.

### **Employability in (and with) Families (Los Molinos) - Spain**

- **Focus:** Family-based employment strategies, gender equality, and financial literacy.

#### **Key Practices:**



- Training in IT, financial literacy, and gender equality.
- Career guidance and job placement services, particularly for migrant women.
- Development of an interactive employment resource map for migrant women.
- Peer-to-peer mentoring for emotional and practical support.

**Objective:** Increase family-based employment integration and promote gender equality.

**Target Group:** Migrants, vulnerable individuals, and the Roma community members.

**Funding:** €40,000 per edition, primarily from Fundación "la Caixa".

**Key Practices :**

- Employment Support: Career guidance, job placement, digital skills, and IT training.
- Financial Literacy: Banking, budgeting, and workshops for economic empowerment.
- Gender Training: Encouraging male migrants and boys aged 10 and above to support women's employment.
- Peer Mentoring & Support Groups: Special emphasis on single-parent mothers.

**Impact:**

- 1,103 individuals benefited across six editions.
- 697 improved pre-employment and digital skills.
- 541 upgraded professional qualifications.
- 307 successfully gained employment.
- 5,438 visits to the interactive "Employment & Family Resources Map."

**Lessons Learned:**

- Long-term engagement with families was challenging due to immediate financial pressures.
- Some male participants showed resistance to gender equality.

**Scalability:** Adaptable to various economic and political contexts, mainly where traditional gender roles affect labour market access.

**Housing Program: Humanitarian Aid (Karibu) - Spain**

- **Focus:** Temporary housing and social integration for mainly African refugee women and young men.
- **Objective:** Provide temporary housing and social integration.
- **Target Group:** 70% African refugee women, 20% young male refugees, 10% mixed nationalities.



- **Funding:** €600,000 per year from the Madrid government and Spanish Ministry of Migration.

**Key Practices & Activities:**

- **Housing Assistance:** Temporary shelter for up to 18 months, food, clothing, and essential items.
- **Social Integration:** Spanish classes, employment skills training, and financial literacy.
- **Peer Support:** Informal mentoring among residents, with older participants guiding newcomers.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Afternoon group workshops to address cohabitation challenges.

**Impact:**

- 290 refugees assisted in the last five years.
- Five housing centers established (women-only, men-only, and mixed-gender).
- Strong partnerships with NGOs, universities, and religious organizations.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Need for 24/7 support staff in housing centers.
- Conflict resolution within shared living spaces required more structured intervention.
- Having a strong support network is essential for the project's sustainability.

**Scalability:** Adaptable to any region with strong NGO ,governmental collaboration, and human rights and migration awareness.

**Financial Education for Migrants (CODESPA-“ Managing my money) - Spain**

- **Focus:** Economic empowerment through financial education and digital inclusion.
- **Objective:** Improve financial literacy and economic independence for migrants and vulnerable individuals.
- **Target Group:** Migrants, mainly Latin Americans; 50% are single mothers.
- **Funding:** European Union – NextGeneration EU.

**Key Practices & Activities:**

- **Financial Education Workshops:** Topics included budgeting, saving, remittance management, and online banking.
- **Online Learning Platform:** “Gestionando mi Dinero” program with self-paced modules.



- Training of Trainers: Volunteers trained to deliver financial education to vulnerable communities.

**Impact:**

- 832 individuals from Latin America completed the online course.
- 56% of women improved financial literacy.
- 61 volunteers trained as financial educators.
- Strengthened partnerships with local NGOs for long-term sustainability.

**Lessons Learned:**

- The financial manual was too extensive and complex; future versions should simplify content.
- Migrants had limited time for workshops, requiring more flexible and attractive training options.

**Scalability:** Easily replicable through online courses and trainer networks; interest from Colombia and the U.S. for adaptation

**Combating Housing Discrimination (Provivienda) - Spain**

- **Focus:** Addressing racial and migrant discrimination in housing access.
- **Objective:** Address and prevent discrimination against migrants in the housing market.
- **Target Group:** Migrants, racialised individuals facing housing discrimination.
- **Funding:** €100,000 per year from various donors, including the Spanish Ministry of Inclusion.

**Key Practices & Activities:**

- Legal & Advocacy Support: Assistance for individuals experiencing housing discrimination.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Social media and outreach efforts to educate the public.
- Training for Tenants & Landlords: Rights education and anti-discrimination measures.
- Collaboration with Real Estate Sector: Establishing fair housing agreements.

**Impact:**

- Over 3,000 individuals assisted since 2017.
- 100,000+ reached via awareness campaigns.
- A landmark case resulted in a real estate agency implementing an anti-racism protocol.

**Lessons Learned:**

- Misinformation and racist narratives in the media fuel discrimination.



- There is a need for stricter legal enforcement against housing racism.
- Many real estate agents must have the necessary skills and attitudes to perform their work free from prejudice and discriminatory practices.
- Accurate state testing, referred to as “Mystery Shopper,” is necessary to evaluate external companies that use these services and their conduct.

**Scalability:** Already replicated in parts of Italy and Belgium, it could be expanded across Europe.

#### 4.7.5 Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

The following testimonials, collected through focus groups with migrants and local community members, offer valuable insight into the challenges, resilience, and aspirations of individuals navigating the integration process.

A total of 23 participants took part across three different focus groups:

- Migrant group: 12 participants (ages 18–40), including five women, six men, and one identifying as other.  
Nationalities represented: Colombia, Peru, Gambia, Senegal, and Venezuela.
- Migrant association leaders and public community representatives: 11 participants shared their experiences and perspectives in two additional focus groups.

#### Challenges in Employment

**Migrants consistently highlighted bureaucratic hurdles, a lack of work authorisation, qualification recognition and cost, and language barriers as primary obstacles to employment. Many expressed frustration at being unable to work despite their willingness and capability.**

*“I have been without papers and without a job for a long time. Now I have a permit, but I still can’t work. I’ve been waiting for five years.” (Migrant voice).*

*“I hold a residency permit but not a work permit. The administration tells me to find a work contract to change my status, but no employer wants to hire someone with such unstable documentation.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“Language is one of the main barriers we face.” (Local Employment Agency Representative).*

*“I haven’t been able to use my degree due to validation issues, so I started studying, taking the ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education)” (Migrant Voice).*

*“For Spain, it’s more feasible to ask for government aid than to be given a job (many participants agreed). For example, all those who don’t have the right to work ask for aid because there is no other way to survive.” (Migrant Voice).*



**Despite their willingness to improve the situation and make a difference, migrants are facing numerous challenges in accessing quality employment in all sectors of the Spanish labour market:**

*There are very vulnerable and precarious situations because the jobs are informal and precarious (Migrant Association Representative)*

*Problems with companies establishing synergies (Public Community Representative)*

*There's a lack of real conciliation policies. When it comes to migrant women, those who are very young are excluded from the spotlight because there are no policies to support them. (Community Representative).*

**More specifically, for women, mainly from South Asian backgrounds, linguistic barriers proved even more restrictive:**

*"For Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi women, not knowing Spanish or Catalan makes it impossible to find work, even in cleaning jobs." (Community Representative).*

**Even highly qualified professionals face structural obstacles:**

*"I am a qualified teacher with a degree in physical education, but they require a C1 level in Catalan. I speak it, but I don't have the official certificate, so I am excluded from jobs." (Migrant Voice).*

*"For the Latin American community (women), the biggest challenge is breaking out of certain sectors, such as domestic work and caregiving. There is a tendency to confine specific groups to particular service industries." (Community Representative).*

**Women with families often face challenges balancing work with rigid conditions, especially without the support of extended family:**

*"I have a child with a disability, and since September, I have had an assistant who helps me get by. My son is currently one year old, and I don't have any documents that assist with his dependency needs." (Migrant Voice).*

**Local community members acknowledge these issues but highlight efforts to bridge the gap:**

*"At first, companies are hesitant to hire migrants, but after working with them, they recognise their skills and demand more workers." (Public Community Representative).*

**Despite these hurdles, migrants remain determined:**

*"I don't want to wait around doing nothing. I want to feel useful and contribute, even if it means volunteering." (Migrant Voice).*



"I have completed seven courses, and I'm still struggling. I'm a cook by profession, and I sell food through WhatsApp and groups, and I'm trying to build my takeout business, and I'm still struggling." (Migrant Voice).

**Local public agencies develop different programs to help migrant to improve their language skills:**

*"We work to adapt to each person's needs, striving for flexibility and offering different modalities so everyone can participate at little to no cost". (Public Community Representative).*

### **Housing Challenges:**

**Access to stable and affordable housing affects everyone living in Spain, with particular concern for migrants and those from diverse, vulnerable backgrounds, especially individuals in precarious legal or financial situations. Many report housing discrimination, living in overcrowded and poor conditions, being deceived by landlords, falling victim to scams or fraud from members of their communities, and even facing homelessness.**

*"People do not have quality payrolls for housing agencies to accept them." (Community Representative).*

*"Social services only react once you are already on the streets." (Migrant Voice).*

*"Landlords often refuse to rent to Latin Americans. I was told outright, 'We don't rent to people from your country.' (Migrant Voice)"*

**Families with children are living in extreme poverty conditions:**

*"I have lived in a shelter with my three children, been forced to rent illegal housing, and was later evicted. It's a constant battle." (Migrant Voice).*

*"I have suffered extortion, and I have lived on the street with my children. One of my daughters has autism and a severe insomnia problem. Being in an apartment without hot water in winter for my children and without anything to cook." (Migrant Voice).*

*"I have slept in shelters with my three children (one with a disability). I have also rented rooms in squatted properties, but I didn't know what that was, and they kicked us out. Social services expect you to be on the street before they can react." (Migrant Voice).*

*"What hurts and tortures me the most is that my young children have had to live through these inhumane circumstances, these conditions of scarcity." (Migrant Voice).*

**Local community representatives confirm that housing is a structural crisis:**

*"Without secure housing, it is impossible to integrate. We need policies that protect migrants from discrimination and exploitation." (Community Representative).*

*"This problem affects the entire population in general, a reality that affects us all, especially migrants, and even more so undocumented migrants." (Public Community Representative).*

**Due to the needs and vulnerabilities of migrants, an emerging illicit market exploits them:**



*“One thing I observe is the growing issue of trafficking and buying and selling documentation, providing pay slips, and forging work contracts. This creates fraud situations and the risk of large debts and extortions.” (Public Community Representative).*

*The precarious situation forces people to enter these shady markets, which adds to the already massive problem of finding housing.” (Community Representative).*

*“Even within my own migrant community, I have been scammed and mistreated.” (Migrant Voice).*

*Apartments in poor condition and informal intra-community systems through favours between people in irregular situations because without registration or due to the prices, it is impossible to use regulated routes. (Community representative).*

*I was scammed by official websites like Idealista. (Migrant Voice).*

**In response, informal support networks have emerged as other strategies to combat real state discrimination:**

*“We help each other. Those of us who already have housing share information and provide shelter when needed.” (Migrant Voice).*

**Financial Literacy and Economic Survival:**

**Navigating financial systems in a new country can be overwhelming. Many migrants reported exploitation by banks and financial institutions, although this issue appears to be relatively new or unfamiliar to local and public community representatives:**

*“Banks charge excessive fees—€60 a month for account maintenance, or they force you to buy insurance.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“We don’t know where to get reliable financial advice. I’ve seen many people fall into debt because they don’t understand how credit works.” (Migrant Voice).*

**One local agency recognised the need for financial education:**

*“We need more programs teaching financial management, especially for vulnerable communities.” (Community Representative).*

*“Economic management becomes very complex when there are issues of drug addiction.” (Community Representative).*

*“There is an unrealistic relationship with money and its value, which is tied to trauma and mental health.” (Community Representative).*

*“There is an overuse of money to go out into the neighbourhood, make contacts, and socialise with others.” (Public Community Representative).*

### **Social Belonging and Discrimination:**

**Experiences of institutional discrimination, as well as from the local society and their communities, were widely discussed. Some migrants felt isolated due to cultural differences.**

*"Spanish society feels very closed. It is difficult to connect with people outside our own community." (Migrant Voice).*

*"I feel like Spain doesn't want me" (several people agreed); despite it being my second country of migration, being a lawyer, and having the tools to navigate bureaucratic systems, it's very complex; the system and the Catalans are hostile to me too" (Migrant Voice).*

*"It's a vicious cycle: unable to find work outside their community, they can't improve their Spanish or Catalan, which prevents them from improving their language skills to find work outside their community. This also happens to second-generation migrants." (Public Community Representative).*

*"Stigma, prejudice and discrimination against Moroccan boys." (Community Representative).*

*"The people responsible are all natives and lack the capacity to integrate us. Institutional racism exists. This includes the second generation, who also face barriers to accessing any space, sector, or level." (Community Representative).*

*"I have suffered verbal abuse and racism from the police due to my status as a migrant. (Migrant Voice).*

*"I have suffered abuse from a social service, and I am afraid to report it because I have been harassed and degraded by an employee. He treated me very badly so that I wouldn't return to social services, and I am afraid to report it!" (Migrant Voice).*

*"In my case, I have experienced rejection both within and outside my community. I also have VHI, and prejudice leads to a lot of rejection." (Migrant Voice).*

**Physical and Mental health issues associated with the migration grief process and as consequences of navigating the system in Spain:**

*"I understand and know what it feels like when you have just a suitcase. I've lived it, but when I look at my children, I try to have resilience. Yet, sometimes my body tells me that I'm strong, but that I can't take any more." (Migrant Voice).*

*"Sometimes I feel foolish sharing my feelings with the social worker, but I have no one else. In my case, I have experienced rejection both within and outside my community. I also have VHI, and prejudice leads to a lot of rejection." (Migrant Voice).*

*"I was rejected because of my physical appearance, and they didn't think I could do the job – 'you can't do it because of your condition; how do you know I can't do it just because I'm overweight?" (Migrant Voice).*



*“The host society is very closed off and clashes with my Latin culture. It’s very hard to connect with people.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“My health has deteriorated a lot.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“I’ve had a lot of depression and anxiety caused by my situation as a migrant.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“My journey to Spain was very difficult.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“Every day I think about what I’m doing here. Even though I have stability in Argentina and an interesting position, I’m forced to emigrate because of my HIV status and my health. And I feel like it’s a punishment.” (Migrant Voice).*

**However, many also spoke of solidarity and support, including the need to highlight the second generation of migrants' positive role and impact on their communities.**

*“The women’s support group I joined changed my life. Sometimes, you just need someone to listen.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“At first, I felt like Spain didn’t want me here. But I’ve learned that finding the right community makes all the difference.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“There are some cases of second-generation migrants working in public organisations (acting as a bridge between institutions and associations) who are very helpful because they understand our communities, but they are not enough.” (Community Representative).*

### **Resilience and Hope:**

**Despite the hardships, many migrants expressed determination and optimism:**

*“We came with a mindset of success—let’s not change that. Not everything is bad, and not everyone is against us.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“If you need help, ask for it. Even when everything seems against you, keep going.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“I really like learning Catalan, and I haven’t had a single Catalan who has discriminated against me. In fact, when a Catalan hears me use their language, they get very excited. In a year, I’ve learned the language because I’ve put a lot of effort into it. And they appreciate this. And now I’m in English class, and I love it!” (Migrant Voice).*

*“It’s important to seek out opportunities, or else you can’t seize them. Our greatest ally is our approach to life.” (Migrant Voice).*

*“Despite everything, I thought I had to keep fighting, endure and continue. I can do it!” (Migrant Voice).*

*“I’m a firm believer in God, and for better or worse, as I try my best to survive, the only thing that fills me with satisfaction is that I’m almost there for my papers, and I’m already seeing a glimmer of hope—but it hasn’t been easy.” (Migrant Voice).*



These voices underscore the pressing need for policy changes, improved support systems, and more inclusive community engagement to achieve integration for everyone:

*“Housing, employment and language” are the three main pillars to successful integration.” .” (Public Community Representative).*

#### 4.7.6 Concluding Remarks

The integration of migrants in Spain presents both challenges and opportunities. Best practices from various initiatives highlight the importance of community engagement, partnership with the private sector, gender—and migration-inclusive strategies, financial literacy, language training, and housing support in fostering successful integration. Programs like peer mentoring, language training, and localised employment initiatives demonstrate that tailored approaches yield positive results.

However, persistent barriers remain, including bureaucratic delays in work permits, a lack of affordable and suitable housing, and systemic discrimination in employment, institutional, and financial services. To enhance integration policies, Spain must:

##### **Employment:**

- Streamline administrative processes, especially the right to work.
- Enhance recognition of skills and qualifications.
- Develop training programmes for employers to understand the nuances of migration and hiring migrants across all labour market sectors.

##### **Housing:**

- Improve access to affordable housing for migrants, including housing support services.
- Strengthen anti-discrimination laws in employment and housing.
- Employ an intersectionality approach to create specific integration pathways for the diverse backgrounds of migrant profiles, such as ageism, gender, disability, and so on.
- Ensure the protection of the rights of minors, including those with their families.

##### **Anti-discrimination measures:**

- Strengthen anti-discrimination policies to ensure that migrants are protected from racial, ethnic, and gender-based discrimination in both the workplace and public spaces.



- Promote diversity campaigns aimed at enhancing public awareness and acceptance of migrants.
- Support the establishment of migrant-led organisations that can function as community hubs for information and support, providing a means to channel and report their cases.

#### **Language and Education Support:**

- In regions with co-official languages and considering the Latin American background of many migrants, policies should be developed to enable them to commence work in all sectors while allowing time to achieve a B1/B2 language level.
- Consider the diverse profiles of migrants, including age, family structure, gender, etc. Offer more language courses to migrants, focusing on beginners and advanced learners.
- Integrate cultural orientation and local history lessons to aid migrants in understanding their new surroundings and environment.

#### **Support and Information:**

- Enhance access to advice and support for migrants navigating bureaucratic processes, such as visa renewals and citizenship applications, by incorporating a peer-to-peer strategy.
- Offer multilingual resources to assist in comprehending rights and responsibilities in Spain.
- Deliver anti-fraud and scam training concerning housing, finance, and labour-related issues.

#### **Social Inclusion and Civic and Political Participation:**

- Enhance collaboration between public institutions and migrant communities.
- Encourage migrants to engage in civic activities, such as voting in local elections, to help them feel more connected and invested in the community.
- Support initiatives that promote political engagement, including migrant advisory boards and councils.
- Participating in local cultural activities will help migrants understand the local traditions, rules, and structure, reducing feelings of isolation and fostering stronger connections with the community.

#### **Psychosocial Support:**



- Provide mental health services tailored for migrants, focusing on challenges such as migration-related mourning, trauma, anxiety, and stress, alongside the difficulties of adapting to a new country.
- Establish community centres that offer emotional support and help migrants cope with feelings of isolation or cultural dislocation shock.

A coordinated, inclusive strategy will not only empower migrants but also strengthen Spain's social and economic fabric, serving as a model for integration strategies across Europe. Integration is a complex and deeply personal process shaped by various social, financial, and cultural factors. Tackling these challenges will enhance Spain's social, cultural, and economic landscape, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society.

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#### 4.7.8 Organisations that contributed:

- ABD
- Codespa
- Los Molinos
- Karibu
- Provivienda
- Abrazo cultural
- Cooperativa Mujeres palante
- Comissió Catalana d'Acció pel Refugi-
- Asociación Cultural Educativa y Social de Mujeres Pakistani
- ObrimFronteras
- La Troca. Escola comunitària de formació permanent
- Servei Públic d'Ocupació de Catalunya (SOC)
- Consorci per a la Normalització Lingüística



#### 4.8 National Report SWEDEN



Förening Maracana compiled this national report. International Socialt Arbete

#### 4.8.1 Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

Sweden's migration policies have evolved significantly over the past century. Traditionally a country of emigration, Sweden became a destination for labor migrants in the post-World War II era, particularly from Europe. In the 1980s and 1990s, policies shifted to focus more on humanitarian protection, welcoming refugees from conflict zones like the Balkans and the Middle East. During the 2015 refugee crisis, Sweden received a large number of asylum seekers, prompting a temporary tightening of its asylum laws. In recent years, migration policy has increasingly emphasized integration, security, and labor market participation, reflecting broader debates on social cohesion and national identity.<sup>107</sup>

As of January 2023, Sweden's population comprised approximately 535,200 third-country nationals (TCNs), accounting for 5.1% of the total population. Additionally, 2,145,674 individuals (20.3% of the population) were born abroad, with the largest groups originating from Syria, Iraq, Finland, Poland, and Iran<sup>108</sup>.

In 2024, Sweden granted the lowest number of residence permits to asylum seekers and their relatives on record, totalling only 6,250 permits—a 42% decrease compared to the previous year. This represents the lowest figure since records began in 1985<sup>109</sup>.

In 2024, the top countries of origin for immigrants to Sweden were Ukraine, India, Germany, China, and Syria. The age distribution of immigrants in 2023 revealed that individuals aged 25 to 34 formed the largest group, followed by those aged 35 to 44 and 15 to 24 years<sup>110</sup>. Statista Migrant populations in Sweden<sup>111</sup> are predominantly concentrated in urban areas, particularly in cities like Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. These regions offer better access to employment, education, and social services, leading to higher settlement rates among migrants.

Sweden's approach to migration has seen significant changes in recent years, marked by a notable decrease in asylum applications and a shift towards attracting skilled labor. The demographic profile of third-country nationals continues to evolve, shaped by policy changes and global migration trends.

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<sup>107</sup> [https://sweden.se/culture/history/sweden-and-migration?utm\\_source](https://sweden.se/culture/history/sweden-and-migration?utm_source)

<sup>108</sup> [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance/sweden\\_de?utm\\_source](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance/sweden_de?utm_source)

<sup>109</sup> [https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-grants-lowest-ever-number-residence-permits-asylum-seekers-2024-2025-01-10/?utm\\_source](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/sweden-grants-lowest-ever-number-residence-permits-asylum-seekers-2024-2025-01-10/?utm_source)

<sup>110</sup> <http://statista.com/statistics/524123/sweden-number-of-immigrants-by-age/>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/524123/sweden-number-of-immigrants-by-age/>



## 4.8.2 National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

### Education and Employment

One of the biggest challenges in integration is that immigrants from countries outside Europe find it more difficult to enter the labor market compared to native Swedes and EU migrants. Low language skills, a lack of recognition for foreign qualifications, and discrimination are factors that hinder labor market integration.

To ease the establishment process, Swedish authorities have introduced various programs, such as:

- Swedish for Immigrants (SFI)
- Establishment Program via the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen)
- Internships and subsidised employment

### Housing Situation

The housing shortage, particularly in large cities such as Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, has made it difficult for many newcomers to find accommodation. This situation has resulted in overcrowding and social segregation in some areas.

The interaction among different cultures presents both positive and challenging aspects. Multiculturalism has enriched Swedish society in areas such as food, music, and art; however, tensions have emerged concerning values, gender roles, and freedom of religion.

### Current Immigration Trends 4

As of 2024, Sweden's foreign-born population constituted approximately 20.3%, equating to around 2.1 million individuals. Notably, the primary countries of origin among non-European immigrants include Syria (9% of the foreign-born population), Iraq (7%), and Somalia. In 2022, Sweden received 90,000 new long-term or permanent immigrants, marking an 18% increase from the previous year. Of these, 36% benefited from free mobility agreements, 20% were labor migrants, 38% arrived for family reunification, and 6% were humanitarian migrants. The top three nationalities of newcomers were India, Poland, and Germany, indicating a diverse immigration pattern.

Between January and October 2024, Sweden issued approximately 23,870 work permits, marking a record number compared to previous years. In addition, during the same period, around 20,595 residence permits were granted for family reunification and 15,965 for study purposes.





### 4.8.3 Key Challenges in the Integration Process

Although comprehensive, Sweden's integration framework<sup>112</sup> presents several challenges for migrants, especially those from third countries. These challenges are affected by legal status, socio-economic factors, and systemic barriers.

**Immigration Status and Access to Services:** Migrants' legal status significantly impacts their access to services. A proposed "snitch law" mandates public sector workers to report undocumented individuals, raising concerns about deterring migrants from seeking healthcare, education, and social services. Critics argue this could undermine trust in public institutions and exacerbate social exclusion.

**Housing Challenges:** Housing availability and affordability are significant issues. Migrants often experience discrimination in the housing market, with reports indicating that landlords may be hesitant to rent to individuals with foreign names or backgrounds. This discrimination limits housing options and contributes to residential segregation, hindering integration efforts.

**Labour Market Integration and Skills Recognition:** Access to the labour market is a significant hurdle. Many migrants, especially those from Africa and the Middle East, encounter difficulties recognising their foreign qualifications. Even with recognition, they often find themselves in jobs below their skill level, a phenomenon known as "brain waste"; For instance, a study found that highly educated immigrants receiving recognition statements exhibited higher employment rates and wages but still faced challenges in obtaining jobs matching their qualifications<sup>113</sup>.

**Language proficiency:** While Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) courses are available, many employers require a higher level of language skills than those provided by SFI, which limits job opportunities for migrants. Additionally, ethnic discrimination persists in the labour market, and migrants face biases despite their qualifications and experience.

**Impact Assessments and Civil Society Recommendations:** Civil society organisations and Ombudsmen have highlighted these challenges and proposed several recommendations:

- **Enhanced Recognition of Foreign Qualifications:** Streamlining processes for recognising foreign education and work experience to facilitate better labour market integration.
- **Anti-Discrimination Measures:** Implement stricter anti-discrimination laws and promote diversity in hiring practices to combat ethnic biases.

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<sup>112</sup>[https://www.su.se/swedish-institute-for-social-research/news/many-labor-migrants-receive-high-wages-but-one-in-five-lacks-income-1.767644?utm\\_source](https://www.su.se/swedish-institute-for-social-research/news/many-labor-migrants-receive-high-wages-but-one-in-five-lacks-income-1.767644?utm_source)

<sup>113</sup> <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/population-and-living-conditions/integration/integration--analysis/pong/statistical-news/integration--matching-on-the-labour-market/>; <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/catching-labor-market-outcomes-new-immigrants-sweden>

- **Improved Language Training:** Expanding and tailoring language courses to meet the specific needs of migrants, ensuring they acquire the language skills necessary for employment.
- **Access to Housing:** Enforcing regulations that prevent discrimination in the housing market and promoting inclusive housing policies.

Addressing these challenges requires a coordinated effort between government agencies, civil society, and the private sector to create an inclusive environment that supports the successful integration of migrants into Swedish society. <sup>114</sup>

#### 4.8.4 Best Practice Examples

We can affirm that Sweden has a good reception and integration system. However, we must also acknowledge that there are obstacles and barriers, particularly related to new policies aimed at drastically reducing the flow of migrants. Despite the limitations associated with the new government choices, the tools provided by the state for migrants remain available. The organizations we collaborate with primarily aim to support, motivate, guide, and train migrants in accessing the public integration system.

The best practices presented mainly focus on support activities, particularly for individuals experiencing severe marginalization due to migration trauma, health difficulties, and psychosocial challenges.

##### Diaconal Center (Malmö, Sweden)

- **Focus:** Supporting needy people, combating injustices, and empowering individuals.
- **Objective:** Offer practical help and emotional support in collaboration with various associations and NGOs.
- **Target Group:** People with social and existential needs include migrants, individuals facing mental health challenges or addictions, the homeless, and those who lack adequate support from the state.
- **Funding:** The financial resources are provided by the Swedish Church, which sustains itself through church taxes.
- **Key Practices & Activities:** The centre provides breakfast, food, clothing, showers, legal advice, and economic support. Support, group activities, including choir and Bible study, and assistance with

<sup>114</sup> [https://coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/sweden-should-enable-ombuds-institutions-to-investigate-discrimination-by-public-authorities-and-improve-integration-support-for-migrant-women?utm\\_source=https://www.government.se/government-policy/the-governments-priorities/migration-and-integration/about-the-governments-prioritisation-migration-and-integration/?utm\\_source](https://coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/-/sweden-should-enable-ombuds-institutions-to-investigate-discrimination-by-public-authorities-and-improve-integration-support-for-migrant-women?utm_source=https://www.government.se/government-policy/the-governments-priorities/migration-and-integration/about-the-governments-prioritisation-migration-and-integration/?utm_source)



communication with institutions. It collaborates with various social organisations and public institutions.

- **Impact:** The centre has observed a rise in the number of individuals seeking assistance, along with increased staff and activities. The long-term goal is to establish a robust community support network.
- **Lessons Learned:** Building trust and relationships takes time and should not depend on specific individuals. It is essential to find ways to distribute knowledge and trust without making it too vague or bureaucratic.
- **Scalability:** Allow every association or organisation to have its own character, ways of functioning, and “spirit,” but simultaneously find common interests and goals. In close collaboration, use the differences and similarities for the best of the people that we want to support. Have a common place/house that becomes the umbrella/the “home.”

#### Mötesplats Otto (Malmö, Sweden)

- **Focus:** To support young migrants in the empowerment process to facilitate their social integration.
- **Objectives:** Mötesplats Otto aims to support young, unaccompanied migrants who have recently arrived, while promoting community, health, participation, equality, and justice.
- **Target Group:** Young migrants aged 30 and under who experience loneliness and challenges with social integration.
- **Founding:** "The Swedish Inheritance Fund" and "The National Board of Health and Welfare.
- **Main Practices:** The center provides educational support, meals, recreational activities, and social counseling, including sports, CV writing, and workshops on health, drug prevention, and job readiness searching.
- **Impact:** It has created an inclusive space with approximately 50 to 60 visitors per day. It has become a point of reference for young migrants. Still, it has also had to adapt to address increasingly serious social issues, such as homelessness, mental health challenges, and addictions.
- **Lessons Learned:** Young people need to be involved in the centre's management, but experienced social workers are also essential to support interactions with authorities. Active participation by young people boosts motivation and minimises conflicts within the centre.
- **Scalability:** We are constantly developing and documenting our methods and routines for running a meeting place for the target group. There are not many such meeting places run by young people and in the form of a non-profit organisation, which brings many strengths and challenges. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience to be gained regarding the routines and frameworks needed for a meeting place with such a diverse target group.



### Hoppet

- **Focus:** To provide support for migrants experiencing psychological issues.
- **Objectives:** Improve the psychosocial health of participants and provide knowledge about their migration situation through psychological support and individual and group informational interventions. The goal is to reduce risks related to mental health and suicide.
- **Target Group:** Migrants who arrived in Sweden in 2015 as unaccompanied minors and are seeking asylum for the second time.
- **Founding:** AMIF
- **Main Practices:** Individual sessions to plan the future, emotional support groups, group activities (e.g., bowling, volleyball), and weekly meetings.
- **Impact:** The project has not yet fully measured its impact, but it has reached a significant number of participants (approximately 190 people were involved in 2023). A complete evaluation is expected in June 2025.
- **Lessons Learned:** The importance of adapting to the target group's needs, with contributions from staff from the same country as the migrants, which facilitated communication and the adaptation of practices.
- **Scalability:** We are flexible when we meet participants, available on social media, and give information that the participants ask for themselves. We are knowledgeable about where to find the correct information. We provide hope without giving false hope. We always offer the information we have and explain it.

### Unga Forum

- **Focus:** To support vulnerable youth, with particular attention to young migrants.
- **Objectives:** Provide immediate and long-term support to people in vulnerable situations, prevent social exclusion, and empower individuals to take control of their lives.
- **Target Group:** Families with children and young adults under 30 facing social and economic vulnerabilities, such as mental health issues, homelessness, and poverty.
- 
- **Founding:** Mostly private donations.
- **Main Practices:** Providing an open meeting space for families, legal and social counseling, psychological support, and collaboration with healthcare professionals (doctors, physiotherapists).
- **Impact:** The number of participants increases each year. By the end of 2025, around 1,200 people are expected to participate in monthly activities.



- **Lessons Learned:** Continually adapting to the community's emerging needs and the ability to reduce participation for logistical reasons (e.g., during holidays) are essential for maintaining effective service.
- **Scalability:** Our open meeting places, where all families with children are welcome, along with our flexibility in adapting our interventions to the participants' needs and society's requirements, enable the organization to adjust to different contexts.

### Läkare i Världen

- **Focus:** To ensure that everyone has access to basic healthcare.
- **Objectives:** Guarantee the right to health for all, particularly focusing on those excluded from formal health services, such as undocumented migrants. The organisation provides free healthcare, psychological support, legal advice, and health rights awareness.
- **Target Group:** Asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, EU citizens lacking the European Health Insurance Card, and other vulnerable groups.
- **Founding:** Swedish state funding and other private funding.
- **Main Practices:** Offering free medical consultations, psychological support for mental health issues, legal counseling to help navigate the healthcare system, and promoting health education.
- **Impact:** Although it is difficult to measure, the project has supported numerous individuals in receiving healthcare, with 1,000 patients referred to regional health services in 2023.
- **Lessons Learned:** Collaboration with other local organisations is crucial for reaching target groups. Additionally, combining healthcare, psychological support, and legal counselling is essential for an integrated and practical approach.
- **Scalability :** Läkare i Världen combines healthcare, psychosocial support, legal advice, and community outreach to address diverse needs. Focusing on vulnerable populations, particularly undocumented migrants and asylum seekers, makes it relevant for areas facing similar migration challenges. Community-based outreach ensures services reach those in need. At the same time, the emphasis on empowerment and education helps individuals navigate their rights, which makes the practice scalable and adaptable to different regions.



#### 4.8.5 Voices of Migrants and Local Communities

The focus group included sixteen young participants and four volunteers representing a diverse range of legal statuses. Some participants were undergoing the asylum process, others had obtained legal residence, and several were undocumented. The undocumented individuals had completed the asylum process but received a refusal and were under an expulsion order. However, as Afghan citizens, they could not be deported due to the lack of a repatriation agreement between Sweden and the Taliban regime.

### Access to Employment Programs

The focus group analyzed the employment integration programs provided by the Swedish state. The discussion highlighted the discrepancies between the expected outcomes and the actual conditions experienced by those who access these services. The participating migrants pointed out several issues they encountered within these programs.

#### AVANTI

*"I participated in a program called AVANTI. It was very helpful because it focuses on language, health, and employment. It's designed for people like me—SFI students, job seekers, or those with trauma from war or migration. We had internships, workplace visits, and training sessions. It made me feel part of something again." (a migrant)*

#### Samhall

*"I worked with Samhall, a state-owned company that offers jobs to people with disabilities. It helped me improve my skills and work capacity. The goal is to eventually move on to regular employers. Arbetsförmedlingen decides if you're eligible for the program." (a migrant)*

### Work Permits

Swedish legislation has increasingly restricted the possibilities of obtaining work permits for workers who are not specialized in fields considered key to Swedish society (such as high technology applied to various productive sectors). Some restrictions are applied broadly based on the country of origin.

*"I'm an asylum seeker, and getting a work permit has been nearly impossible. You need a valid ID, but Sweden doesn't recognize the passport from my country, Afghanistan. That blocks everything." (a migrant)*

## Language, Education, and Employment Barriers

Language literacy programs are fairly widespread and efficient, although the government is increasingly cutting funding to the organizations that manage them. It is not always easy for migrants to find a language course suited to their level of education. A number of migrants drop out of language courses for various reasons, including mental health issues such as depression and the illusion of being able to find work within the immigrant communities in Sweden that come from their own countries. A driver's license is an important requirement for obtaining a job. The theoretical exam needed to obtain the license requires a high level of Swedish language proficiency, which is not easy to achieve.

*"I've realized that without knowing Swedish well, you get nowhere. Even though I studied in Germany, everything here feels stricter. A driver's license is also essential for many jobs." (a migrant)*

*"I volunteer, and I see every day how many people are left out of the labor market because of poor language skills or low education levels. Even the best programs don't help if you can't understand what's being asked." (a migrant who helps other migrants)*

## Discrimination and Racism at Work

Although Sweden has historically been a country open to immigration, there are still latent pockets of xenophobia. Migrants report various episodes of racism directed at them.

*"When I worked in a care home in Malmö, the colleagues excluded me and refused to cooperate. Yet I already had experience from another care home in Stockholm." (a migrant)*

*"My legal guardian gave false information about me during my asylum process. It had a devastating impact on my mental health." (a migrant)*

*"My mother was physically assaulted by train staff. She didn't speak Swedish well, and there was a misunderstanding—but that doesn't justify violence." (a migrant)*

*"I was threatened and beaten after being evicted from a municipal camp because my asylum application had been denied." (a migrant)*

## Work Experience and Internships

The formal labor market requires high levels of integration skills (language, competencies, digital literacy, and previous experience). This is why there are state programs to support integration. One of the most common problems is the lack of previous work experience.

*"The main problem is that I have no work experience. No one wants to hire you if you've never worked before. And staying at home for too long leads to loneliness and depression." (a migrant)*

## Instability Due to Legal Status

Under current legislation, the work permit and the residence permit are not directly linked. As a result, there are paradoxical situations, which migrants themselves have shared with us through their testimonies.

*"Even if you manage to get a job, you can lose it immediately if your residence permit expires or is denied. It's frustrating and leaves you feeling trapped." (a volunteer)*

## Housing Challenges

In Sweden, the system that regulates access to rental apartments is very rigid and generally involves waiting times of at least three years. When many young unaccompanied migrants arrived in Sweden in 2015, they were welcomed and housed in foster homes. Upon reaching adulthood, they lose the possibility of staying in a family setting and must find their own housing. They are given one year to secure permanent employment. This requirement is difficult to meet, especially due to the challenges mentioned earlier. The result is the inability to find housing and the risk of becoming undocumented.

### Overcrowded Camps and Poor Conditions

*"I arrived in Sweden in 2015. I was underage, but the camps were overcrowded and lacked properly trained staff. Some even had criminal activity." (a migrant)*

### Homelessness After Turning 18

*"As soon as I turned 18 and my permit was denied, I was forced to leave the center. I had nowhere to go. Malmö used to give some financial help, but they stopped in 2022." (a migrant)*

### Support from Non-Profit Organizations

*"Thanks to Save the Children and the Church of Sweden, I was able to live in shared housing. There were*



*two or three of us in an apartment. Some friends with permits hosted me and used money from CSN to help." (a migrant)*

### **Long Waiting Times for Housing**

*"I applied for housing through Boplat Syd. It takes about two years to get a place. And the rent is too high. That's why four or five of us live in one room." (a migrant)*

## **Financial Challenges**

It is not easy to navigate the relationship with Swedish institutions at the national or municipal level. Often, there are services whose existence is difficult to know. The high level of digitalization in accessing services requires a great deal of independence from citizens to fill out often complex forms.

### **Lack of Financial Literacy**

*"I don't really understand how the Swedish financial system works. Banks, bills—it's all very complicated. Luckily, the unions sometimes offer help. But without language skills, it's hard to communicate with authorities." (a migrant)*

### **Bureaucratic Complexity**

*"Filling out social benefits applications is a nightmare. I prefer to keep receipts manually, because doing it online is just too hard. I don't have strong computer skills." (a migrant)*

## **4.8.6 Concluding Remarks**

The integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) in Sweden continues to face significant challenges, largely due to a migration system that often places them in a precarious and subordinate position. This system tends to generate a "subclass" of temporary workers and residents, where access to fundamental economic and social rights is tightly linked to the status of one's residence permit. As a result, TCNs often find themselves in vulnerable situations, unable to fully participate in society or establish long-term plans. The lack of stability in both employment and housing severely restricts their ability to build secure and fulfilling lives in Sweden.

A more inclusive and adaptable migration policy framework is urgently needed. Such an approach would not only facilitate easier access to public services but also promote more equitable opportunities in the labor market and housing sector. Structural reforms that prioritize stability, rights, and dignity over temporary or conditional solutions are essential to improving integration outcomes.



Insights gathered from a recent focus group in the Malmö region revealed widespread instability experienced by TCNs, particularly in the realms of employment and housing. Representatives from various participating organizations emphasized several urgent priorities. These include the development of more flexible and responsive integration policies that reflect the diverse needs of migrant communities. They also called for better coordination between public institutions and civil society organizations to streamline support services and avoid gaps in assistance.

Moreover, the focus group underscored the critical importance of enhancing legal protections against labor exploitation, a common issue faced by TCNs due to their precarious legal status. Finally, improving access to safe, affordable, and stable housing was identified as a cornerstone for successful integration, as it provides the foundation from which migrants can pursue employment, education, and community participation with dignity and security.



## 4.8.7 Bibliography

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#### 4.8.8 Organisations that contributed

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## 5. Concluding remarks

The AMIR project's comprehensive research across eight European countries has highlighted the multifaceted nature of migrant integration. While each nation demonstrates unique strengths and challenges, several common threads emerge.

### Key Findings:

- **Systemic Barriers:** Migrants across Europe face obstacles in accessing equitable opportunities in employment, housing, and social services. These barriers often include language difficulties, discrimination, complex bureaucratic procedures, and the non-recognition of foreign qualifications.
- **The Importance of Holistic Support:** Successful integration requires a holistic approach that addresses various aspects of a migrant's life. Programs that combine language training, employment assistance, housing support, and social inclusion initiatives have proven to be more effective.
- **The Role of Local Communities:** The active involvement of local communities and stakeholders is crucial. Initiatives that foster interaction, understanding, and collaboration between migrants and host communities lead to better integration outcomes.
- **The Need for Policy Coherence:** There is a need for greater policy coherence at both national and EU levels. Policies should be streamlined and coordinated to avoid creating additional obstacles for migrants.
- **The Value of Civil Society:** Civil society organizations play a vital role in supporting migrant integration, often filling gaps in public services and providing essential assistance. Their work should be supported and adequately funded.

### Recommendations:

- **Promote Equitable Access:** Member states should implement policies and practices that ensure migrants have equitable access to employment, housing, education, and social services.
- **Invest in Language and Skills Development:** Robust language training and skills development programs are essential to facilitate labor market integration.
- **Foster Social Inclusion:** Initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue, community engagement, and combat discrimination should be prioritized.

- **Strengthen Collaboration:** Collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, and local communities should be enhanced. Prioritize Sustainable Solutions: Integration policies should focus on long-term, sustainable solutions that empower migrants and promote social cohesion.

## 6. Acknowledgements:

We sincerely appreciate the time, insights, and experiences shared during the focus groups. Everyone's voices have been instrumental in shaping this report, highlighting the realities of migrant integration and the challenges faced by both migrants and local communities.

We are grateful for their willingness to share their stories and perspectives, and we hope this work will contribute to meaningful progress. Their time, insights, and personal experiences have been invaluable in shaping this report and have enriched our understanding, advocating for more inclusive and effective policies.

## 7. Partners

