



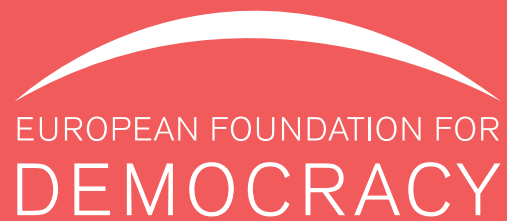
REFUGEES IN EUROPE

REVIEW OF INTEGRATION PRACTICES & POLICIES

AUSTRIA / BELGIUM / DENMARK / FRANCE / GERMANY / THE NETHERLANDS / SWEDEN

[Full version]

EUROPEAN FOUNDATION FOR
DEMOCRACY



The European Foundation for Democracy would like to express its gratitude to all involved in this research project. In particular, we would like to thank the 131 refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the workshops and interview process. Their contribution has made this report unique and innovative.

2018

About the European Foundation for Democracy

The European Foundation for Democracy is a Brussels-based policy institute dedicated to upholding Europe's fundamental values of freedom and equality, regardless of gender, ethnicity or religion. Today these principles are being challenged by a number of factors, among them rapid social change as a result of high levels of immigration from cultures with different customs, a rise in intolerance on all sides, an increasing polarisation and the growing influence of radical, extremist ideologies worldwide.

We work with grassroots activists, media, policy experts and government officials throughout Europe to identify constructive approaches to addressing these challenges. Our goal is to ensure that the universal values of political pluralism, individual liberty and government by democracy and religious tolerance – remain the core foundation of Europe's prosperity and welfare, and the basis on which diverse cultures and opinions can interact peacefully.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

One of the greatest challenges facing twenty-first century Europe is the mass migration and integration of refugees who cross borders in search of safer lives. This report analyses the wide-ranging issues relating to the integration of refugees in seven European countries and presents our key findings – both in terms of good practices and areas for concern – as well as recommendations for change.

Although the 2015 migration crisis has subsided, a number of issues related to the crisis persist, challenging the liberal democratic values, safety and socio-economic cohesion of Europe. It is increasingly evident that these problems will endure and, in some instances, worsen over time. Given this, the European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) undertook this research project, conscious that the way Europe copes with the refugee crisis will have a lasting impact on European societies, as well as on how successfully the European Union (EU) will stay true to the values and principles which define it. The aim of this report is to present measures for improvement on a national and Europe-wide level, offering macro and micro recommendations based on research carried out across seven countries. Our research reveals that a delay will not only allow current issues to persist, but will also prove costlier for Europe; should policymakers fail to invest in long-term integration policies now, the resources which will be required to fix future problems will be considerably more.

The key findings of this report are based on qualitative research carried out in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. In order to obtain a general snapshot of the integration procedures of Europe, we conducted interviews and workshops with refugees, government officials and civil society actors. This offers considerable value-added as the majority of previous studies conducted on this topic are based on secondary sources.

Our main time frame dates from 2015 until the present day, though some statistical data and integration policies pre-date 2015. For each country researched, we analysed existing policies and good practices, as well as bad practices or policies, which produce undesirable results.

In determining the key findings, we analysed policies and practices relating to: socio-cultural integration within the liberal-democratic framework; socio-economic integration in the education sector/labour market; and social-inclusion within host communities. Based on these results, we found common practices and issues present across our research countries.

A number of good practices emerged, including;

- **Liberal-democratic values**

Most governments we surveyed require asylum seekers to sign a declaration of intent at the beginning of the integration process, compelling newcomers to abide by the fundamental liberal democratic values of the host country. Although these are formal requirements, some states also offer courses on intercultural exchanges, further supporting the declarations.

- **Social Inclusion**

Similarly, a number of initiatives aimed at fostering social inclusion between refugees and the host community were common to all countries surveyed. These projects promote social inclusion through engaging refugees with their peers, through the use of mentors, or through schemes which work to reduce the creation of “closed” communities or ghettos. Further initiatives emerged at the civil society level, focussing on bringing together refugees and local communities through activities and volunteering. The initiatives not only help to integrate refugees into local societies, but also work to dispel the fears and lack of knowledge of local populations with regard to refugees.

- **Key support services**

As well as the volunteer initiatives at civil society level, we also identified a number of official and volunteer-based organisations offering newcomers information about the asylum procedure, as well as other critical advice on how to start life in their host country. Particularly important is the professional guardianship some states offer to unaccompanied minors, taking care of children in family-based surroundings and facilitating their integration from the moment they apply for asylum.

- **Housing**

Although access to housing is often cited as the main challenge for newcomers, we identified a number of states that help refugees find available and affordable housing. Initiatives included social housing for refugees, the creation of a network of “sympathetic landlords” willing to rent to refugees and tools to help disperse newcomers evenly throughout the country.

- **Language and work**

Also cited as a great obstacle is the development of language skills. However, in all of the countries we researched, language forms part of the integration package – although, critically, to varying degrees. Linked to language development is access to the labour market and the ability to find skills-relevant work. Many states reported investments in initiatives which facilitate refugees’ access to the labour market. Such initiatives include skills-mapping exercises to determine whether asylum seekers and refugees live in areas where their skills are needed, subsidised jobs, as well as work placement programmes and assessments of skills and qualifications. NGOs also play a crucial role in helping refugees access the labour market; we identified numerous organisations which help accelerate the recognition process of qualifications, connect refugees with employers and provide mentoring systems between local experienced mentors and newcomers.

Although these good practices demonstrate a degree of initiative and commitment to help integrate refugees and asylum seekers into their host communities, we also identified a number of vulnerabilities and areas of concern.

The key challenges emerging from our research include;

- **Socio-cultural integration**

The lack of preparedness of the EU in the face of the refugee crisis led to the formulation of ad-hoc policies which fail to promote, or even protect, the liberal democratic values and principles enshrined within the EU. Our research revealed common grievances relating to intolerance and abuses in all seven countries, ranging from the sexual exploitation of children in temporary reception facilities to missing migrant children. Several respondents also cited instances of fearmongering by conservative religious groups, particularly in relation to female behaviour and clothing. This occurs in reception centres as well as in society at large, where tensions regarding cultural, religious or political differences were reported, sometimes leading to violence and intimidation. The problem is amplified when refugees gather in “closed” communities (de facto ghettos), frequently located in low-income areas of large cities.

- **Socio-economic issues**

Another common grievance which emerged is the difficulty of entering the labour market. Respondents cited “bureaucratic hurdles” as considerable obstacles to overcome, as well as the fact that skills and educational achievements from their native countries are often not recognised in the host country. The process of retraining or the recognition of qualifications is often costly and lengthy. Furthermore, the issue of a language barrier emerged in several countries, as not all states provide free or obligatory language training. Common problems relating to education and training also featured, particularly in relation to teachers: integration providers often lack cultural training, leading to insensitivity and

a disconnection, whilst in some countries we heard of instances of underqualified teachers. The lack of psychological trauma therapy was also cited as a common grievance. Finding suitable housing is also mentioned as cause for significant concern.

- **Socio-inclusion issues**

Social fragmentation was another common theme, fuelled by a “resistance to the unknown” and a common sense of mistrust from local communities. The rise of right-wing extremist groups who oppose immigration highlight the splintered nature of society leading to social and political polarisation. Cultural barriers relating to freedom of speech, religion, politics and sexual orientation further hinder the integration procedure.

- **Vulnerabilities**

All seven countries reported issues with conservative religious organisations and individuals. Respondents raised concerns relating to verbal abuse in some Quranic schools, as well as high levels of conservatism and intolerance in certain mosques. Another issue which frequently emerged was the prevalence of conservative religious organisations in providing education services at kindergartens, as well as governments permitting political-religious organisations to take over tasks more properly carried out by the state. All countries also had respondents who recounted attempts to indoctrinate refugees into radical ideologies, as well as discouraging them from integrating in to their host society or learning the local language. Moreover, interviews revealed some official actors involved in the integration process fail to report signs of radicalisation to the authorities, often due to a lack of training and intercultural awareness.

A PATHWAY TO CHANGE

These findings reveal migration and integration are long-term processes which require long-term policies. To begin the pathway to successful integration, this report makes policy recommendations on both the local and international levels, which work together to address issues relating to migration and integration.

These recommendations can be broken down into three sections;

1. To tackle the destructive divisions within society and protect the EU’s liberal democratic norms, we recommend that values-based policies are introduced at the beginning of the integration process. Values-based training with vetted trainers as part of the **early integration** procedure will lay the groundwork for the successful integration of refugees. It will also help break down the societal divisions currently in place across Europe. In terms of vetting, organisations that provide religious-based education services or which offer to “represent” a specific community should go through a more robust vetting procedure. This will protect refugees from violence, abuse and exposure to extremist individuals or organisations. Language training is also invaluable for cultural assimilation, as well as for facilitating access to the labour market. At the other end of the integration procedure, states could invest in organising more events aimed at improving awareness of refugee issues among local populations and host communities.

2. To promote further inclusion and integration, policymakers should **restructure the asylum procedure**, particularly in relation to labour market access and housing. In terms of access to the labour market, states should begin the process of mapping asylum seekers' previous education and skillset earlier, as well as introduce more effective policies to help newcomers find jobs. This could be achieved by reducing the number of bureaucratic hurdles and investing in vocational training initiatives, as well as language training. With regard to housing refugees and asylum seekers, states should avoid establishing reception centres in isolated areas, as well as enacting policies to prevent segregated or "closed" communities from forming and which currently exist in countries across Europe. To achieve this, they should focus on avoiding the creation of ghettos and dispersing refugees and asylum seekers according to established objective criteria, such as the availability of housing, state services and jobs. Authorities should also increase investment in programmes and in supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which work on linking refugees with job opportunities in different regions of the country.

3. On a wider scale and to prevent disasters such as the 2015 refugee crisis from recurring, there needs to be a **reassessment of the regulatory and organisational framework** of asylum and immigration policies at EU and national levels. On the local level, organisational changes should involve better dialogue among organisations, including the creation of bodies to monitor, evaluate and coordinate all initiatives as well as distinct bodies working with refugees.

A failure or delay to implement changes at both the national and EU levels will prove costly for the European Union. As this report reveals, the consequences of the 2015 refugee crisis are still being felt today and will continue to do so until they are properly addressed through long-term policies and commitment. Such changes, therefore, are not only necessary for the present crisis, but also for the future cohesion, safety and stability of Europe. Indeed, we can expect a bleaker future for Europe should things remain as they are. Europe must find an equilibrium between security, humanitarian responsibilities and the protection and promotion of its liberal democratic values and principles.

INTRODUCTION

SETTING THE SCENE: 2015, A TURNING POINT FOR EUROPE

In 2015, an unprecedented number of asylum seekers arrived in Europe, primarily fleeing the civil war in Syria. That year, some 1.3 million people from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and a number of African countries applied for asylum in the European Union (EU).¹ Today, Germany is hosting by far the largest number, having granted protection to a total of 593,410 asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, including approximately 400,000 Syrians.²

Other countries — notably Sweden, Austria, and the Netherlands — also received large numbers of asylum seekers in 2015. Austria is emblematic of the magnitude of the refugee influx; it received 85,000 asylum requests in 2015 alone, which is equal to the number of requests it had received in the previous five years combined. That same year, Sweden—a country of just under 10 million people—recorded the highest per capita number of asylum applications of any OECD country, ever (162,877).

Many of the asylum seekers who arrived in the European Union as part of the 2015 influx came illegally by way of the Mediterranean Sea or other smuggling routes across Turkey and Europe. Experiences of war and escape left many traumatised. This is particularly true for Syrians, although this is not limited to them alone. Upon arrival, they have faced further challenges regarding asylum procedures; housing; a general lack of psychological trauma therapy; and issues related to education, work, and conflicting values. These factors jeopardise their process of integrating into their host country.

To understand better the 2015 refugee crisis and its evolution, the European Foundation for Democracy (EFD) decided to research how different European countries with high numbers of refugees (or those with experience integrating high numbers of refugees) are managing the integration process.

WHY THIS SURVEY?

The European Foundation for Democracy's decision to undertake this survey was driven by the awareness that the policy decisions currently being developed across Europe will have a long-term impact both on European societies and on how successfully we remain true to the fundamental principles and values at Europe's core, as enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the national constitutional traditions.

The enormous influx of asylum seekers into Europe since 2015 has created significant structural and organisational challenges for governments across the continent, as well as heated political debate. Xenophobic political parties have exploited the humanitarian disaster, which occurred at the same time as increasing numbers of terrorist attacks and terror threats all over Europe. Such parties have used these dual events to foster the false and dangerous narrative of “fortress Europe,” under attack from people they describe as the “invaders.” At the other end of the spectrum, it has emerged that radical groups have, on occasion, sought to prevent the integration of refugees in order to destabilise Western societies and sometimes even seek to recruit them into terrorist and extremist activities. Both refugees and host societies are victims of this polarising dynamic. The only way to avoid reaching the point of no return is to address the root causes of the problem. To this end, this report takes a multifaceted approach to examining the challenges of integration, seeks to understand the extent of prejudice and racism to which those escaping the horrors of civil war have been subjected and assesses the risks of radicalisation to which such vulnerable individuals are exposed.

A delay or indeed failure to implement changes on both the national and EU levels will prove costly for the European community. We can expect a bleaker future for Europe should things remain as they are. This report highlights the importance of finding a balance between

security, humanitarian responsibilities and the need to protect and promote Europe's liberal democratic values and principles.

PROJECT FOCUS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purpose of the survey therefore was to identify good and bad practices in operation in the different countries surveyed. In identifying good practices, we sought to assess whether and to what extent it might be possible to replicate these in other EU member states. As regards the bad practices, we wanted to examine their vulnerabilities and potential for causing harm and address these accordingly. Based on the overall assessment, we propose a series of recommendations for consideration by policy makers at both national and EU levels.

Our research analysed the situation through the prism of three key tenets of integration policy: socioeconomic, sociocultural and social inclusion. We focused on a number of different categories, including the asylum process, national recognition procedures, economic and sociocultural integration following recognition and issues for concern, among others.

In our work, we distinguish between “asylum seekers” and “refugees”, defined as follows:

- **Asylum seeker:** “In the global context, a person who seeks safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and awaits a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international and national instruments. In the EU context, a person who has made an application for protection under the Geneva Convention in respect of which a final decision has not yet been taken.”³
- **Refugee:** A third-country⁴ national who has been granted either refugee status⁵ or subsidiary protection.⁶

Following these distinctions, we have observed good practices, as well as other issues and vulnerabilities, from the beginning of the integration process to its conclusion; from the time asylum is claimed to the point of whether an individual is granted or refused international protection.

¹Eurostat, “Asylum in the EU Member States,” 4 March 2016, 1, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/>. See also Connor, Phillip, “Number of Refugees to Europe Surges to Record 1.3 Million in 2015,” Pew Research Center, 2 August 2016, <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/08/14100940/Pew-Research-Center-Europe-Asylum-Report-FINAL-August-2-2016.pdf>.

²In 2015 and in 2016, a total of 1,164,100 first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in Germany, including 424,850 Syrian nationals. In the same years, Germany granted protection to 398,700 Syrian nationals. In this regard, see Eurostat, “Asylum in the EU Member States,” 4 March 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf/>; Eurostat, “Asylum in the EU Member States,” 16 March 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7921609/3-16032017-BP-EN.pdf/e5fa98bb-5d9d-4297-9168-d07c67d1c9e1>; Eurostat, “Asylum Decisions in the EU,” 20 April 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7233417/3-20042016-AP-EN.pdf>; and Eurostat, “Asylum Decisions in the EU,” 26 April 2017, <http://www.europeanmigrationlaw.eu/documents/Eurostat-AsylumDecisions-2016.pdf>.

³European Migration Network (EMN), “Asylum and Migration Glossary 3.0,” European Commission, October 2014, 33 <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/asylum-and-migration-glossary-30>.

⁴Ibid., 282. “A country that is not a member of the European Union as well as a country or territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Schengen Borders Code.”

⁵Ibid., 232. “In the global context, either a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned before, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it. In the EU context, either a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Art. 12 (Exclusion) of Directive 2011/95/EU does not apply.”

⁶Ibid., 278. “The protection given to a third-country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person to their country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in Art. 15 of 2011/95/EU, and to whom Art. 17(1) and (2) of Directive 2011/95/EU do not apply, and is unable or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country.”

We surveyed Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden on deciding that these are the key countries whose experiences tell us the most. The focus

was on Syrian refugees, although not exclusively so. Our report primarily looked at the years 2014-2016, when peak numbers of asylum seekers entered Europe.

NUMBER OF FIRST-TIME ASYLUM APPLICATIONS

	AUSTRIA	BELGIUM	DENMARK	FRANCE	GERMANY	THE NETHERLANDS	SWEDEN
2016	42,073	14,670	6,055	76,000	722,370	31,642	28,939
2015	85,500	39,064	20,825	70,570	441,899	58,880	162,877
2014	25,675	14,131	14,535	58,845	173,071	24,000	81,301

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To assess good practices and policies in place related to refugee integration based on research, evaluation and long-standing experiences.
- To provide policy recommendations to European and national decision-makers so as to develop sound and effective integration policies and infrastructures that will help achieve successful integration.
- To contribute to the integration debate currently taking place in Europe and the United States by offering practical and sustainable recommendations that incorporate Europe's fundamental rights and individual liberties and, more broadly, European and Western values, obligations and responsibilities.

REPORT STRUCTURE

The report is divided into two main parts. The first includes an overall analysis and recommendations; the second provides a more detailed overview of the specific countries surveyed and makes recommendations as per each national context.

For each country, we analysed existing policies, legislation and good practices; how these function and whether recipients perceive them as responding to or otherwise meeting their needs and expectations; how refugees are integrated into the labour market; and so on. We also assessed what is and is not working and

whether lessons from one country's experience can be applied to other jurisdictions.

The annexes provide detailed country-specific data, including recent annual asylum seeker figures, country-of-origin statistics, national legislative frameworks, national asylum processing policies and procedures, asylum seeker reception procedures and integration policies and practices.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This report is intended to be a policy study aimed at presenting recommendations to relevant European stakeholders for developing sound and effective integration policies and practices, rather than an academic research project.

We therefore adopted a concrete, inductive approach based on the qualitative examination of existing integration policies in the countries concerned and an evaluation thereof.

To this end, our focus was to observe and understand a social process in depth—specifically, the experiences, perspectives and views of actors in the integration process—rather than collecting data for statistical analysis. The research was mainly based on interviews with a selection of government officials, civil society organisations, integration experts, academics, community leaders, practitioners—including front-line professionals who engage with

refugees—and notably, refugees themselves. The preliminary selection of individuals and groups has been expanded thanks to the additional contacts and input received from our interviewees. The quantitative analyses carried out on asylum seekers and refugees in Europe have been used to integrate oral data collected during the interviews. Relevant academic and policy studies, as well as government documentation, complemented our analysis.

Between January and April 2017, we interviewed 245 individuals, of whom 131 were refugees and asylum seekers. Most of these had arrived in Europe from Syria in recent years. This represents a considerable added value compared to the majority of the previous studies on this topic, a number of which are based on secondary sources.

Government officials and civil society actors received a similar questionnaire that was adapted to the audience. These semi-structured interviews were divided into three parts:

- on asylum seekers awaiting status recognition, with a focus on recognition procedures;
- on what happens after asylum seekers obtain refugee status or temporary protection, with a focus on the aspects of economic and sociocultural integration; and
- on areas that respondents viewed as of concern.

For interviews with refugees, we adapted the questionnaire to include space for their specific realities and to capture more personal experiences. In addition to the interviews, we held a number of workshops with refugees and asylum seekers and organised several group meetings for refugees and asylum seekers in the various countries we studied.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent academic and policy literature that address the refugee crisis and the challenges of asylum and integration reach similar conclusions on a number of key issues that the EU should address as soon as possible.

One of the main points several observers identify is the need to overcome the so-called Dublin system, whereby the burden of the asylum process is placed predominantly on Mediterranean states. According to the Dublin Regulation,⁷ in most cases the responsibility to host asylum seekers lies with the Member State he/she first entered. This means that pressure on southern Member States is very high simply because of geographic location. This is not a fair sharing of responsibility. For this reason, in September 2015, Member States agreed to set up the Emergency Relocation System within the EU to transfer asylum seekers and refugees from those Member States, whose systems were severely overstretched, to other EU countries. As of August 2017 however, countries such as Denmark, Austria and Hungary were still not participating in the programme and others were doing so on a very limited basis.⁸ Moreover, the EU set up “hot spots” in Greece and Italy to help these countries manage the migratory pressure.

⁷Regulation (EU) No 604/2013 of 26th July 2013, establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person (recast). <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32013R0604&from=EN>

⁸European Migration and Home Affairs, “Member States’ Support to Emergency Relocation Mechanism,” 10 November 2017, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/docs/state_of_play_-_relocation_en.pdf.

These sites were designed to help frontline Member States “swiftly identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants”⁹ but, according to some studies, they turned into overcrowded detention centres.¹⁰

Given this, according to the analysts, the EU regulatory framework should be comprehensively reassessed; the EU should be more robustly involved both at the borders (by reinforcing the resources and mandate of Frontex, the European Border and Coastguard Agency, to promote, coordinate, and develop European border management in line with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights) and in handling asylum applications and redistribution.¹¹ The creation of a fully-fledged EU Agency on Asylum (currently under discussion at the EU level)¹² is considered by certain experts to be a fundamental step in this direction.¹³

More thought-out and better-organised asylum procedures in Europe would also help from a security perspective. These ideally would favour more thorough checking of the identity of those who cross borders and therefore, on potential terrorist threats. An increased sense of security, in turn, would help dispel the negative myths surrounding refugees, thus deconstructing the political narratives against them.¹⁴

Finally, more enhanced security could help protect the many children who are currently at risk. In a 2017 report, the Council of Europe highlighted the situation affecting children and unaccompanied minor asylum seekers fleeing conflicts. According to this report,¹⁵ many children become easy targets for sexual exploitation and abuse in overcrowded temporary reception facilities. Many migrant children also go missing and, according to Europol, likely end up in prostitution or child labour. Even when minors arrive with their parents, they remain a particularly vulnerable category and must be looked after with the outmost care. Rania¹⁶, a refugee from Syria, told us about the horrific experience her 5-year-old son suffered in the reception centre, where he was sexually assaulted by another asylum seeker. To this day, the child continues to receive psychological therapy.



Regarding the challenge of integration, all analysts stress the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach toward early integration, one that is focused not only on the humanitarian emergency, jobs and material needs, but also on language, civic integration and education. In particular, some authors stress the importance of introducing asylum seekers to core European values, including gender equality, tolerance regarding sexual orientation and the role of religion in secular Western societies¹⁷ from the very beginning of the integration process. Indeed, past cases of large refugee influxes demonstrate refugees' potential radicalisation in the medium and long terms, especially when extremist groups driven by a political agenda—albeit nonviolent—are involved in relief efforts.¹⁸ Therefore, education about shared values combined with narratives that contrast with radical ones seem to be essential factors for successful integration.

⁹European Commission, "A European Agenda on Migration," 13 May 2015, 6, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/communication_on_the_european_agenda_on_migration_en.pdf.

¹⁰On that note, please see Aspasia Papadopoulou, "The Implementation of the Hotspots in Italy and Greece," European Council for Refugees and Exiles, 5 December 2016, 11, <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HOTSPOTS-Report-5.12.2016.pdf>, and "Understanding Migration and Asylum in the European Union," Open Society Foundations, accessed 24 October 2017, <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-migration-and-asylum-european-union>.

¹¹Clémentine d'Oultremont and Anna Martin, "The Migration Crisis: A Stress Test for European Values," *European Policy Brief* no. 38 (September 2015), <http://aei.pitt.edu/74541/1/38.pdf>; Christian Dustmann et al., "On the Economics and Politics of Refugee Migration," CESifo, no. 6111 (September 2016), http://www.cesifo-group.de/DocDL/cesifo1_wp6111.pdf; and Elspeth Guild et al., "The 2015 Refugee Crisis in the European Union," Centre for the European Policy Studies no. 332 (September 2015), https://www.ceps.eu/system/files/CEPS%20PB332%20Refugee%20Crisis%20in%20EU_0.pdf.

¹²European Union Agency for Asylum, "Briefing EU Legislation in Progress," European Parliament, 10 March 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595849/EPRS_BRI\(2016\)595849_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595849/EPRS_BRI(2016)595849_EN.pdf).

¹³d'Oultremont and Martin, "The Migration Crisis"; Guild et al., "The 2015 Refugee Crisis in the European Union."

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Council of Europe, Lanzarote Committee, "Special Report Protecting Children Affected by the Refugee Crisis from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse," 3 March 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/protecting-children-affected-refugee-crisis-sexual-exploitation-and-sexual-abuse>.

¹⁶All respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality in their responses to the survey questions to protect their identity and encourage a frank and open dialogue in the interviews. All the names used in this article have been changed and are not the real names of respondents.

¹⁷Frank Mattern et al., "A Road Map for Integrating Europe's Refugees," McKinsey Global Institute, November 2016, <http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/employment-and-growth/a-road-map-for-integrating-europes-refugees>.

¹⁸Barbara Sude, David Stebbins, and Sarah Weiland, "Lessening the Risk of Refugee Radicalization," *RAND Corporation*, 2015, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE166/RAND_PE166.pdf.



PART I: REFUGEES IN EUROPE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 OVERALL CONTEXT

In the autumn of 2015, thousands of asylum seekers crossed several borders from Turkey through the Balkans to Western Europe. Many were transiting through southern Europe to get to Germany, Sweden, or the Netherlands, where conditions for asylum seekers were considered more favourable than in other countries. Some individuals crowded into unseaworthy boats or were dependent on smugglers to cross the Mediterranean. Thousands of people lost their lives trying to reach the EU by sea in 2015–2016. The death of Alan Kurdi, a three-year-old Syrian boy whose body was photographed washed up on a Turkish beach, became emblematic of the refugee crisis, which was one of the largest humanitarian disasters in Europe since the Second World War.¹⁹

It was not just Syrian asylum seekers who were arriving in Europe. Many people were fleeing other parts of the Middle East, southern Asia and continental Africa, most escaping local and regional conflicts. They were joined by economic migrants in search of better life prospects. Tens of thousands of these asylum seekers walked through southern Europe, travelling north, until fences were erected to bar their route. The flow of people continued, however and numbers increased.

By the second half of 2015, it became clear that Europe and its national security systems, administration procedures and asylum and immigration processing facilities were

unprepared for such a dramatic, sustained and uncontrolled influx of people into their territories. Most were unable to house or process the huge numbers arriving. The lack of a common policy generated a certain level of chaos at numerous borders and countries responded to the crisis in various ways. Hungary, for example, prevented asylum seekers from entering its territory and accorded protection to very few individuals. Sweden decided to impose temporary border controls and did grant asylum, while the Danish government began an advertising campaign in the Lebanese press to discourage asylum seekers from coming to Denmark. Germany, after guaranteeing free access for Syrian asylum seekers, later reestablished temporary border controls under article 25 of the Schengen Borders Code.

Meanwhile, in March 2016 the EU announced a deal with Turkey to reduce drastically the influx of irregular migration inside its borders. Turkey was responsible for halting the exodus; in return, the EU had to provide, among other things, financial assistance to resettle refugees among its Member States and facilitate the visa-free travel of Turkish nationals to the Schengen passport-free zone. Although the deal was intended to curb the flow of Syrian refugees, as of 2017 many Member States had not yet begun resettling refugees within the EU-level schemes and thousands of people have continued to travel to Europe with the help of smugglers.

¹⁹Regulation (EU) "Latest on the Refugee and Migrants Crisis," UNICEF, accessed 24 October 2017, https://www.unicef.org/eca/resources_28329.html.

The fact that European governments found themselves surprised by and unprepared for this wave of asylum seekers and refugees was reflected in the application of ad-hoc policy measures that did not benefit from proper planning or a longer-term strategy.²⁰

THE “US” VS. “THEM” NARRATIVE

The situation was becoming highly polarised and rapidly so. Many Europeans said they felt that the social contract between the government and its citizens was breaking down as a result of the high numbers of refugees now residing in Europe.

In 2015, the media played an important role in helping to disseminate a polarised debate. Social media and television networks were used extensively to share messages and language pervaded by intolerance, resentment and violence. The strong sentiments that animated the debate also contributed to the development of a polarising “us” versus “them”, “citizens” versus “refugees” narrative. This form of social fragmentation helped create fertile ground for the emergence of different forms of extremism, ranging from right-/left-wing xenophobia to Jihadist radicalisation. Both phenomena represent two sides of the same coin—a worldview that rejects the values and principles of liberal democracies.

Meanwhile, right-wing political parties across the continent exploited people’s fear of refugees by promoting the idea that “the other” was coming to take over Europe’s Christian democratic heritage. This narrative became increasingly common in many countries during 2015–2016. The spectre of right-wing nationalism became manifest in Germany, home to 1.5 million refugees. Cities across the country experienced passionate demonstrations and right-wing populist parties made gains in local elections, exploiting people’s fear of refugees among other anti-establishment concerns.

EU institutions and centrist European governments feared that right-wing populist leaders would be swept into office. This was a

particular cause for concern during national elections in France, the Netherlands and Germany, where curbing immigration became a defining issue for many political parties running for office. Though none of these parties was elected to the highest office in the land, it has become clear that issues and platforms that were once fringe or socially unpalatable have become largely mainstream.

Racist sentiments have undoubtedly taken root in certain sectors of society to which the following anecdotes will attest. Rami, a refugee from Syria, told us that a group of individuals with shaved heads verbally abused him and other refugees while eating a sandwich and overturned the table where they were sitting. Hussein, from Iraq, told us he was treated with disrespect in all the different refugee camps he passed through before reaching his final destination, while Sandra, from Syria, said she and other asylum seekers were called “animals” by a security officer in charge of their asylum application process. Episodes such as these emerged in our research as isolated incidents. However, they remain signals of polarisation that cannot be ignored.

The recent birth of the group Defend Europe is a symptom of the continent’s increasingly polarised debate on the topic of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Under the slogan “Help us to save Europe!” this group is comprised of individuals who claim to document the acts of charities working in the Mediterranean and intervene if they do something illegally, such as picking up migrants on the Libyan coast from human smugglers. Defend Europe also claims to make the Mediterranean Sea safer by “saving” people in distress and handing them over to the Libyan Coast Guard. On the other side, antiracism groups are issuing warnings concerning migrants’ safety. This growing tension between antagonistic groups could become a serious threat.

If the debate that has become commonplace across Europe has deepened social divisions, it has also raised awareness of the dramatic plight of those forced to flee their homes because of war and violence. This situation has also been

exacerbated by the absence of policies that address the need for values-based integration of refugees and migrants.

In the event, it is important to remember that the refugee emergency of 2015 exacerbated a tense situation but is not in itself responsible for Europe's current crisis. Longstanding economic issues and the wave of terrorist attacks across Europe are not a direct consequence of the 2015 influx.

Indications that second and third generations from within communities of immigrant background have become increasingly disenfranchised and radicalised²¹ confirm that integration is a long-term process that requires long-term policies and commitment. Governments can no longer ignore or dismiss the phenomenon; they must take positive action to prevent extremism, racism and polarising divisions within society. Successful integration is the best antidote to fractured and polarised societies and all actors bear responsibility: the EU, national governments, civil society organisations (CSOs)—and even individual citizens.

THE STRUCTURAL DIMENSION OF ASYLUM AND INTEGRATION

Governments in most EU countries have similar asylum and immigration policies, although application processing can take significantly

longer in certain jurisdictions; in March 2017, for example, applications took as long as 13 months to process in certain jurisdictions. The changing political climate toward refugees in Europe has seen governments tighten the rules on granting asylum and significantly, those concerning family reunification for refugees.

Academics and government officials interviewed reported that there are concerns regarding groups of asylum seekers likely unqualified for asylum as they come from countries that are considered safe. For the host countries, this means providing resources for people who remain at reception centres until they can be returned to their homelands.

Over the past year, EU Member States have handled the needs of more than 1 million refugees within their borders, providing not only basic services such as food, clothing, shelter and medical care, but also assistance via integration policies that facilitate access to work, language courses, education, well-being, cultural understanding and social inclusion. Such a complex challenge requires solid structural organisation. For example, in response to the 2015 influx, the Dutch government established a temporary Ministerial Committee on Migration that resulted in the creation of a Task Force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees and a Task Force for the Higher Education of Refugees.²² As tends to be the case with specific ministries in charge of integration issues, the entity responsible for

²⁰France's experience is an example of this phenomenon. At least four relevant policy devices were simultaneously put in place during the 2015 influx: relocation, resettlement, the coordination of Iraqi nationals belonging to persecuted religious minorities and the need to find a solution to the Calais "jungle" refugee camps.

²¹On that note, see Gilles Kepel and Antoine Jardin, *Terror in France. The Rise of Jihad in the West* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017); Sean S. Costigan and David Gold, *Terrornomics* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 60; Vicki Coppock and Mark McGovern, "Dangerous Minds? Deconstructing Counter-Terrorism Discourse, Radicalisation and the 'Psychological Vulnerability' of Muslim Children and Young People in Britain," *Children and Society* 28, no. 3 (2014): 242–56; Frazer Egerton, *Jihad in the West: The Rise of Militant Salafism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118; Peter Bergen, "Bergen: A Pattern in Terror—Second Generation, Homegrown," 24 May 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/05/24/opinions/homegrown-terrorism-opinion-bergen/index.html>; V. de Diveritiis, "Considerations over Factors Empowering Radicalization in the European Union," in *Perspectives on Immigration and Terrorism* ed. G.M. Ruggiero, S. Sassaroli, Y. Latzer, and S. Suchday (Amsterdam, NL: IOS Press, 2011), 53; and Lindsey Holtgraves, "The Politics of Identity: The Roots of Radicalization and Home-Grown Terrorism Amongst Second and Third Generation Immigrants in Europe" (The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012), <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/indexablecontent/uuid:65b0a5f0-3ba1-4a2e-ab4a-0f7ac37ecc41>.

²²Laura Seiffert and Henrika Wörmann, "Annual Policy Report 2015, Migration and Asylum in the Netherlands," European Migration Network, June 2016, 3, https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/annual-policy/annual-policy-20a_netherlands_apr_part2_en.pdf.

coordinating the field of integration policies in the Netherlands is the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment.²³

In the seven EU Member States surveyed, the national-level integration solutions are different; only three countries—France, Germany, and

Denmark—deal with both immigration and integration through the same ministry. Although the majority of Member States distinguish between immigration and integration, these policies are closely interlinked.²⁴ Table 1 offers a snapshot of the situation.

Table 1: Immigration and Integration: Who Is in Charge?

State	Responsible for Immigration	Responsible for Integration
 Austria	Ministry of Interior	Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs
 Belgium	Ministry of Interior	Regions and Linguistic Communities
 Denmark	Ministry of Immigration and Integration	Ministry of Immigration and Integration
 France	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Interior
 Germany	Ministry of Interior	Ministry of Interior
 The Netherlands	Ministry of Safety and Justice	Minister of Social Affairs and Employment
 Sweden	Ministry of Justice	Ministry of Employment (multilevel governance)

Responsibility for immigration and asylum lies within one of three ministries: Interior (Austria, Belgium, France, and Germany), Justice (Netherlands and Sweden) and Immigration and Integration (Denmark). Unlike the other countries, Denmark has a specific ministry for immigration and integration issues that was set up in connection with the November 2016 change in government. Regional administrations and local municipalities in all the countries surveyed are largely responsible for the integration process. This is particularly true in Sweden, where the Ministry of Integration was abolished some years ago; the responsibility is now managed through multilevel governance via

the 21 county administrative boards. Belgium represents a particular case in which integration policies and coordination are highly fragmented because they are mainly competencies of the Regions and Linguistic Communities. In fact, it is necessary to distinguish among the regions into which the federal state is divided: the Flemish region started integration programmes in 2001, but in Wallonia the integration programme was devised only in 2014; the Brussels region does not yet have a compulsory integration programme. Moreover, in all of the seven countries surveyed, CSOs are playing a fundamental role in the integration process, which in itself has pros and cons.

1.2 MAIN FINDINGS

In launching this research, we hypothesized that countries with a long tradition of receiving asylum seekers and refugees would have solid experience in handling such complex situations. Their maturity in this field could produce lessons and good practices to share with countries with less experience on the issue. However, this initial assumption was partially upended during our research. The integration processes in the countries analysed do not present, to date, perfect models that have avoided key problems: all show a strong need for targeted support policies.

The crisis of 2015 showed that many countries were unprepared to handle the influx of migrants—even those with a long tradition of doing so. The system was largely not ready, trained, or equipped to deal with this significant flow of people, thereby creating chaos and spawning a multiplicity of additional related and other problems.

In spite of this, the research has also highlighted a significant number of good practices at work. These include examples, programmes and initiatives implemented to address specific problems related to receiving asylum seekers and integrating refugees.

In the following sections, we provide an overview of good practices and vulnerabilities, while country-specific lists are present in each country report in Part II.

GOOD PRACTICES

Currently no clear agreement exists on how to measure and evaluate practices that facilitate integration. After conducting preliminary research into integration policies and practices in the different countries, we made an assessment based on a number of criteria aimed at evaluating the holistic integration of refugees in European societies. We examined approaches to integrating refugees socially, economically and culturally into their new host societies. Considering that most of the good practices identified are ongoing while others are at an initial stage, respondents' satisfaction should be taken as a midpoint evaluation, rather than a definitive judgment, of the practices' success. Overall, our assessment was based on the relationship between need and response: if the practices targeted solutions to central problems that affect the integration process in the outlined pillars, they were considered "good practices" and therefore mentioned for their potential contribution.

The following list of good practices should not be taken as an exhaustive mapping, nor as a way to compare heterogeneous national and local realities, but as an overview of positive examples we encountered during our research that could be promoted and replicated where needed.

²³Jeanine Klaver, "Local Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, Reception and Integration," NIEM Analyses, 2016, 6, http://www.forintegration.eu/uploads/drive/publikacje/pdf/holandia_1.pdf.

²⁴See Yves Pascouau, "Measures and Rules Developed in the EU Member States Regarding Integration of Third Country Nationals," European Policy Centre, December 2014, 19, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_6519_reportintegrationschemesfinalversionpdf-en.pdf.



LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC VALUES

For the sake of peaceful and harmonious coexistence, it is necessary that all citizens, including newcomers, abide by the principles of liberal-democratic societies.

Most governments surveyed require asylum seekers to sign a declaration of intent to abide by the values of the host country. These include fundamental liberal-democratic values such as gender equality, respect for different sexual orientations, freedom of religious and nonreligious beliefs and overall respect for the individual. Such declarations are a compulsory part of the integration process.

However, similar documents exist at the local level and are signed on a voluntary basis. For instance, the City of Vienna has adopted a charter, drafted with input from refugees and asylum seekers and containing the basic principles for good neighbourly relations in the city, including respect for the abovementioned values.

These good practices, in any case, need to go beyond mere formalistic requirements.

From this point of view, some integration courses, such as those offered in Belgium by the Flemish integration system or by different CSOs throughout the country, include modules dedicated to intercultural exchanges and civic education on the laws and values of the host country.

Some projects specifically designed by refugees for newly arrived asylum seekers intend to overcome the barriers between the different cultures. In Belgium for example, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers supports a pilot project, run by Afghan volunteers from the NGO *Humanitarian Welfare Association*, that aims to educate Afghans in refugee centres on gender equality.





SOCIAL INCLUSION

The research identified a number of initiatives in the different countries aimed at supporting social inclusion between refugees and the host community.

Since 2012, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which provides language and other services to help integrate asylum seekers and migrants into Austrian society, has managed an initiative called TOGETHER:AUSTRIA. This programme asks successful migrants—so-called *Integration Ambassadors*—to visit schools, clubs, and associations to help young people with a migrant or refugee background recognise education as an opportunity and to avail themselves of the many career options Austria has to offer them. It is intended to showcase role models for young people who are in the process of integrating into Austrian society and, through them, highlight that educational opportunities offer everyone the possibility to achieve their goals and participate in society.

Another example is *Peer Youth*, a subproject of an EU-funded initiative run by the City of Vienna that aims to prepare groups of refugee and/or immigrant youth to engage with peers from their neighbourhood, particularly on issues related to integration. Another association - *Zebra* - provides assistance to access the labour market and connects refugees with the local community in Graz through close cooperation with municipalities and other stakeholders.

In Denmark, some municipalities recruit older or former refugees to serve as mentors who train newly arrived individuals to act as intercultural bridges between newcomers, the authorities, and the general public. In order to avoid the creation of ghettos, the Danish government requires refugees to remain in the municipality to which they have been assigned for three years

in order to receive state integration benefits. This seems effective in prompting refugees to integrate into Danish society. Surveys by the Justice Ministry²⁵ have demonstrated that following initial misgivings, most refugees settle in quickly, enjoy living in the area where they have been assigned and manage to integrate successfully.

In March 2016, Sweden approved a law requiring all municipalities to settle asylum seekers to free up capacity within the reception system. Prior to this, it was optional for municipalities to settle asylum seekers. This resulted in several municipalities taking in a minimal number of refugees, which led to problems associated with high concentrations of individuals in certain areas.

At the civil society level, Swedish NGOs undertake a number of local initiatives that aim to integrate refugees into local societies through volunteering. One example is *Hej Främling! (Hello Stranger!)* in Jämtland County, which organises outdoor excursions and physical exercise activities for refugees and their families. These initiatives generally have a high level of participation.

In Belgium, *DUO for a JOB, Refugees Got Talent* and *Our House Project* are worth mentioning for the integration initiatives they promote between refugees and the host society. Furthermore, *Convivial* organises workshops for Belgian schools and other groups in which the historical and humanitarian dimensions of refugeeism are presented from different angles. Our research found a similar initiative in the Netherlands undertaken by *Humanity House* under the auspices of the *Dutch Red Cross*. In Germany and France, we also met representatives of the organisation *SINGA*, which undertakes critical work bringing together refugees and

²⁵Information provided by Justice Ministry officials, 29 March 2017.



HEJ FRÄMLING! (HELLO STRANGER!) IN JÄMTLAND COUNTY (SWEDEN), WHICH ORGANISES OUTDOOR EXCURSIONS AND PHYSICAL EXERCISE ACTIVITIES FOR REFUGEES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

local communities. These kinds of activities are crucial for dispelling myths, fears and general misconceptions regarding refugees.

In Germany, a number of municipalities have created structures to teach the local population about refugee-related issues. One example comes from the city of Lübeck, in Schleswig-Holstein, which has pioneered the so-called “*Lübeck method*” This is a public relations and information campaign that aims to include the public in planning and decision-making related to accommodating refugees in their communities. Another initiative comes from the city of Worms, in Rhineland-Palatinate, where

regular roundtable discussions bring together both supporters and opponents of Germany’s refugee policy with a view to engaging the community in productive debate on the issue.

At the civil society level, several initiatives and programmes address intercultural interaction between refugees and local communities via cultural, musical and similar activities. *Start with a Friend* is one example of an NGO active in this area. Founded in Berlin in 2014, the initiative is currently active in 15 cities, linking refugees to locals and offering newcomers access to mainstream society.



KEY SUPPORT SERVICES

It is crucial that each newcomer receives information about asylum procedures, how to find essential goods, overcome common challenges, identify options for obtaining social aid and how to find a job. We identified a number of official and volunteer-based organisations offering these services, although often with a lack of overall coordination.

The *Start Vienna* programme and the *We Answer* website (weanswer.eu), created in Paris, are two examples of potential good practices that provide basic information regarding how to start life in these cities.

In Germany, a partnership between public actors has created the *Ankommen smartphone app* to help refugees navigate the labyrinth of German asylum and integration rules and regulations, as well as understand the basics of adapting to daily life in Germany.

In Belgium, asylum seekers enjoy the right to individual guidance from a social worker. This is meant to inform asylum seekers of their social rights, the rules of the reception centres and the asylum procedure, as well as provide assistance with any critical individual circumstances.

Several CSOs in all the countries examined provide administrative guidance to asylum seekers and inform them of their rights and duties. For instance, a Berlin-based CSO founded by social workers, lawyers, and students called *Angehört* explains the process of applying for asylum and helps applicants prepare for their interview at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). In Belgium, organisations such as *Caritas*, *Ciré*

and *Convivial* help asylum seekers and refugees with legislative and administrative hurdles and provide assistance with daily life necessities, both during the asylum process and afterward. France has similar efforts led by *SINGA France* and *Syrians&FriendsParis*.

One of the most vulnerable categories of people in need of specific services are unaccompanied minors. In Sweden, local authorities are recruiting retired individuals to work with unaccompanied refugee minors to address the shortage of mentoring and teaching staff there. This is significant because in 2015, more than 35,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in Sweden—half of the total number of children who came to the country.

Stichting Nidos is a Dutch organisation providing guidance and support to unaccompanied minor asylum seekers—the first European organisation to do so. One does not need refugee status to have a Nidos guardian. The organisation is also responsible for the *Reception and Living in Families (RLF)* project, in which children under 15 years of age are placed with reception families. Nidos recruits families of the same ethnicity and culture of the asylum seekers who have been in the Netherlands for at least two years. Children who have been granted refugee status will be integrated into the community in which they live and Nidos is responsible for them until they turn 18. Having professional guardians educated in child protection and caring for children in family-based surroundings can be considered good practices that should be replicated in all European countries.



HOUSING

Refugees say that finding available and affordable housing is the greatest challenge they face—and one that is exacerbated by housing shortages, high rents and landlords' lack of willingness to rent to them.

In the Netherlands, the State provides refugees with social housing and each municipality is required to house a certain number of refugees. In Belgium, where the State supports refugees economically but does not offer them

accommodation, *Caritas* and *Convivial* have built a network of “*propriétaires solidaires*” (“sympathetic landlords”) willing to rent to refugees and act as intermediaries between the two groups. In France, we encountered *QuickBed*, a management tool that helps asylum seekers and refugees find accommodation. It also is useful for dispersing newcomers throughout the country without placing too much pressure on any one region.





LANGUAGE AND WORK

Developing language skills and finding skills-relevant and skills-appropriate work are among the most critical challenges refugees face. In all countries surveyed, language is, to varying degrees, part of the integration package. All countries also have programmes, courses, web platforms and opportunities for professional inclusion at the initiative of both central governments and CSOs.

Many governments surveyed for this research support initiatives to facilitate refugees' access to the labour market. Asylum seekers are usually allowed to apply for a work permit within a number of months (between four and nine) after submitting a claim. Some governments have conducted skills- and education-mapping exercises to determine if asylum seekers and refugees live in areas where their skills are needed.

In Austria, the Public Employment Service launched the *Competency Check*, a programme which assesses refugees' qualifications and prior work experience in order to determine their suitability for specific jobs and match them with prospective employers who have specific needs.

In Sweden, the government has undertaken a number of measures to provide support to non-Swedish labour market entrants. These include subsidised jobs and internships, where a company receives an 80 percent subsidy for the newly arrived individual's salary, the so-called *Step-in Job* programme, as well as complementary education and work placement programmes administered by the Public Employment Service. The government works with social partners and other agencies to fast-track newly arrived individuals into the labour market. This involves education, training and internships in areas that have a high demand for labour. The first fast-track scheme took place in September 2015 and focused on chefs; since then, it has been adopted for a number of other professions, including doctors, nurses, painters,

decorators and entrepreneurs, among others. The Swedish government also created the *100 Club/Sweden Together* in 2015, which allows the Public Employment Service to offer support to large companies that wish to help integrate newly arrived individuals while strengthening their own workforce. The objective is for each company to employ or offer an internship to at least 100 new arrivals within three years.

Providing volunteer opportunities to asylum seekers and refugees as a form of aid is a widely implemented good practice in all of the countries analysed, even if it presents some critical issues. In particular, it should be emphasised that if governments encourage CSOs to intervene in the asylum process, they must carry out constant checks and evaluations on the quality of benefits provided.

We also identified a number of NGOs that help refugees search for a job. *Zebra*, in the Austrian city of Graz, undertakes significant efforts to provide refugees with immediate information and assistance to accelerate their integration in the labour market. This includes an accelerated qualification recognition process and cooperation with the Association for the Promotion of Labour and Employment (FAB) to identify the qualifications, work experience and training refugees need to access certain jobs.

In Denmark, we encountered a volunteer-based organisation called *Venligboerne (Kind Neighbours)* that has more than 90 Facebook groups based in different districts, towns and cities in Denmark and abroad. Its 150,000 or so members and refugees widely praise it as being one of the country's most accessible support networks for newcomers. For many, it offers the first tangible opportunity to participate in the labour market and receive practical information on different domains. A similar initiative is the French group *Action Emploi Réfugiés*, an NGO that launched a project aiming to connect refugees looking for work with employers prepared to recruit refugees.



In Belgium, an interesting model is found in *DUO for a JOB*, an NGO that has developed a mentoring system between experienced locals and newcomers looking for a job. In addition to helping refugees navigate the labour market, the initiative has the added benefit of bringing them together with the host population.

There are also initiatives that exist in specific sectors. The *Danish Society of Engineers (IDA)* for example, has undertaken its own training courses for Syrian refugees who were engineers at home. This course, which includes language and on-the-job professional training, is remunerated. Similar courses exist for doctors

who train on the job and learn the language. In Belgium, the *NGO Refugees Got Talent* offers refugee artists the chance to practice their art, meet other artists and share their work.

Furthermore, providing volunteer opportunities to asylum seekers and refugees as a form of aid is a widely implemented good practice in all of the countries analysed, even if it presents some critical issues. In particular, it should be emphasised that if governments encourage CSOs to intervene in the asylum process, they must carry out constant checks and evaluations on the quality of benefits provided.

VULNERABILITIES AND AREAS OF CONCERN

Many asylum seekers have experienced psychological trauma as a result of fleeing civil war and conflict in their home countries. Those interviewed for this research were no exception. Syrians including Farhad told us about the horrors of living in Deir al-Zour under Daesh; Sayid was kidnapped in the streets by Bashar al-Assad's secret police for participating in a peaceful demonstration, tortured for fifteen days and then freed after his father paid a bribe. Majd too fled to Europe with his brother after being tortured by the Assad regime. Rajab conveyed the horror of viewing dead children and seeing sick people wandering abandoned and dying in the streets. Most governments do not offer psychological trauma therapy as standard, although it can be made available if requested. In some of the countries surveyed, government funding is being reduced for this service.

Another source of frustration is the loss of social status, which is regularly cited as profoundly stressful and demotivating. Many refugees interviewed said they accept un- or semiskilled work even if they had been skilled workers/professionals before seeking asylum in Europe. This occurs for a number of reasons: many of the refugees surveyed said they had accepted lower-skilled work than they had previously performed in order to facilitate family reunification; almost all refugees said their diplomas were not recognised as being on a par with similar European degrees. On the other hand, European labour markets are highly skilled and automated, providing few opportunities for un- or semiskilled asylum seekers and refugees.

Finding affordable accommodation is also an obvious priority for refugees, though this is not an easy task. In Sweden, a number of cities, including Malmö, are experiencing a housing shortage for refugees. Similarly, France suffers

from a chronic housing shortage. In Belgium, refugees and CSOs complained about housing shortages, combined with some landlords' reluctance to rent to refugees.

The situation is complicated by the fact that certain countries do not enact policies of redistribution. This leads to high concentrations of newcomers in poor neighbourhoods, which place strain on local social services. It also discourages integration with the host community, while heralding the oppression of certain refugees or immigrants by others.

In Belgium, there is no plan for how to distribute asylum seekers and refugees, who tend to concentrate in Brussels and Flanders. Similarly, distribution in France is unequal, with concentration in the Paris/Île-de-France region. Until very recently, Sweden's lack of distribution policies encouraged concentration and ghettoisation in certain neighbourhoods, particularly in Malmö and Stockholm. In these neighbourhoods, tension, criminality and clashes with police have been reported. In the Netherlands, despite a quota system in each municipality, refugees complained about the concentration of migrants and refugees in cities like Amsterdam or Utrecht. This closed, highly concentrated environment reportedly makes it more difficult for refugees to pass the language and integration exams.

Life in reception centres and communal housing is reported as yet another hardship asylum seekers and refugees endure. Through the course of this research, it became clear that overcrowded reception centres, a lack of pre-integration activities for asylum seekers (such as language classes and civic orientation courses to relieve boredom) and forced cohabitation of people from different backgrounds have led to regular incidents of violence in most countries surveyed. These issues often were due to sectarian tensions, for religious and political reasons. Marwan explained that in Europe one

can find pro-regime Syrians, anti-Assad Syrians and a grey zone of non-affiliated individuals just escaping the war. They are all generally cautious and reluctant to interact with one another. Amina added another element: with the exception of big cities, Syrians are used to interacting only with their local community; arriving in a European reception centre with others of different culture, religion, language and ethnicity, is often a source of shock and tension.

Some refugees reported finding high levels of conservatism in the centres, including pressure to adopt certain mores and clothing styles, as well as harassment against women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and those who consume alcohol. Refugees complained about how the authorities barely enforce security and mutual respect in communal housing.

For their part, authorities have had to manage complex and sensitive situations. On the one hand, they have often had to deal with pressure from right-wing political parties to crack down on the number of refugees received into their countries. On the other, they are confronted with attempts by various Islamist groups to call any government intervention to prevent radicalisation as being anti-Muslim or infringing on religious freedoms.

In fact, a number of refugees reported that they had encountered Islamist organisations seeking to act as intermediaries between them and various government agencies or had even appointed themselves to represent certain refugee communities. The refugees said they had rejected these groups because of their overly conservative narratives and non-inclusive approach to integration. A number said that they also resented the fact that government institutions had delegated their responsibilities toward refugees to politico-religious groups interested in taking over certain tasks. Many interviewees felt that those groups did not represent their interests or needs, did not appear to have the same respect for liberal-democratic values and/or seemed corrupt and ineffective.

All countries we examined experienced problems with conservative religious organisations and individuals. For instance, in the Netherlands, some refugees expressed concern that, in some Arabic and Quranic schools, women had been verbally abused for not wearing the veil. They also asked that authorities refrain from assuming that religious organisations were automatically entitled to address the spiritual needs of Muslims in the Netherlands. In Sweden, a number of civil society respondents criticised the government for allowing conservative religious organisations to take over tasks related to refugees' material needs or education, including preschool education for young refugee children; these were funded by the government but lacked any oversight. In France, respondents reported obscure money-raising schemes in halal butcher shops that were allegedly for relief purposes but outside any state control.

Furthermore, it was reported to us that Islamist actors in Germany and Belgium have been proselytising among newly arrived refugees, particularly aiming their efforts at young people and unaccompanied minors who represent those categories most at risk for radicalisation and recruitment by terrorists. In Austria, France and Germany, we heard examples of high levels of intolerance and conservatism evident in some mosques. Aisha told us that she and other Syrians she knows stopped going to the mosque out of fear of encountering hard-core Salafists. Some refugees even said they are too afraid to pass by these mosques. We also heard that some women refugees feared their own menfolk in Europe when they did not wear the hijab and behaved more like Western women—in fact, they feared repercussions from their own community more than they did acts of racism or anti-Muslim sentiments. In all countries, respondents reported some attempts to indoctrinate refugees into radical ideologies and mores and to discourage them from integrating or learning the local language. Harassment of those who do not want to conform is also a recurring phenomenon, especially in neighbourhoods that have high concentrations of immigrants, as in the case of Asal, an Afghan refugee in Belgium who

was harassed by compatriots in the street for wearing Western-style clothes. Amjad, Rami and Adnan, also told us they were harassed for consuming alcohol in public.

Interviews with international crime and terrorism experts reveal that some actors involved in supporting the refugee integration process don't always report signs of radicalisation emerging from some of the individuals met. This happens for various reasons, including lack of intercultural awareness and relevant training in spotting signs of radicalisation, fear that their reports may have serious negative repercussions for those individuals and/or a lack of feedback from the authorities regarding their reports.

On the other hand, even in those cases where asylum seekers are clearly proven to be radical and a threat to the country, they cannot be expelled if their identity remains unknown or if they would be sent back to a country where their life is at risk (based on the principle of "nonrefoulement"). Indeed, a problem common to all EU Member States is that of the so-called "undesirable and unreturnable migrants." In those cases, the rejected asylum seeker enters into a kind of limbo of uncertainty and diminished rights, posing a risk to national security. Recent attacks in Ansbach (24 July 2016), Berlin (19 December 2016), and Hamburg (28 July 2017) may ring alarm bells regarding this issue; indeed, in each case the attackers were asylum seekers whose claims had been rejected.

Government respondents from many countries downplayed the risk posed by "fake refugees" because of what is considered to be good cooperation between the security services and asylum agencies and systems in place to detect inconsistencies in asylum seekers' applications. However, it is possible for individuals to present a plausible case and be considered genuine. European authorities interviewed admitted

that in many cases, they did not know who was who among the refugee flows arriving in 2015. The numbers were so vast that many countries' security services were overwhelmed and unable to vet those arriving. National authorities also were not inclined to share information about individuals who had passed through the entry ports in Europe with their law enforcement colleagues in neighbouring countries.

Given the various vulnerabilities and numerous areas of concern, it is critical to find a balance between security and humanitarian responsibilities.

1.3 CONCLUSIONS

In conducting this research, it became clear that considerable challenges relating to the 2015 migration crisis persist at both the local and international levels. Failure to integrate refugees into the socioeconomic and sociocultural fabric of liberal democratic society is bringing about political and social polarisation, creating voids that are being filled by extremist forces of different hues and colours that, in a vicious circle, increase polarisation and fragmentation. These problems are deeply rooted within European societies and cannot be fixed with ad-hoc policies or quick solutions.

Indeed, our key findings, both in terms of good and bad practices, reveal that the consequences of the crisis will continue to be felt until they are properly addressed through long-term policies aimed at socioeconomic and cultural integration. Investing in policies that facilitate access to the labour market, housing and values-based training will lay the groundwork for a more equal, diverse and safer Europe. An increased commitment by states to support services and NGOs will further aid the integration process. At the same time, in order to protect refugees from being exposed to radical ideologies and values, states must adopt more robust procedures for vetting organisations that provide delegated services.

There is but a small window of opportunity to devise and implement sound and effective integration policies relevant in particular to Syrian refugees, whether they remain in Europe temporarily—which is increasingly unlikely, as there is no end in sight to the Syrian civil war—or indefinitely. This will require political courage, foresight and intellectual honesty from all political actors and civil society players. There must be greater awareness that failing to fully integrate refugees and migrants into European society, regardless of whether they stay 6 months or 10 years, will have greater long-term economic and social costs than the expense of comprehensive integration programmes.

The international community has failed to protect the Syrian people from their own government and other forces over the past six years; now that hundreds of thousands of refugees are in need of the protection of many EU Member States, we have a duty of care and a responsibility to protect them from exploitation, predation and attack while preserving the values upon which our liberal democratic societies are built.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FOLLOWING ARE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU AND NATIONAL POLICYMAKERS AS A WHOLE; SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ARE INCLUDED IN THE SEVEN COUNTRY PROFILES IN THE ANNEXES.

- Protect asylum seekers and refugees from violence, harassment, and exploitation from extremists of all hues and colours.
- Be aware of the potential for clashes to occur among asylum seekers housed in reception centres, as a result of different cultural, religious, ethno-national and political backgrounds/allegiances.
- Organise compulsory values-based training for refugees. Ensure that trainers are properly vetted and qualified to understand the cultural background of those whom they instruct.
- Engage directly with refugees and assess their needs and requirements to facilitate their successful integration into European societies.
- Be wary of accepting the credentials of any organisation that claims to represent particular groups or religious faiths. Be particularly careful of encouraging certain groups to approach and interact with refugees if those groups promote a politico-religious ideology.
- Be cognisant of the psychological trauma experienced by refugees, who have been forced to flee their homes because of civil war and local and regional conflict; just because the evidence is not visible, it does not mean it is non-existent. Consider providing specialised psychological support, including trauma therapy, particularly for children, who are the most vulnerable and risk becoming a “lost generation.”
- Ensure that any pastoral care for refugees is provided by vetted religious instructors who are trained to conform to the principles of liberal democracy.
- Ensure that rigorous qualitative assessment, evaluation monitoring and inspection systems are in place for any organisations that provide religious-based education services for refugee children and unaccompanied minors. Establish transparent and compulsory disclosure rules for such organisations’ funding sources and make any public funding contingent on a binding commitment to support liberal-democratic values.
- Governments should redistribute newcomers so as to avoid creating ghettos and educate newcomers about the benefits of remaining in their assigned catchment areas while undergoing the integration process. Refugees themselves report that they do not appreciate living in ghettos and avoiding such environments helps them integrate much more quickly. Public authorities could consider linking social benefits to the refugees’ remaining in their assigned areas.

- ➔ Begin the process of mapping asylum seekers' previous education and skills as early as possible. Consider providing state-funded language classes at the earliest possible stage to generate a sense of investment in integrating into the host country, should their application be successful.
- ➔ Prepare measures that facilitate less-complicated labour market access for both asylum seekers and refugees. As a 2017 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/International Labour Organization (ILO)/World Food Programme (WFP) report outlined, jobs make the difference.²⁶
- ➔ Provide incentives for business interests to invest in mentoring programmes, skills mapping, language classes and/or traineeships for asylum seekers and refugees.
- ➔ Invest in vocational training initiatives for refugees.
- ➔ Establish rigorous qualitative assessment and evaluation of the activities, service provision and funding sources of private contractors governments hire to provide services to refugees.

²⁶United Nations Development Programme, the International Labour Organization, and the World Food Programme, "Jobs Make the Difference, Expanding Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities," 5 April 2017, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/compressed_12312313123UNDP_JOR_FINAL_Low%2520Res.pdf.



PART II: COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY ASSESSMENTS




2.1 AUSTRIA

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Austria received more than 85,000 applications for asylum, which was more than three times the number received the previous year. As with most other EU countries, the relevant government departments were largely unprepared for the influx. Located on the refugee route from eastern and southern Europe, a frontier state to the richer European countries, Austria was a destination of choice for many asylum seekers.

Most asylum seekers who arrive in Austria go to Vienna, where the relevant government ministries and agencies are located and primarily where asylum applications are processed. Asylum seekers are distributed across the country and required to remain in the locations where they are sent. However, most refugees tend to move to Vienna after their applications are accepted.

A total of 34 interviews were carried out in Austria, 13 of which were conducted with refugees in a workshop. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	20
 Government officials	7
 Civil society representatives	7

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Numerous civil society and other actors are involved in integrating refugees in Austria, though our research was unable to identify many examples of outreach to refugees outside of Vienna.

The situation in Austria is complicated by the large number of stakeholders involved in the asylum and post-recognition processes. Many stakeholders have overlapping responsibilities and experience what several respondents described as a lack of overall coordination with the relevant government ministries and agencies. Coupled with the capacity issue, this somewhat complicates the extrapolation of information on national asylum policies both pre- and post-recognition.

Asylum seekers who arrived as part of the 2015 influx came mainly from Afghanistan; they comprised 29 percent of applications, which was slightly more than Syrians and Iraqis (28 percent and 15 percent of applications, respectively). The refugees we interviewed—all from Syria—said they chose Austria to be reunited with families and friends who had arrived earlier. A few expressed the determination to build new lives and integrate into Austrian society, while others said they had misgivings about having chosen the country. In retrospect, they said, they would have preferred Germany, Sweden, or the Netherlands, where they believe the situation for Syrian refugees is more favourable.

Among the reasons cited for their dissatisfaction with life in Austria were a sense of isolation, scant state support, the feeling that private service providers determine their destinies, a lack of inadequate integration courses and the sense that authorities do not support their education or employment ambitions. They also said that family reunification procedures are overly bureaucratic with lengthy application processing times, which engenders a sense of desperation, and that authorities were unsupportive of their desire to be proactive in self-starter associations. Finally, they noted the rise of certain Islamic organisations, whose vast

funds permitted them to organise large-scale religious-themed activities for refugees, despite the fact that most refugees did not support or wish to be associated with these.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Socioeconomic issues

- Refugees interviewed said they found the process of integration in Austria challenging. A number of respondents highlighted specific problems, such as accessing the appropriate level of language classes and integration courses, where refugees of different ages and cultural and educational backgrounds were frequently grouped together. Because of this lack of coordination, most refugees interviewed felt that they were not benefitting from the integration services offered by the government.
- The refugees said that integration service providers (teachers, trainers, and instructors) were underqualified in many cases, lacking the required level of knowledge, understanding and general information to deliver an effective course.
- The government's *Competence Check* initiative²⁷ to help prepare refugees to enter the Austrian labour market is considered a good practice and acknowledged as such by all refugees interviewed. However, two issues were raised as problematic. First, officials did not follow up to evaluate the performance of the actors supporting the refugees. Second, the Public Employment Service (AMS), responsible for referring refugees to companies and institutions as part of the initiative, did not receive feedback from private sector actors; such feedback should be recorded in the refugees' files.
- Refugees highlighted that the most significant hurdle they faced was a lack of recognition of their educational and professional qualifications. Most said they had difficulty accessing even the most basic information on how to engage in the mutual recognition process and generally were referred to a particular organisation for support. The

requirements for recognition are complex, particularly for specialisations such as medicine and engineering. A specialised university is required to test and accept the applicant's qualifications, a process that may take up to six months. This university has sole discretion on deciding the applicant's qualification status. Difficulties arise with language in particular, as the applicant needs to demonstrate his or her ability to follow course work in German. Another hurdle is to find a university that will accept the application, which is the refugee's responsibility. Financial obstacles, as well as the short time frame, place additional pressure on individuals. Most interviewed for this research had had negative experiences in this context.

- A number of refugees felt that the AMS tended to direct them toward any available job without expending sufficient effort to match skills, education, or previous work experience with the individuals' requests and expectations.

Housing and related issues

- Many refugees had aspirations to live in "closed" communities in Vienna, including the so-called 10th and 15th districts known for their concentration of immigrants and refugees, because of what they described as "failed" integration policies that make them feel they are unable to progress in society. Another reason cited for wanting to live in such communities is that refugees can maintain more easily their religious and cultural traditions, such as women walking freely and comfortably wearing the hijab, women staying at home to take care of children and children being educated and raised according to Islamic, Arabic and other traditions.

GOOD PRACTICES

Reception of asylum seekers

- *Start Vienna*. A voluntary programme begun in 2008 by the City of Vienna, *Start Vienna* offers basic information in 24 languages on how newcomers can begin life in Vienna. The programme's features pertain to education, work qualification recognition,

the intricacies of the national health-care and insurance system and issues related to women and children, schools and education and more. Since 2015, the City of Vienna has targeted asylum seekers with specific information related to their status and their needs to help them get their bearings on the different aspects of daily life in Vienna. As a continuation of this effort, officials are planning to establish a comprehensive database for asylum seekers in which information on their qualifications, language level, work experience etc. is gathered. This database will include qualification recognition and be transferred to the AMS as soon as the person gets refugee or subsidiary protection.

- *Youth College*. Part of the City of Vienna's "Integration from Day 1" policy and undertaken in cooperation with the AMS, this initiative targets asylum seeking youth, 15–21 years old, who arrive in Vienna and are not subject to compulsory schooling. The programme's two-year curriculum includes language and vocational training, as well as professional or university education, if necessary. The initiative's objective is to avoid requiring these individuals to wait until they get their status to participate in integration activities. When they are awarded their status, they can continue with the programme and not have to change educational institutions and local administrative authorities. The City of Vienna and AMS share equally the project's costs.

Sociocultural issues

- *Vienna Charter*. The Vienna Charter contains the basic principles for good neighbourly relations in the city of Vienna. It addresses the main values of western liberal democracies: gender equality, support for individual freedoms, government by democracy, freedom of religion, among other issues. The city authorities have involved refugees and asylum seekers in the discussion about the Charter, placing advertisements in the city's asylum reception centres inviting participants to attend discussion groups. This aims to overcome

the sensitivity of addressing certain issues and introduce different cultural considerations and backgrounds under the umbrella of the Charter's content. The discussions are conducted largely in the refugees' languages, based on the participating target groups and include moderators who come from a migrant background. Attendance and interaction has been described as "significant," and city officials are studying how to establish fixed venues for such meetings so those in private accommodations also can participate. These discussions are intended to provide the refugees, as well as all other non-Viennese, with the impression of solidarity, without a compulsory or obligatory component that usually accompanies integration activities. Refugee support for this is a result of the consensual atmosphere in which the Charter was initially discussed. It is not the authorities' intention to force refugees to attend the meetings or to sign the Charter.

Socioeconomic issues

- *Competence Check*. A pilot project initiated by the AMS and launched in 2015, *Competence Check* assesses refugees' qualifications and prior work experience to determine their suitability for specific jobs and matches them with prospective employers. The project is considered a success and has been extended to cover a larger number of refugees.
- *Zebra*. This is an NGO that connects refugees with the local community in the city of Graz through close cooperation with the municipalities and other stakeholders. It also undertakes activities that provide refugees with immediate information and assistance to hasten their integration into the labour market. This includes an accelerated qualification recognition process and cooperation with the Association for the Promotion of Labour and Employment (FAB) to identify the qualifications, work experience and training a refugee needs to access certain jobs.

²⁷European Commission, "'Competence Check' for the Vocational Integration of Refugees (Kompetenzcheck)," September 2017, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=18263&langId=en>.

Social Cohesion

- *TOGETHER:AUSTRIA*. Since 2012, the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which provides language and other services to help integrate asylum seekers and migrants into Austrian society, has managed an initiative called *TOGETHER:AUSTRIA*. The programme asks successful migrants—so-called Integration Ambassadors—to visit schools, clubs, and associations under an initiative called Your Chance! in order to help motivate young people with a migrant or refugee background to recognise education as an opportunity and make use of the many career options Austria has to offer them. It is intended to showcase role models for young people who are in the process of integrating into Austrian society and, through them, highlight that educational opportunities offer everyone the possibility to achieve their goals and participate in society.²⁸
- *Peer Youth*. This is a subproject of an EU-funded initiative run by the City of Vienna that aims to prepare groups of refugee and/or immigrant youth to engage with peers from their neighbourhood and community, particularly on issues related to integration.

Monitoring and evaluation of integration policies and practices

- In 2011, the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA) established an Experts' Council on Integration. Comprised of academics and scholars, the council is responsible for evaluating the State's integration policies. The council reviews and monitors the implementation of plans and activities in light of developments regarding the numbers of refugees arriving, their gender, their age and other factors. It then provides BMEIA with recommendations to amend or improve certain practices and policies and publishes its findings annually. Although the council does not directly monitor the activities as implemented, it is a unique step that demonstrated its effectiveness when it led to discussing—and shortly thereafter, establishing—a national law specifically for integration that includes targeting asylum seekers in addition to refugees.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Refugees said that, although the activities and projects of certain Islamic organisations are presented as supportive of broader integration policy, in reality they feature mainstream religiously conservative narratives and aim to recruit additional supporters.
- Refugees expressed frustration with the increasing and visible influence of Islamist organisations in terms of their ability to organise high-profile, well-attended religious events and activities and secure the support of several other organisations, including some government ones. When refugees themselves try to organise smaller-scale, secular integration activities, they encounter a lack of interest and support from authorities and/or other organisations.
- Refugees reported concern regarding the conservative religious content that is part of the curriculum at newly established Islamic preschools.
- A number of refugees said that compulsory integration into Austrian society was incompatible with their religious beliefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Administration

- The State should establish national and provincial information offices that have staff qualified to guide refugees through the complex administrative procedures involved in social integration.
- Austria needs a harmonised system that clarifies, connects and centralises the roles and responsibilities of relevant bodies and authorities involved in the integration process.

Integration courses

- Orientation courses that feature values-based content should be obligatory for refugees. Mother language instruction could be considered a part of integration courses, although care needs to be taken to ensure that young refugees in particular are not exposed to their native language for the majority of the time. Instructors and teachers must be trained

and qualified to understand the cultural background of those whom they instruct, or possess a similar background.

- Language courses (along with other classes) should be organised according to participants' educational, age and cultural differences.
- Rigorous mechanisms with which to monitor the quality of integration activities, as well as the providers of these services, should be implemented.
- Consideration should be given to introducing a system whereby refugees can learn the language as they work. This could be accomplished by allocating a fixed number of hours of a compulsory language course to be spent in any form of relevant work—not necessarily paid—and, where possible, linked to the refugee's experience and background.
- Voluntary work should be recommended. This would have two benefits: first, it would improve direct communication and interaction with Austrians and others; second, it would help individuals focus on learning the professional language needed to fully function in the workplace.

Social cohesion

- Authorities should focus on informing and raising the public's awareness of refugees. This should include, as a priority, intercultural events and activities to introduce Austrians to refugees and help put a human face on the new arrivals. Such activities and events could be permanent and/or recurring.
 - Values-based topics should be discussed widely and feature the involvement of reliable, integrated individuals from among refugee and immigrant communities.
 - Authorities should invest in mentoring experienced and well-educated refugee youth and deploy them to places like schools where they can implement integration activities among other young refugees.
- Authorities should engage with organisations and support activities that have been initiated by refugees and immigrant communities. The State should diversify its contacts and engagement with organisations that demonstrate a concrete commitment to supporting integration based on liberal democratic values and should avoid relying on entities, including politico-religious ones, that claim to represent all refugees or communities of individuals.
 - Authorities should be cautious of engaging solely with conservative religious organisations that use well-established networks to implement projects as part of the integration process.

Labour market

- The State could adopt the Competence Check initiative, launched by the AMS in 2015, as a permanent measure. The initiative could be combined with obligatory monitoring of refugees' experience as they work, as well as other feedback regarding results that are currently lacking. The initiative should also include the qualification recognition process.
- The qualification recognition procedures are burdensome and should be reviewed and amended. The relevant authorities should centralise the process and involve key actors, such as universities.
- Support for vocational and professional training should be given more attention and resources. Many refugees who are registered as unemployed and have a working proficiency in German should be considered for such training.
- Authorities could encourage employers and larger companies to facilitate refugees' access to training programmes and jobs.
- Authorities should support refugees' self-employment initiatives, for example by providing tax exemptions for limited periods, making available micro-grants and other credit options with which to launch small

²⁸"The Austrian Integration Fund," Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und auswärtige Angelegenheiten (BMEIA), accessed 24 October 2017, <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/integration/the-austrian-integration-fund/>.

businesses, simplifying the procedures for start-ups and maintaining social welfare support until a refugee can be independent.

- A national programme should be established in which CSOs and NGOs help connect refugees with local mentors who can introduce them to the labour market, make contact with the local community and practice the local language.
- NGOs that focus on linking refugees with job opportunities in other regions of the country need support. Build their capacity to identify opportunities for refugees who have the skills to move and establish themselves in these regions.

Housing




- Landlords and real estate agencies should be made aware of the need to consider refugees who require accommodation as a legitimate demographic that is subject to standard, non-discriminatory renting procedures.
- Authorities should engage in awareness-raising and motivational programmes to encourage refugees to remain and establish their lives in the locations in which they have been allocated housing.

2.2 BELGIUM

INTRODUCTION

To reflect Belgium's political and administrative structures, we carried out a proportionally higher number of interviews in relation to the country's size and its refugee population. The survey examined the situation in Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region (Région de Bruxelles-Capitale), which is itself organised into Dutch- and French-speaking administrative communities.

A total of 40 interviews were carried out in Belgium. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	17
 Government officials	10
 Civil society representatives	13

The refugees interviewed were primarily from Syria but also from Africa, Russia and Georgia. It is relevant to note that, in Flanders, refugee and integration programmes are managed and implemented by agencies and officials of the regional government, whereas in Wallonia programmes are implemented by CSOs appointed through tender procedures. This distinction is reflected accordingly in the figures provided above.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The first element of complexity when it comes to Belgium is the fact that Flanders and Wallonia have fundamentally different systems and rules for processing refugee applications and in devising integration programmes: there are different obligations, curricula and implementation processes. The overall approach of Flanders and Wallonia is also reflected in the respective Dutch- and French-speaking communities within the Brussels Capital Region.

These differences are the result of two philosophically distinct approaches. Flanders promotes the notion that the host community's values and culture need to be at the centre

of any integration effort. In Wallonia, there is wariness that integration programmes may be perceived as a form of assimilation; the priority is thus on ensuring that refugees can become self-sufficient. To this end, programmes focus on providing language courses and creating job opportunities.

A case in point is the fact that, in Wallonia, migrants or refugees who are employed are exempt from the obligation to attend integration courses. As an additional example of this philosophical/political approach, in Flanders, participants are deemed to have passed the integration course when they reach a specific level of knowledge or performance, whereas in Wallonia, participation itself is considered a success.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Integration programmes and support structures/socioeconomic issues

- There is a lack of structured integration programmes for asylum seekers. Furthermore, they can request a work permit only four months after filing their application and even then, very few seem to take advantage of this opportunity.
- All interviewees complained about overly bureaucratic rules and regulations and a lack of information on how to navigate the process. This issue was highlighted by most refugees, who stress it is not easy to learn and manage the intricacies of the different processes, offices and NGOs involved. Practitioners also are well aware of this difficulty and stress that part of their job is to match needs with service providers or to fill in information gaps.
- Part of the problem is that services are fragmented among a plethora of different offices that are answerable to different authorities. This situation is underscored by the absence of a holistic, coordinated structure.
- Job availability is also a problem. According to civil society actors, there is a lack of information and communication about job

availability, which official structures such as employment offices are unable to provide.

- Unemployment issues are not solely about lack of availability, however. A CSO that works to facilitate the employment of people of foreign origin highlighted the unwillingness of some applicants to compromise, especially in case of value clashes. For instance, they reported cases of Muslim women refusing a job that would require them to remove their hijab or work in a canteen where one would be required to serve pork.
- Some civil society actors highlighted that many employers are less disposed to employ refugees than locals.
- The process of recognising educational and work qualifications is described by all actors as highly onerous for a variety of reasons, including lack of documentation and stringent requirements that qualifications completed abroad be equal to those in Belgium. This means that highly qualified refugees often need to adapt by taking lower-level jobs. Although some vocational training and exams are based on practical demonstrations of competence, civil society actors and refugees stressed that this practice should be expanded.
- Recent reforms are poised to improve the situation in the future, however. In 2016, regulations were changed with a view towards simplifying the procedures, acknowledging at least the general educational level (for example, Master's level), if not the specific qualification.

Housing and related issues

- Some refugees complained about certain aspects of life in collective reception centres: overcrowded rooms, long lines for bathrooms, lack of privacy, insufficient food, young and old people sharing rooms, older women placed in higher bunk beds and a general lack of consideration for basic needs. Others described more positive experiences and did not encounter such issues.
- Some tensions exist in refugee centres, mainly due to cultural, political and religious issues.

Among the more controversial topics are the various opinions on the Syrian revolution and, in some cases, there is mistrust and hostility between Christians and Muslims. Most of these tensions are ascribed to the difficulties of living in an artificial environment, but some refugees also report episodes of Islamist intolerance (for example, regarding alcohol consumption, mistreatment of Christians and so-called “bad Muslims,” etc.). Some refugees reported that authorities do not appear to deal harshly with offenders on these issues.

- Officially recognised refugees receive an allocation to pay their rent, but they have difficulty finding accommodation in the private housing market. Landlords are often described as being unwilling to rent to refugees for various reasons (a lack of trust regarding payments, racism, fear of “the other”...). For this reason, certain organisations have devised a network of “sympathetic landlords” who are willing to rent to refugees.
- Difficulty finding accommodation affects the integration process, as officially recognised refugees must find housing in order to register at the municipality; this is necessary to receive social assistance from the local public social services centre, *Centre Public d'Action Sociale* (CPAS).
- Refugee communities tend to be concentrated in disadvantaged neighbourhoods where housing is less expensive and easier to find. This creates two problems: ghettoisation and overstretched local services. One civil society actor said that in certain districts, the CPAS does not have sufficient resources to guarantee adequate assistance, while others have an abundance of resources.
- Refugees themselves complain about the ghettos in certain neighbourhoods. They say that relations with other immigrants are not always harmonious and call for greater dispersion of individuals.

Sociocultural issues

- Neither refugees nor other interviewees reported significant racist incidents. However, a common sense of mistrust, hostility and fear towards refugees, often prompted by

ignorance, did emerge. One civil society actor defined it as a sort of “resistance to the unknown.” These feelings seem to be dispelled when there is more direct contact between the host community and refugees, who generally report that Belgians treat them kindly.

- There were differing accounts regarding interaction between refugees and Belgian authorities. Most refugees reported fair treatment, whether at the police station, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, or in refugee camps; however, some did report that officials had spoken harshly to them.
- Opinions on integration courses (particularly the civic education element) tend to vary significantly among first-line practitioners. Most refugees, on the other hand, consider them very important and are generally happy with the approach/content; they even say the courses should be organised in the refugee centres. However, some observed that an individual’s background (previous experience, educational level, etc.) is not sufficiently taken into consideration. Interestingly, this is also the view of implementing organisations and integration experts. One barrier is language, particularly when courses are not delivered in the person’s mother tongue.
- Regarding culture and values, all first-line practitioners acknowledge the existence of certain cultural barriers between Western law and morals and many refugees’ mind-set. Invariably, homosexuality is highlighted as the most problematic issue,²⁹ along with religion, women’s rights, and freedom of expression. Issues that raise problems are freedom of speech (blasphemy against religion), the headscarf ban in certain schools or workplaces and the challenge to well-established Western norms within the family regarding women’s empowerment.³⁰
- Although most refugees interviewed declared they do not have a personal issue with Belgian values and laws (other than some finding certain aspects “bizarre”), most also acknowledged that not everybody is keen to respect them. This raises tensions not only with the host community but also among refugees themselves: for instance, one reported being intimidated for consuming alcohol and another for not wearing the veil and saying she was an atheist. One woman said she was harassed on the street by men from her home country. There also were indirect accounts of homosexual, transsexual and female asylum seekers and refugees being harassed by their peers in refugee centres and elsewhere.
- Several actors reported occasional tension between refugees. These may be within one community or between different communities. Concerning the former, one major source of mistrust is the political affiliation, or lack thereof, of Syrian refugees. Cultural and religious problems also exist, as explained in other parts of this report.

GOOD PRACTICES

Reception of asylum seekers

- In spite of the refugee crisis, which in 2015 significantly strained the capacity of Belgian reception centres and processes, the State reacted relatively quickly by increasing human and material resources to the extent that there are now more host venues than needed for asylum seekers.³¹
- All asylum seekers are entitled to health care and individual social protection.
- Child asylum seekers are enrolled in compulsory education immediately upon arriving in Belgium.
- Several projects are financed by the State to guarantee that asylum seekers who need it are provided with mental health support.

²⁹One social worker attested to the fact that she had had to confront a refugee who believed it was quite normal that homosexuals be executed.

³⁰For instance, in Belgium, it is women who are the recipients of the social aid for the entire family.

³¹As of 15 March 2017, Belgium had 25,296 reception places in total with 21,452 individuals accommodated in the network (occupation rate of 85 percent). Information courtesy of Fedasil.

Sociocultural issues

- In 2016, new legislation was adopted requiring newcomers to sign a declaration binding them to respect the democratic and human rights principles on which Belgium's laws are based. Among other things, they are required to respect the freedom and integrity of the individual and the right to freedom of expression, association, religion (including atheism and the right to reject religion) and sexual orientation. Furthermore, signatories must declare they "understand and accept" equality between men and women in rights and duties. We consider the declaration to be a positive initial step because it outlines non-negotiable principles that constitute the essence of a liberal-democratic society. These must be respected, if not shared, by all inhabitants to guarantee peaceful coexistence. Focusing on culture, values, and morals, with discussions that address sensitive topics such as secularism, gender equality, sexual orientation etc, are fundamental parts of integration.
- Intercultural debates facilitated by experts that involve refugees, immigrants, and Belgians are a positive instrument that certain organisations implement to raise awareness on all sides.
- Certain CSOs work with official integration programmes to remove cultural barriers. For instance, the abovementioned *Humanitarian Welfare Association*, supported by Fedasil launched a pilot project in late 2017 run by Afghan operators to educate Afghan nationals in refugee centres on gender equality. This may be considered a good practice to expand further.
- One organisation reported that funds from the municipality have been made available for radicalisation prevention.
- As far as gender, religion, nationality and ethnicity are concerned, orientation classes feature mixed attendance. This is a good practice because it prepares refugees for the diversity they will encounter in Belgian society.

- Some initiatives such as those undertaken by *Duo for a Job*, *Refugees Got Talent*, *Our House Project* and *Convivial* focus on raising the local population's awareness about the reality of refugees' lives and encouraging integration. This is a good practice, although these initiatives are not systematic and need further improvement, according to several interviewees.

Integration courses

- Where present, compulsory integration courses (Flanders, Wallonia) are a good practice that serve both the interests of refugees and the host society. Integration courses provide valuable insight into the multifaceted aspects of life in Western society. Refugees would be unable to access all the necessary information and handle bureaucratic intricacies without such guidance.
- In certain cases, integration classes are tailored to the specific audience, which is selected via an initial test based on educational levels, background, and cognitive skills. Furthermore, depending on the class and the trainer's assessment in the initial period, programmes can be flexible. This constitutes a good practice, so long as such classes do not turn into a "multispeed integration" process wherein certain refugees become more integrated than others.
- Evaluation based on more than mere attendance is a good practice to build upon.

Socioeconomic issues

- Perspective employers and employment agencies often are involved in the integration courses. This is a good practice, particularly when combined with individual work plans devised by refugees with the support of their social worker.
- The idea of *Caritas* and *Convivial* to build a network of "sympathetic landlords" ("*propriétaires solidaires*") willing to rent to refugees may be considered a good practice, as it helps people find accommodation without placing more pressure on the State.

- Civil society initiatives such as *Duo for a Job, Ciré, Refugees Got Talent et al.*, that provide mentoring... that provide mentoring to refugees in the sector of their interest (arts, jobs, education) are positive for both the refugee's integration into the labour market and the host society.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Some instances of intolerance from more traditional or conservative refugees emerged. This is problematic for societal harmony at large, but represents *in primis* a direct threat to more liberal refugees.
- Some refugees complained about conservative attitudes and behaviour among North African communities in certain neighbourhoods. Two interviewees went so far to say that they "... don't feel safe" living there. A civil society actor reported that although some refugees are happy to find a familiar environment, others feel trapped in an oppressive reality that they desperately want to leave behind. Some refugees even considered the Belgian system "weak" when it comes to imposing respect for local laws and values.
- A number of refugees reported being proselytised by radical individuals, particularly during the 2015 housing shortage that forced many of them into emergency shelters at Parc Maximilien in Brussels.³² Proselytising that targets asylum seekers and refugees was confirmed by a civil society actor who has dealt with immigrant communities in different capacities. There also were reports of attempts to isolate individual refugees from Belgian society and discourage them from mixing or learning the language.
- According to one civil society actor, refugees experience a great deal of pressure, stress and frustration. They must not only deal with the stress (and often trauma) of what they endured in their home country and during their escape, but also with the loss of social status and economic wealth, mistreatment,

disorientation, social hardship and more. This can fuel frustration that may reach a breaking point and it creates a vulnerability that may be exploited by radicals.

- Authorities have not indicated whether extremist recruitment occurs among asylum seekers and refugees, nor whether any of those seeking asylum were doing so as a possible pretext for undertaking potential terrorist activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Integration courses

- The State should ensure that the "declaration" made by newcomers is understood as the lowest common denominator of coexistence in liberal-democratic society. With this aim, all integration courses should include an explanation and discussion of European culture, values and laws that is taught by intercultural experts.
- Orientation activities on rights, duties, key laws, local language basics and obligations of daily life should be conducted in a systematic way before a refugee's official status is recognised.
- Integration systems should be harmonised among and within the three regions. Avoid "multispeed integration" processes.
- Multiple services and programmes need more structured, long-term coordination, as they are currently too fragmented and were conceived and financed with a short-term view.
- Integration courses should be tailored to different groups in a language they can master. This should not imply that such courses have different standards; rather, it should constitute a way to reach the same goals by appropriate means. Civic training courses should take into account refugees' educational and cultural backgrounds and not shy away from stressing certain issues with groups and individuals who are particularly

³²Parc Maximilien, Le Village Pour Réfugiés s'organise Tant Bien Que Mal," Radio-Télévision Belge de la Fédération, 16 September 2015, https://www.rtbf.be/info/dossier/drames-de-la-migration-les-candidats-refugies-meurent-aux-portes-de-l-europe/detail_parc-maximilien-le-village-pour-refugies-s-organise-tant-bien-que-mal?id=9081582.

distant and/or hostile to Western values and laws. Both practitioners and refugees highlighted that it is not effective to mix highly educated newcomers from big cities and more developed countries with semiliterate or illiterate individuals from rural and more conservative areas.

- Integration centres should continue to develop pilot projects that focus on preventing radicalisation as part of the integration package.
- The Flemish approach to language teaching, based on an obligation to achieve specific results, may be considered a good practice. Wallonia should ensure that all newcomers achieve, in a reasonably short time frame, a level of competency in French that is sufficient for their full integration into society and the labour market.
- The system of individual evaluation should be improved; more than mere attendance should be required to pass an integration course. A final test to assess the level of understanding, as well as a system of periodic follow-up, should also be considered.³³
- Qualitative public monitoring on outsourced integration activities and their results should be improved.

Organisational issues

- Improve the clarity and quality of information at every level. Public services should make administrative procedures more accessible and clear from an early stage (for example, with asylum seekers in camps).
- A coordination office should be set up to track all public and private activities, organisations and services that serve refugees. This structure should provide information and guidance to navigate the complex institutional system that exists in Belgium.

Housing and labour market

- Those authorities responsible should help CSOs expand the network of proprietors willing to rent to refugees. Smartphone applications, websites and social media could advertise these.

- The State should focus on avoiding the creation of ghettos and dispersing refugees and asylum seekers according to established objective criteria, including available housing, social and other state services, potential job availability, etc.
- Public offices should use new technologies (smartphone applications, websites and social media) in a more systematic way to match demand and supply in the labour market and coordinate existing but less well-developed private endeavours.
- Whenever possible, the formal recognition of diplomas should be replaced with practical tests aimed at proving acquired competence.

Social cohesion

- Expand activities among the local population that aim to raise awareness about who refugees are, where they come from and what their aspirations are, among other issues.
- Increase interaction between refugees and host communities. The State should organise (or support NGOs in organising) activities that involve people from both categories. This would help counter stereotypes and prejudices on both sides, foster integration and encourage refugees to share in, rather than simply learn, the host society's values, habits and behaviour. As one refugee said, "Tell, and it will go to the mind. Share, and it will go to the heart."

2.3 DENMARK




INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Danish government has taken significant steps to curb the flow of refugees by making Denmark appear a less-attractive destination. These practices include seizing cash (above € 1,340)³⁴ and individual items valued at more than that amount, initiating an application fee for permanent residence seekers,³⁵ increasing language and employment requirements for permanent residence applicants,³⁶ lengthening the waiting period for family reunification for some classes of refugees from one year to three³⁷ and restricting the ability of asylum seekers to work. In addition, in January 2016, Denmark reintroduced random check controls on its border with Germany.³⁸ While the government has made efforts to make Denmark more restrictive and less appealing to refugees, many Danish citizens and the CSO community have worked to find ways to make refugees feel welcome.

A specific Ministry of Immigration and Integration was established in connection with the change of government in November 2016. The ministry is composed of the Department on Integration, the Department on Immigrants and the Department on Management.

The Danish system of integration focuses on a labour-oriented approach in which the role of the municipalities is very important. Economic incentives are granted to the municipality in the form of rewarding regional job centres when a migrant enters the labour market.³⁹

A total of 17 interviews were conducted in Denmark. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	5
 Government officials	6
 Civil society representatives	6

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Denmark received 20,825 asylum applications in 2015, which was an increase of more than 40 percent over 2014, when it received 14,535 applications. In 2016, the number of applications dramatically dropped to 6,055.⁴⁰

The majority of first-time asylum applicants in 2015 were Syrian (5,253). Other significant application requests came from Eritrea (1,818). In 2016, there were 2,151 applications from Iran and 1,938 from Afghanistan.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Socioeconomic issues

- Refugees need a high degree of proficiency in the Danish language to access the labour market.
- Refugees rarely find opportunities that match their work experience and education. A free service helps assess third-country diplomas, but most are not equivalent to Danish standards and the labour market is too advanced, automated and highly skilled for almost all asylum seekers.

³³ One representative from an integration centre expressed regret that officials don't see the results of their teaching.

³⁴ "Here's What Denmark's New Immigration Bill Means for You," AFP/The Local, 26 January 2016, <https://www.thelocal.dk/20160126/heres-how-denmarks-new-immigration-bill-will-affect-you>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Jon Kvist, ESPN, "Recent Danish Migration and Integration Policies," European Commission, 2016, <https://www.google.it/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKewjopefV-d3VAhWFB5oKHa9-BD0QFggtMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FblobServlet%3FdocId%3D15320%26langId%3Den&usq=AFQjCNHyMNIXt10yAATR3IH479NabCCzKg>.

³⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Migration Policy Debates," 8 January 2017, <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-13.pdf>

⁴⁰ Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 4 March 2016.

- According to refugees, they and economic migrants from the European Union and other countries are treated similarly. Many refugees described educational, language, psychological, trauma and familial barriers to work that are not always recognised by the authorities. There needs to be better understanding that refugees need particular support in this regard.
- Remaining in reception camps for extended periods without gainful employment or regular activities can negatively impact asylum seekers. These camps are often located in rural areas, with few ways individuals can occupy their time. Individuals have no access to language or integration courses while awaiting a decision on their application for asylum.

HOUSING AND RELATED ISSUES

- Refugees are dispersed in different municipalities around the country, though the State groups people from the same country to create cohesive communities. The challenge is that most of the refugees prefer to settle in larger municipalities, where they believe the prospects for employment are better.
- Due to what is perceived to be an unwelcoming atmosphere created by the government, some CSOs/integration experts asserted that the current policy of distributing refugees all over the country and requiring them to remain in these communities for at least three years does not necessarily have a positive impact. Government surveys on this practice, however, reveal a different view from the refugees themselves.
- One of the biggest challenges for refugees raised by CSOs/integration experts is being housed in centres in isolated, rural places.
- The local municipality is responsible for providing refugees with a stipend for daily incidental purchases. Until 2015, the allowance was equal to that enjoyed by Danish citizens; this has since been reduced, however. Refugees may obtain the full allowance after living for a number of years in Denmark.

Sociocultural integration

- Regular incidents of conflict and clashes are reported in asylum centres on religious, political and ethnic issues, particularly among Syrians.
- Refugees have expressed misgivings about the content of integration courses due to the teaching methods. They say the courses indirectly communicate the idea that “what we teach you are the right values only.”
- One particularly unwelcome aspect of the 2014 tightening of the asylum laws was that some of the Syrian refugees could not apply for family reunification for three years. This was highlighted as causing distress.
- Municipalities contract private sector organisations to provide integration, language and other services to refugees; there is little evaluation of the provision or quality of the services’ content.
- There is a lack of communication among different actors involved in refugee integration endeavours. A number of CSOs/integration experts interviewed said that this squanders the positive work that takes place during the initial period of receiving, assessing and registering an asylum seeker.
- Certain CSOs/integration experts and refugees interviewed said that the authorities often ignore the need to address the local public with awareness-raising activities to reduce tensions between the two. Any existing outreach programmes and activities are usually organised by the NGO sector and aim to bring both communities together. According to a number of respondents, the authorities do not support these efforts.

GOOD PRACTICES

Sociocultural integration

- Certain municipalities use older refugees as cultural ambassadors. They help train new mentors and act as an intercultural bridge.
- Any CSO working with the City of Copenhagen is obliged to sign a “civic pledge” to uphold liberal democratic values and freedoms.

- The government requires refugees to remain in one municipality for three years with the idea that this helps them integrate into Danish society. Surveys by the Justice Ministry⁴¹ reveals that following initial misgivings, many refugees come to like the municipality where they have been assigned and integrate well into the local community. Most refugees complete the compulsory language courses after a year or two and if they can find accommodation elsewhere, they may move, provided they have completed the language courses. They often don't need to stay in one area for the three-year period.
- A number of volunteer initiatives encourage the local population to interact with the newly arrived. One is *Trampoline House* in Copenhagen, established in 2010, which provides counselling and support services for asylum seekers and refugees. It is different from other initiatives in that it is a user-driven culture house, run on equal terms rather than managed top-down as many other organisations tend to be. Asylum seekers both teach and learn. One CSO representative interviewed considered it an effective integration initiative, helping people belong rather than providing direct assistance in finding work.⁴²
- The Danish group *Venligboerne* (Kind Neighbours) is another, much larger volunteer-based organisation that has 150,000 members across the country and 41,000 in Copenhagen alone.⁴³ It also has more than 90 Facebook groups based in different districts, towns, and cities in the country and abroad. The group, widely praised by refugees, provides newcomers with support in finding jobs, affordable services, furniture, clothing and more.⁴⁴

Socioeconomic integration

- Each municipality makes a plan for the refugees in its care, which involves 37 hours of language classes and internships with a wage subsidy so the newly arrived can access the labour market. Cooperation with local businesses is key. The refugees interviewed were pleased with the fact that housing is provided by the municipality.
- According to one CSO representative, a positive development is that certain organisations (such as the *Danish Society of Engineers* (IDA)) undertake their own training courses—in this case for Syrian engineers—which includes on-the-spot language and professional training and is remunerated.
- Similar courses are available for doctors who train on the job and learn the language. It takes three years to complete this programme, which also is remunerated.
- The *Danish Refugee Council* now has shifted its focus from language to employment to give refugees the opportunity to work even before mastering Danish. This has increased the number of refugees employed; the downside is that only unskilled jobs are readily available.

Language

- Refugees need to be proficient in Danish to access the labour market; as such, the government makes language classes compulsory. Classes are free of charge, and the government even pays for refugees' transportation costs to attend them.
- Up to five years of language classes are available for refugees; this differs from other countries such as Sweden, where classes have a limited number of hours and must be taken in a specific time frame. For traumatised individuals, Denmark's open-ended approach is considered a good practice—it involves 12 hours of classes per week. Most students

⁴¹Information provided by the Justice Ministry, 29 March 2017.

⁴²To learn more about Trampoline House, visit <https://www.trampolinehouse.dk/>.

⁴³The Refugee House Copenhagen is an example of one such initiative.

⁴⁴Nicol, "Humanitarianism Still Exists in Today's Denmark," *Global Europeans* (blog), 17 March 2016, <http://globaleuropeans.com/humanitarianism-still-exists-in-todays-denmark/>.

finish within a year or two and do not need to access the five-year option.

Health

- The State pays for trauma therapy for refugees who have suffered torture. This is a good practice insofar as many refugees suffer from trauma—both psychological and physical—which can be a significant barrier to integration. However, the government has begun to reduce the funding available for this service.
- The State also supports organisations that work with youth from traumatised families who may be at risk of radicalisation.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- Finding qualified, official translators is a challenge for the government. Refugees and refugee support organisations discussed incidents of intentional mistranslation. A number of refugees said that during interviews, translators were not sufficiently proficient. In addition, translators do not necessarily speak the same language as asylum seekers. Discussions between asylum seekers and officials in migration services are not recorded, so there is no documented evidence of mistranslation that could be used in a legal case, if such were to be contemplated.
- Some CSO representatives discussed the existence of right-wing extremism, citing a number of firebomb attacks on shelters, the use of Nazi graffiti and in one case a Molotov cocktail that was thrown at an Afghan asylum seeker.
- The general tone in the debate about refugees and foreigners has become increasingly negative in Denmark. There is a regular focus on the negative aspects and challenges of refugees emanating from a number of politicians and media organisations.
- There is the perception that hate speech is becoming more prevalent in Denmark, both from right-wing nationalists and Islamic radicals. Both have built their narratives on demonising “the other.” One example of the latter is the extremist group Hizb ut-Tahrir. The

wider proliferation of hate speech in Denmark has not yet progressed into systematic use of violence, although there is a concern among CSO representatives that Denmark will eventually reach this point. Local associations from the refugee community have sought to counter extreme narratives, but they lack support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sociocultural integration

- Increase support for NGOs’ and CSOs’ existing initiatives and programmes that bring refugees and Danish people together.
- Encourage authorities to include raising public awareness about refugees in the integration policy. This should include steps that involve the local community in activities that target and engage refugees.
- Introduce programmes to all municipalities that recruit older or former refugees to serve as mentors who train new refugees to act as intercultural bridges among newcomers, the authorities and the general public.

Socioeconomic integration

- Create an accessible system whereby refugees can be assessed on their knowledge of a particular profession or trade.
- Prioritise professional and vocational training for refugees, especially for those who are unable to overcome the educational and skill requirements to access the highly automated Danish labour market.
- Encourage additional programmes to be added to integration courses that involve refugees in work to help overcome the language barrier and accelerate refugees’ readiness to participate in the workforce.

Structural/organisational

- Consider reviewing family reunification policies in light of the reported negative effects on refugees’ efforts to integrate.
- Specially train interpreters at official asylum reception facilities to address language, dialectic, cultural, religious and other sensitive issues.

- The requirements to receive permanent residency status were changed in 2016 and 2017, so that education alone no longer counts: having a job is now critical to receiving the status. This has the effect that many refugees take unskilled jobs rather than following their aspirations to finish their education. Being enrolled in the Danish education system should be accepted as on a par with having a full-time job to obtain a permanent residence permit.
- Improve coordination for all official bodies that engage with asylum seekers and refugees to facilitate communication and the transfer of information between and among these actors.
- Ensure that information collected during the initial assessment of asylum seekers' applications is sent to all relevant actors during later stages.

Language and education

- Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the performance of public and private sector service providers, particularly in the case of language and integration schools.
- Design more effective training programmes on how to approach intercultural issues for teachers and instructors of integration courses.
- Enhance the values-based content of integration courses and make the process more interactive and practical rather than didactic.

Housing

- Create programmes for individuals settled in rural areas to both enhance the local community's understanding and acceptance of them and also help asylum seekers culturally adapt.
- Minimise the period of stay for asylum seekers in asylum camps/centres.

Vulnerabilities




- Improve relations with migrant/refugee associations to enhance trust and communication with their communities to increase their willingness to integrate. Address and counter conservative narratives that encourage separation from mainstream society.
- Work with trusted grassroots organisations and individuals who have a proven track record of engaging with refugee communities and vulnerable groups and who can support integration efforts.
- Be wary of supporting religious organisations that claim to represent entire cultural and religious communities.
- Undertake qualitative assessments of language, integration and other refugee support services provided by private sector actors.

2.4 FRANCE

INTRODUCTION

In 2015, France received more than 70,000 first-time asylum applications, 11,725 more than the previous year. France was unprepared for this unprecedented influx, not least because of inadequate accommodation capacity at reception centres that was typified by the situation near Calais. There, thousands of individuals lived in squalid, makeshift camps called “the Jungle,” which was eventually closed down. Almost all Syrian and Iraqi refugees were granted asylum in 2015. Most asylum seekers to France were concentrated in the Paris, Île-de-France region.

A total of 26 interviews were carried out in France. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	15
 Government officials	6
 Civil society representatives	5

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The highest number of asylum applications in France in 2016 came from Sudan, followed by Albania, Haiti, Afghanistan and Syria. The number of Syrians seeking asylum has increased over the years—from 458 applications in 2012 to 3,562 in 2016.

Albanian asylum seekers represent a high number of applicants despite the fact that Albania is included in France’s list of safe countries. While the authorities can fast track manifestly unfounded applications, the process requires considerable resources to provide social and economic support for the high numbers of individuals who in most cases have no chance of being awarded refugee status.

During the 2015 influx, many asylum seekers were forced to contend with new legislation that came into force on 2nd November 2015. Complex application procedures, a lack of clarity on required documentation, as well as the need to attend numerous geographically dispersed government offices were among the

challenges asylum seekers cited. NGOs and CSOs play a key role in providing information to asylum seekers and fostering the integration process, as the government delegates most of the responsibility to them.

All the refugees and asylum seekers interviewed came from Syria. The majority arrived in France with a long-stay visa that allowed them to remain in the country for more than three months in order to request a residence permit that would allow them to live in France for a specified period. In some cases, individuals had applied for visas from different embassies in Lebanon and Turkey; it so happened that the French embassy granted the visa more quickly than any other country.

In other cases, Syrians arrived in France with a student visa and sought asylum when the document expired. Almost all of those interviewed had a family member or friend living in France. Those with no family ties in France sought asylum in other European countries, but their claims were rejected because of the Dublin Regulation, as they had already received a visa from the French embassy.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

General

- A number of asylum seekers said that during the application process, the only interlocutors they met were translators, who sometimes understood only classical Arabic, rather than Syrian Arabic and had a rudimentary understanding of their cultural backgrounds and aspirations. They said they needed mediators who had more appreciation for their traditions, culture and needs.
- During the 2015 influx, the government was operating different application processes, which affected the asylum seekers interviewed for this research. These included relocation and reinstallation as well as the evacuation of Calais and Grande-Synthe camps.
- The most significant challenges facing asylum seekers in France remains the critical lack of suitable housing and the fact that normally

they are not permitted to work. Even when they receive refugee status or subsidiary protection, finding work remains beyond the reach of most, mainly due to insufficient knowledge of the language.

Socioeconomic issues

- Administrative procedures for asylum applications are lengthy and complex. Access to information and support services for filing applications has been described as largely inaccessible to asylum seekers, which leads to frustration.
- There are few asylum seeker support organisations outside Paris. This is one of the factors that contributes to the high concentration of refugees in Paris.
- Asylum seekers may apply for a work permit within nine months of filing their application. However, it remains difficult to find a job because they generally lack language proficiency. During the period waiting for status recognition, asylum seekers may attend language or university courses as “outsiders” but are not permitted to work, which places financial strain on them.
- Refugees testify that it is difficult to find employment opportunities in line with their educational qualifications. Diplomas/degrees from their home countries often are not accepted.⁴⁶
- Despite new legislation that established a service to support refugee access to the labour market, individuals generally register

with the *Pôle Emploi*,⁴⁷ a state agency that supports job seekers, like any other citizen. As refugees face significantly more difficulties in finding work, the *Pôle Emploi* is not particularly well equipped to support them.

- The language barrier is described as one of the most significant challenges for refugees in France.

Accommodation shortages

- Government resources are insufficient to deal with the number of applications for public housing, as well as a chronic shortage of housing for asylum seekers/refugees. Given this, many asylum seekers are sent to hotels. In 2016, this cost the French exchequer approximately €154 million.⁴⁸
- The distribution of refugees in France is unequal, with some areas of high concentration (for example, in the Paris/Île-de-France region).
- Generally, refugees do not accept being allocated to housing in small villages. They complain of poor employment prospects and significantly reduced or absent support from CSOs and expect to experience increased racial abuse or attacks (particularly in the case of veiled women), among others.

Social and cultural issues

- Asylum seekers find it challenging to engage with officials in the local government offices and many said they have not been treated with courtesy or respect. CSOs, asylum

⁴⁶To find out more about this topic, see “Questions-Réponses ‘Infos Réfugiés’—Diplôme/Permis de Conduire,” France Terre d’Asile, accessed 24th October 2017, <http://www.france-terre-asile.org/refugiés-col-280/infos-migrants/refugiés>: “In France, holders of foreign qualifications have access to most jobs. The assessment of the diploma and the professional level belongs solely to the employer. However, in order to give a better visibility to the curriculum carried out abroad and to reassure employers, it is possible to request the issue of a certificate of recognition of level of studies with the ENIC-NARIC France centre (www.ciep.fr) determined by foreign diploma, period of study or training obtained abroad. When a diploma can be compared with a level of training of the French nomenclature, the centre establishes a certificate of comparability. Where a diploma cannot be compared with a level of training in the French nomenclature, it establishes—if the examination of the file permits—a certificate of recognition of training studies abroad. The issuance of an attestation is 70 euros, except for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection who benefit from the service for free. Warning: The certificate issued by ENIC-NARIC France is not an equivalence, obtaining this certificate is not compulsory to look for a job and its taking into account by the employer is not guaranteed.”

⁴⁷The *Pôle Emploi* is a public administrative institution whose main task is to offer a single contact person to all jobseekers to ensure that they return to the labour market quickly and in the best possible conditions.

⁴⁸“Les Bonnes Affaires des Hôtels de la Misère,” *Le Parisien Magazine*, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.leparisien.fr/magazine/grand-angle/les-bonnes-affaires-des-hotels-de-la-misere-13-01-2016-5447029.php>.

seekers and refugees attest to examples of misleading information and discourteous and occasionally racist behaviour from officials.

- The two-day civic orientation course provided by the State for refugees is insufficient.
- A number of individuals reported a lack of psychological support from the State. Certain stakeholders indicated their asylum seekers and refugees need psychological support for a variety of reasons.
- The State does not provide a differentiated approach based on country of origin when allocating asylum seekers to reception centres upon their arrival, or when carrying out sociocultural integration measures. Asylum seekers are all grouped together regardless of their cultural background, educational qualifications, employment skills and experiences.
- Individuals reported incidents of aggressive behaviour within refugee communities because of different political/religious affiliations.

GOOD PRACTICES

CSO initiatives

- Many NGOs in Paris support asylum seekers and refugees. One such group is *Action Emploi Réfugiés* in Paris, which has been described as very helpful in providing employment-related support. After setting up a Facebook group, this NGO launched a platform in June 2016 aiming to connect refugees looking for work and employers prepared to recruit a refugee.
- *QuickBed* is a management tool that provides a central database of all accommodation resources so asylum seekers and refugees can be dispersed evenly across the country, without placing too much pressure on any one region.
- The *We Answer* website (weanswer.eu), a project by a network of volunteers, provides a hotline that asylum seekers and refugees can call with basic queries about life in France.
- *SINGA France* is an NGO working to improve relations between refugees and locals. In 2017, it organised more than 150 outreach events

across the country. They also work to place refugees in shared accommodations with French citizens to promote integration, provide language tutoring and offer professional mentoring for refugees seeking to enter the labour market.⁴⁹

- *Syrians&FriendsParis* is an NGO that provides assistance to asylum seekers with administrative procedures and advice on social and economic difficulties they might encounter while filing their application or with the integration process itself. It was originally established in 2012 to deliver food aid to conflict zones. The organisation built a school in the north of Syria for 600 children at the Ameth refugee camp and are currently using their knowledge and experience to help Syrian refugees in France.
- *France Terre d'Asile* focuses on legal aspects and administrative practices related to asylum law. Their objectives include implementing information campaigns, intervening with public and private sector organisations on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees, and helping them navigate French bureaucracy. *France Terre d'Asile* manages more than 5,000 accommodation sites in 34 reception centres (centres d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile, or CADAs) for asylum seekers across 10 regions. Parliamentary committees frequently seek their expertise when developing legislation in this area.

Government initiatives

- The *contrat d'intégration républicaine* (CIR) commits foreign nationals to "... respect the principles and values of French society and the Republic and to follow seriously and diligently the training prescribed." It makes civic orientation/European values courses compulsory for all signatories and, if necessary, requires French-language training to acquire proficiency in reading, writing and speaking.
- The government has introduced a new system that brings together local, national and global organisations to provide access to key services, such as permanent housing, for one year. As part of the CIR, this service

offers support to learn French, helps refugees access medical care, provides education for children, gives professional and job-related support and shares advice for daily life in France.⁵⁰

- On 10 August 2016, the French government, through the Interministerial Delegation for housing and access to housing (Délégation interministérielle à l'hébergement et à l'accès au logement - DIHAL) invited organisations to submit projects that would mobilise civil society and increase reception facilities for refugees; 11 NGO projects were selected.⁵¹ It is important to monitor the results of these projects and measure their impact on specific refugee groups' social integration.
- A booklet of information, translated into several languages, is available at the French Ministry of the Interior website (<http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr>) and also at the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) website (<http://www.ofii.fr>). It helps newcomers understand procedures and other basic information.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- The French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) decides whether to grant protected status to asylum seekers. One of the most common problems OFPRA deals with is identifying asylum seekers. Because asylum seekers have a greater chance of being granted protection if they are from an unsafe country, some pretend to be from somewhere other than their country of origin.⁵²
- Closely related to the issue of establishing identity is the management of the so-called "undesirable and unreturnable migrants."

Article L521-1 of the Code of Entry and Stay of Aliens in the French territory (CESEDA) states that "expulsion can be ordered if the stay of an alien in France poses a serious threat to public policy."⁵³ When a migrant poses a threat to the community and proves to be "non-returnable" (for example, because of his identity cannot be established), the authorities have two options: order a detention or a home custody. In both cases, the migrant falls into legal limbo with uncertain and reduced individual rights.⁵⁴ Such situations can pose a serious threat to national security.

- Some respondents indicated that there are many refugees in Paris who do not like living in France and expect to return to Syria. They speak only Arabic and do not adapt to the local culture.
- One interviewee told us that Syrians often have trouble with Salafists, particularly in Villejuif, a commune in the southern suburbs of Paris. The most common example relates to the consumption of alcohol; if a Syrian man goes to a take-away restaurant where Salafists are and he buys alcohol, Salafists treat him aggressively. According to this respondent, it is very difficult for authorities to handle these issues because, on the one hand, Salafists try to make the case that Muslims are not able to practise their religion in France and, if the authorities intervene, this could strengthen Salafists' argument; on the other, there is strong pressure for firm intervention by far-right forces.
- Some Syrian refugees reported being nervous about becoming involved in practices lacking transparency as when, for example, they go to halal butchers where they are regularly asked for money, the purpose for which is unclear.

⁴⁹ In this regard, see "Qu'est—ce que SINGA?" SINGA France, accessed 24 October 2017, <https://singaproject.files.wordpress.com/2015/08/singa-e28094-brochure.pdf>.

⁵⁰ "Logement des Réfugiés," Gouvernement.fr, accessed on 24 October 2017, <http://www.gouvernement.fr/logement-des-refugies>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Interview conducted at OFPRA, Paris, 23 April 2017.

⁵³ Chloé Peronnet, "Undesirable and Unreturnable Migrants under French Law: Between Legal Uncertainty and Legal Limbo," *Refugee Survey Quarterly* (January 2017) 36 (1): 35–60.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

- Some refugees provided examples of intolerance and conservatism in mosques, including at the Grande Mosquée de Paris, but did not say if they had reported the issue.
- There were cases highlighted in which Syrians support political and humanitarian activism in France against the Assad regime, but those who favour the regime work to disparage them. Some activist refugees say they know that their names have been recorded, which could threaten their lives if they return to Syria. Some no longer attend community events for this reason.
- A government official reported an issue with Yazidis who had been recruited by Da'esh.
- According to some government officials, certain newcomers perceive France's secularism to be an attack on their religious beliefs.
- One CSO representative active in supporting refugees said they had received a number of death threats from anonymous groups because of their work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisational issues

- Offer asylum seekers more clarity on how to navigate the complex asylum application process and access to state support.
- Streamline the Ministry of the Interior's asylum application and asylum-relevant administrative processes.

Integration issues

- Focus more on French language courses beyond the A1 level. (Achieving A2 level—elementary, “ability to deal with simple, straightforward information and to express oneself in familiar contexts”—is one of the conditions for attaining a residence card.)
- Increase learning opportunities for refugees on France's laws, culture, heritage and values.
- Expand and improve awareness-raising activities among the local French population regarding the status of refugees.
- Recognise that different cultures need tailored approaches to understand French values, duties, basic laws and everyday aspects of life; a differentiated approach is needed based on a person's country of origin.
- Provide psychological support for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Ensure Prefecture staff has the appropriate skills to deal properly with asylum seekers and refugees.
- Improve dialogue with the Syrian community about the problems they face relating to intolerance and conservatism in mosques.

Housing and labour market

- Although a national shelter platform⁵⁵ was launched in October 2015 to reduce overcrowding and utilise more “free spaces,” further improvement is needed in the fair dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees across France.
- Relax rules and wait times, particularly those that restrict refugees from accessing employment.
- Help refugees improve their professional skills and provide more information about recognising and converting home country qualifications.
- Implement more effective policies to help refugees access the labour market.

2.5 GERMANY




INTRODUCTION

In 2015 and 2016, Germany received almost 1.2 million applications for asylum. Refugees are identified at all border crossings, as well as within the country at police stations, foreigner's registration offices, communal shelters, or outposts of Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees). Following registration, asylum seekers are distributed to the federal states according to a quota that is calculated annually on the basis of the previous year's fiscal revenue and population numbers.

Due to the large number of refugees entering the country in 2015, Germany instituted its first integration law⁵⁶ in July 2016. The law affects a variety of areas governed by different laws, such as social security statutes, asylum laws and the Central Register of Foreign Nationals. It enacts changes that pertain to asylum and integration measures.

The large number of refugees in Germany, along with the perception that Chancellor Angela Merkel is a leading voice in the European Union advocating for the humane treatment of refugees, has added to Germany's challenging situation. The spectre of right-wing nationalism reared its head in 2015 and many German cities have experienced demonstrations against asylum seekers. Germany has suffered several terror attacks which have exacerbated negative feelings toward refugees in general and Muslim refugees in particular; it has also amplified the voice of right-wing nationalism.

A total of 54 interviews were conducted in Germany, including a workshop in which 18 refugee interviews were conducted. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	38
 Government officials	7
 Civil society representatives	9

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Refugees seeking asylum in Germany have many countries of origin. However, Syria has been the top country of origin in 2014, 2015 and 2016, with nearly 500,000 total applications. Other top countries over the same period include Afghanistan (127,012 applications in 2016), Iraq (96,116 in 2016),⁵⁷ Albania (53,805 in 2015), Kosovo (33,427 in 2015),⁵⁸ Serbia (17,172 in 2014) and Eritrea (13,198 in 2014).⁵⁹

We identified stakeholders in all German federal ministries and agencies involved in the asylum and integration process. To reflect Germany's federal structure, we aimed to expand the report's scope across the federal states and take into account local differences. It must be noted that certain asylum and integration policies vary not just across the different federal states but also within different cities in the same federal state. For this reason, this report cannot claim to be comprehensive in terms of integration practices. Additionally, many CSOs we contacted did not have the capacity to participate in the research.

We used our network to reach out to refugees all over Germany, who then helped coordinate

⁵⁵The platform is led by DIHAL, which commissioned the Public Interest Group—Housing and Social Affairs (HIS-GIP) to be the operator. DIHAL is responsible for coordination and must monitor the implementation of state priorities for housing and access to housing for homeless or people poorly housed.

⁵⁶"Integrationsgesetz," *Bundesgesetzblatt Teil I*, no. 39, accessed 24 October 2017, https://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBI&start=//%255B@attr_id=%27bgbl116s1939.pdf%27%255D#__bgbl___%2F%2F%5B%40attr_id%3D%27bgbl116s1939.pdf%27%5D__1497452120985.

⁵⁷Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2016," December 2016, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201612-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

⁵⁸BAMF, "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2015," December 2015, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201512-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

⁵⁹BAMF, "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2014," December 2014, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201412-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf;jsessionid=5919859B892BC1611004AE2BB3875865.1_cid359?__blob=publicationFile.

further meetings. We met refugees living in Berlin, Mannheim, Neubrandenburg, Frankfurt, Gelsenkirchen, Hanover and Potsdam. Most of the interviews were conducted in person, while some took place via phone or Skype calls. Syrians comprised the majority of refugees interviewed, but we also met Palestinians, Iraqis, one Libyan and one Lebanese refugee. Some of the refugees had established their own organisations for dealing with integration.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Asylum procedure

- There is a major backlog of old cases, which leads to long wait times for applications to be processed.
- Some respondents voiced concern at the fact that the asylum application hearing and subsequent decision on individual cases were not undertaken by the same person on many occasions, meaning that those deciding the fate of individuals had not actually met them in person. Other respondents indicated that officials lacked intercultural competence and the requisite training.
- According to a number of CSOs, asylum seekers lack psychological support.

Sociocultural integration

- One of the main integration challenges asylum seekers and refugees cite is the lack of direct interaction with the German population, due to the fact that refugees often stay for long periods of time in communal accommodation. According to those we interviewed, authorities are only minimally involved in promoting interaction between the local community and newcomers; CSOs mainly undertake this task. This absence of a government-led information campaign means it is largely left to the media to paint a picture of the newcomers in the minds of both the German public and members of the administration. Refugees note that the local population lacks information about the cultural diversity and heterogeneity of those seeking protection and this results in what they perceive as guardedness on behalf of the locals.

- Refugees report that communication with the government is limited to administrative matters. They are at no point included in the design of integration programmes that target them.
- The refugees highlighted the absence of complaint procedures within these institutions or organisations, along with a lack of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms. Such monitoring would be beneficial in terms of, say, improving the quality of integration courses: refugees report that some of the newly contracted schools focus solely on commercial gain. This was revealed through shared stories of malpractice, such as mutual agreements with refugees to reduce their attendance and easing performance requirements rules.
- One CSO respondent noted a particular kind of fear of openly discussing certain ideas with refugees (such as religious issues, individual freedoms, among others), either during integration courses or elsewhere, due to the assumption that they might respond with hostility or avoid the discussion. According to the respondent, this fear prevents open debate, leads to misunderstandings and prevents values from being communicated, which is considered a critical component for successful integration.

Economic issues and bureaucratic hurdles

- Refugees pointed out that too many regulations govern integration policies and accompanying services. Most indicated that there was not enough guidance in terms of administration and integration activities and requirements and that information provided by the German government (regarding preparing to enter the labour market, the local branches of the federal employment agency) is rather formal.
- The challenge of overcoming regulations and getting information from the government leads refugees to seek much of their information from nongovernmental actors, or to exchange personal experiences and knowledge among themselves, which can result in incorrect information.

- According to some interviewees, many employers do not know they can legally hire refugees and many avoid employing them because they lack information about the administrative process. Lack of proficiency in German is one of the main reasons employers reject job applications from refugees.
- In some cases, highly qualified female refugees say that their application was most likely rejected because they wore a hijab.⁶⁰
- Refugees lack knowledge and expertise about Germany's standard job application process, including how to prepare a CV and cover letter.
- Authorities have significantly increased the number of employees in the various sectors that deal with refugees, yet two main issues remain. First, refugees said that new officials lack knowledge of their needs, comprehensive understanding of the asylum procedure's administrative and legal processes and expertise in dealing with psychologically affected individuals. Second, it was noted that because many of these officials are temporarily assigned to their positions, they lack motivation. Most refugees complained about what they perceived as arbitrary decision-making, which they said in turn diminished their own motivation to integrate.
- Officials' explicit use of German (for example, in job centres) to discuss refugees' specific obligations represents a critical obstacle to their ability to access accurate information.

Education

- The obligation to participate in language courses is generally well received among the refugees interviewed for this research. However, they said the BAMF's integration courses focus too much on language and history rather than actual information on integration. Moreover, rules and regulations are taught using an advanced level of German that is difficult for many refugees to understand.
- Course content and teacher performance vary widely from school to school.
- Teachers and instructors generally lack intercultural skills or training to deal with controversial issues such as value systems, behaviour, religion, or politics.
- According to one CSO respondent, language courses are evaluated on the basis of whether participants reach the intended level rather than on the practicality of what they learn.
- Language courses are inflexible and insufficient in terms of quantity and quality. In many cases, due to the limited number of courses offered and available places, refugees must wait long periods to be admitted to the next course level. Refugees cannot receive support for advanced language courses, which is specifically needed if they are to be included/accepted in many job markets, particularly specialised professions like medicine, engineering, etc.
- Refugees of different ages, educational, cultural, religious and geographical backgrounds are taught the same content via the same teaching techniques. This results in a marked reticence toward discussing potentially sensitive issues—cultural, religious, etc.—as well as frustration over being unable to advance quickly because of the class composition.

Housing

- According to some respondents, communal accommodation lacks sufficient space or privacy and there is a shortage of affordable living space in neighbourhoods that have high concentrations of refugees.
- Asylum seekers and some CSOs regularly criticise private contractors commissioned by the authorities to deliver basic security in shelters; respondents complained of the poor quality of service and few if any complaint or monitoring procedures.
- The same companies deliver security in communal shelters, which has led to tensions and allegations of inappropriate treatment, including sexual harassment and racism in some cases.

⁶⁰ European Foundation for Democracy-run workshop, Neubrandenburg, 13 May 2017.

- There is an absence of any official plan or programme to facilitate interaction between communal shelter residents and local communities.
- The lack of access to and interaction with mainstream society is exacerbated by the extended periods of time that refugees are often required to remain in communal shelters, which has two consequences. First, they are segregated, which aggravates the already existing difficulty of learning and practicing German. Second, it facilitates the formation of closed communities based on countries of origin, a phenomenon that persists after people are free to choose their own accommodation.
- Another problem highlighted by refugees who spent time in communal housing while they awaited recognition status is the lack of effective monitoring and problem-solving mechanisms within communal housing. Without such mechanisms, conflicts that arise among the residents (for example, due to lack of privacy) are more likely to escalate.
- A shortage of housing is an issue across Germany in general and in the big cities in particular, but the situation is made doubly difficult for refugees due to landlords' and real estate agencies' reluctance or refusal to rent to them.
- Despite recent laws that prohibit refugees from switching their residence from one state to another, many refugees choose to live in or near cities that already have high concentrations of refugees/immigrants. There are few obvious policies to encourage refugees to settle in other areas.

GOOD PRACTICES

CSOs

- German civil society has made a significant and positive impact in terms of supporting refugees' integration. Organisations have created initiatives to support refugees with legal issues; help them visit local authorities; assist those ineligible for BAMF courses access German classes; and help them access food, shelter and clothing.
- A number of NGOs/CSOs recognised the importance of mapping and profiling all actors involved in efforts that support refugees.

Government

- In 2017, the German Chancellery initiated the National Integration Award, which honours the best initiative to integrate refugees into German society. A jury of five integration experts considers private individuals, groups, initiatives, or municipalities for the award, nominated by 33 eligible institutions. Some religious organisations are involved, including the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association. In 2017, the €10,000 prize went to the City of Altena in North-Rhine Westphalia for its work pairing refugees with a so-called buddy to help them integrate into local society.
- It is the local Länder's responsibility to house asylum seekers, yet there is not a consistent approach to informing the general public about the issue. A number of municipalities have launched information programmes to make the local population more aware of refugee-related issues. One is the city of Lübeck, in Schleswig-Holstein, that has pioneered the "Lübeck method," a public relations and information campaign that aims to include the public in planning and decision-making related to accommodating refugees in their communities. Another initiative is in the city of Worms, in Rhineland-Palatinate, where regular roundtable discussions bring together both supporters and opponents of the country's refugee policy, with a view toward engaging the community in productive debate on the issue.

Economic

- Some NGOs run programmes to connect refugees to labour market stakeholders. Some provide refugees with professional mentoring; others analyse their qualifications, help them develop their CVs and profiles and match them with relevant job opportunities. One example of civil engagement in this area is *Worker*, a platform that matches refugees and potential employers. Another is *SINGA Deutschland*, which offers professional mentoring programmes.

Sociocultural integration

- Several initiatives and programmes address intercultural interaction between refugees and local communities through cultural, musical and other activities. One example of an NGO active in this area is *Start with a Friend*. The initiative, founded in Berlin in 2014 and currently active in 15 cities, links refugees to locals, offering newcomers access to mainstream society. Local partners can assist with bureaucracy issues or help refugees develop German language skills. Some associations that have individuals with an immigrant background on staff offer psychological and social (family) counselling; one is MRBB. Additionally, some programmes address topics such as democracy, individual freedoms, family and education. These initiatives seek to engage refugees in a targeted discussion on European values.
- Some schools (in Trier, Rheinland-Pfalz, in addition to the *Wellkommensklassen*)⁶¹ provide additional language classes before

and/or after school hours. Some media outlets describe this approach as the “Trier Model.”

AREAS OF CONCERN

- The Federal Ministry of the Interior is aware of attempts by Salafist groups to approach refugees and is closely monitoring this. The ministry works with organisations represented in the German Islam Conference and funds projects that train volunteers within mosques with a goal of opening mainstream Islamic communities to more refugee work.⁶²
- The German Islam Conference⁶³ has been criticised for failing to address issues such as radicalisation, Islamism and conservatism within the organisations they represent.⁶⁴ In February 2017, the state of North-Rhine Westphalia suspended the association from its advisory body on Islamic education.⁶⁵ A month later, the German government halted funding to one of the German Islam Conference’s organisations, the Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB)⁶⁶ due to a lack of clarity regarding the values DITIB imams promote in German mosques.⁶⁷
- The case of Islamist terrorist, Anis Amri, who perpetrated the 2016 attack on the Berlin Christmas market, highlights major deficiencies regarding the BAMF’s current procedures and information exchange within Germany. Amri was identified as a threat, yet the state government ruled that an order to deport him was not legally enforceable. While the process was sorted out, Amri was allowed to travel freely within the country.⁶⁸

⁶¹ Special German classes for asylum seekers/refugee children within schools, where children attend intensive language classes while at the same time attending other classes part-time. These children are evaluated periodically, and when school administration bodies consider that they have acquired an adequate level of German, they fully integrate the children into the regular classes.

⁶² Information provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

⁶³ The German Islam Conference was created by the Interior Ministry in 2006 as an institutionalised forum for dialogue between federal, regional and local authorities and Muslims in Germany.

⁶⁴ Parvin Sadigh, “Islamkonferenz: ‘Muslime Müssen Selbst den Deutschen Islam Formen,’” *Die Zeit*, 27 September 2016, <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2016-09/islamkonferenz-ahmad-mansour-bilanz>.

⁶⁵ “NRW: Moscheeverband Lässt Sitz in Beirat für Islamunterricht Ruhen,” *Spiegel Online*, 7 February 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/nrw-ditib-laesst-sitz-in-beirat-fuer-islamunterricht-ruhen-a-1133579.html>.

⁶⁶ Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e. V.

⁶⁷ “Bundesregierung Stoppt Fördermittel für Ditib,” *Deutsche Welle*, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.dw.com/de/bundesregierung-stoppt-f%C3%B6rdermittel-f%C3%BCr-ditib/a-37946914>.

- The case of two extreme right-wing German armed forces soldiers who managed to pass themselves off as refugees and planned a “false flag” terror attack (which was foiled) further illustrates security⁶⁹ shortcomings.
- According to intelligence from the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, BfV), Islamists can often seek to indoctrinate newcomers, especially unaccompanied minors. These activities are not limited to Salafist groups.⁷⁰
- Most of the refugees emphasised that while living in communal housing, they witnessed high levels of extremely conservative behaviour. Some non-Muslim refugees described their stay there akin to “living in solitude” due to the presence of very conservative refugees.
- Some refugees said they preferred to attend prayers in certain mosques and avoid others due to the reputation for extreme conservatism and potential extremism that certain of them had.
- Syrian Muslim refugees who were not Sunni complained that other refugees accused them of being affiliated with the regime in Damascus.
- Certain refugees said they preferred to move to other cities to “escape the restriction of our freedoms” in areas with high levels of refugees.
- Some refugees expressed concern about the ability of radical elements to adversely influence the refugee community.
- A number of female refugees from Syria said they feared their own menfolk in Europe because they did not wear the hijab and behaved like Western women. They said they feared this more than they did acts of racism or anti-Muslim hatred.
- Most refugees and CSOs were unaware of systematic approaches by religious organisations or individuals to recruit refugees. However, most agreed that religious groups strive to increase their influence and mainstream their narrative to do so, particularly in areas concentrated with refugees.

- The media plays a role in fuelling mistrust of refugees, which hinders their integration. As a result, refugees tend to go to religious institutions where they believe they can protect themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

General

- Support and encourage additional efforts by NGOs/CSOs, including ones to map and profile all actors involved in efforts that support refugees.
- Identify programmes that work well within the federal states or municipalities and promote them to the rest of the country.
- The government should do more to educate the public about refugee-related issues.

Social cohesion

- Promote psychological support, for example by including qualified personnel from the refugee community in counselling efforts.
- Increase interaction between residents of communal shelters and local communities. This will help to decrease refugees’ isolation as well as the opposition of the local community and result in an enhanced integration process.

Asylum procedure

- Conduct comprehensive intercultural training and regular in-service training regarding the latest administrative developments and changes in the law.
- Simplify and coordinate all government departments involved in handling official records and documents relating to the asylum procedure.
- Simplify the BAMF application procedure.

Housing

- Make refugees more aware of the advantages of staying in one place after they are granted residency and the disadvantages of congregating in cities or neighbourhoods where housing is scarce. At the same time, establish support programmes specifically tailored to their needs.

- Increase oversight of private sector service providers, especially in communal housing.
- Municipalities should provide more support to refugees to help them find affordable housing and work with landlords to prevent discrimination.

Economic issues

- Authorities should enhance and institutionalise cooperation, dialogue and agreements with employers—particularly big commercial companies—to increase their knowledge, interest, and willingness to hire refugees.
- Make it compulsory for refugees to take on volunteer—or paid—work in a field relevant to their educational or professional background, especially after their language courses end.

Education

- Language courses should be combined with practical activities (for example, meetings and conversations with native speakers) that are organised by the schools as part of the curriculum.
- The orientation component of the integration course should be more practical and less theoretical; activities should be combined with explanation and discussion. Consider using refugees' mother tongue in this context and certain circumstances so they can better understand, debate and discuss.

Vulnerabilities

- Promote enhanced information sharing between security services and government entities that work with refugees.
- Ensure the government and the German Islam Conference undertake rigorous vetting and oversight of all Islamic and other religious organisations that provide integration, housing and education services.
- Politico-religious organisations often self-appoint themselves as intermediaries between refugees and government ministries and agencies. The government should be wary of allowing such organisations to represent refugees and should insist on having direct contact with individuals themselves.

⁶⁸“German Police Warned Anis Amri Was Planning a Suicide Attack Nine Months Before Berlin Christmas Market Massacre,” The Telegraph, 26 March 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/26/german-police-warned-anis-amri-planning-suicide-attack-nine/>.

⁶⁹“Second German Soldier Arrested over ‘False Flag’ Plot to Assassinate Left-Wing Politicians in Terror Attack,” The Independent, 9 May 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-soldiers-false-flag-arrests-refugees-assassinate-plot-far-right-left-wing-politicians-terror-a7726676.html>.

⁷⁰Information provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

2.6 THE NETHERLANDS

INTRODUCTION




In 2016, the number of first-time applications for asylum in the Netherlands was 31,642. This was 47.3 percent fewer applications than were received in 2015, when asylum claims peaked at 58,880.

The large number of claims within a single year generated a crisis regarding lack of reception capacity, especially because the majority of people arrived during the last six months of the year.⁷¹ To manage the influx, the government called on municipalities and provinces to set up several emergency reception centres for asylum seekers and provide more housing for refugees.⁷²

According to some respondents, the creation of new reception centres initiated a major and heated debate across the country; with many local residents protesting. The changes also created a delay in asylum procedures and family reunification. Reception centres in the Netherlands differ in terms of size and whether they are located in rural or urban areas.⁷³

The government has delegated the reception of asylum seekers to the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), an independent body. Unaccompanied minors (younger than 15 years of age) are placed with reception families. The Ministry of Safety and Justice has delegated responsibility to the NGO *Stichting Nidos* to provide professional guardianship for these minors.

A total of 32 interviews were carried out in the Netherlands. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	17
 Government officials	4
 Civil society representatives	11

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

In 2015, the majority of first-time asylum applicants were Syrian (16,655) and Eritrean (6,466).⁷⁴ This resulted in an increase of positive applications (80 percent) that year, as almost all Syrian and Eritrean applicants were awarded refugee status.⁷⁵

Dutch legislation distinguishes between asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers have no right to integration support; refugees, on the other hand, must follow procedures for further integrating – *inburgering* – into society and are required to take an exam that tests their Dutch language skills and knowledge of national laws, regulations and societal norms.

The typical asylum procedure conducted by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) takes eight days. Following the increased number of applications in 2015, time limits for processing claims were incorporated into national legislation and fixed at a maximum of nine months.⁷⁶ Government sources indicated that on average, in 2015 it took eight months for an asylum application to be processed. The wait time was shorter in 2017 because of the dramatic decrease in the number of asylum seekers entering the country.

Government agencies and Dutch municipal authorities cooperate with the main social workers and other partners in the sector, consulting under the Joint Refugee Work and Integration Task Force (RWITF).⁷⁷ Working groups within the RWITF focus on recording and matching refugees' education and work experience with available opportunities and strengthen the focus on language and integration.

According to refugees and civil society actors, the government overly relies on volunteers and the private sector to provide language and other integration services. These respondents also believe there is little, if any, evaluation of the services apart from quantitative assessments.

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Asylum procedure

- Some groups of nationals (such as those from a number of North African countries) travelling to the Netherlands are unlikely to be eligible for asylum. These individuals remain in reception centres until they are returned to their country of origin. This is a common issue in Europe that is being tackled through the publication of a safe countries list. The Dutch government is focused on quickly dealing with unfounded claims for asylum, limiting pressure on social and economic resources and only allocating resources to those who have a chance of being awarded refugee status.
- Several interviewees mentioned that family reunification rules are overly bureaucratic.
- For Afghan asylum seekers, the process can take much longer due to additional security checks into applicants' potential involvement in possible war crimes. This uncertainty can cause immigrants to experience psychological and other health-related problems that can negatively impact their ability to integrate.

Sociocultural integration

- On the issue of racism against refugees, no significant episodes have been reported by any of those interviewed. However, official accounts do not necessarily tally with that assessment. According to The Netherlands' 2016 Human Rights Report, "In the Netherlands, the Muslim community of approximately 900,000 persons faced frequent

discrimination, intolerance and racism, as did members of other minority/immigrant groups, particularly in public venues and in regard to housing and employment. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the minority unemployment rate during the year was approximately twice that of the native Dutch workforce, while the unemployment rate among minority youths was almost three times as high as among native Dutch youth."⁷⁸

- We heard reports of homophobic acts in refugee camps among inmates.

Socioeconomic issues

- Asylum seekers can enter the labour market if they have been in the application system for at least six months. However, some respondents stated this was difficult to achieve due to the significant bureaucratic requirements placed on refugees. In addition, if they work, money is deducted from the assistance they receive during this period. This results in refugees preferring not to work at all.
- The process of having job qualifications recognised varies from one municipality to the next. Some refugees found the process easier than others and received sufficient guidance; others complained that they needed to figure it out alone and made mistakes because they had received incorrect information from other refugees.
- According to some civil society representatives, municipalities' evaluation of refugees' skills is inconsistent and they place some in unsuitable low-skilled jobs or temporary work. However, a number of refugees praised the assignments

⁷¹Klaver, "Local Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, Reception and Integration," 4.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), "Country Report: The Netherlands," Asylum Information Database, November 2015, http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_nLupdate.iv_.pdf.

⁷⁵Klaver, "Local Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, Reception and Integration," 3.

⁷⁶ECRE, "Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update," Asylum Information Database, 31 December 2016, 9, http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_nLupdate.v_final.pdf.

⁷⁷L.F. Asscher, Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, policy initiative addressed to the president of the Dutch Parliament, 27 October 2016, 2.

⁷⁸"Dutch Language Learning Toolkit for Volunteers and Refugees," National Support Services Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe Nederland, accessed 24 October 2017, <https://ec.europa.eu/epale/en/resource-centre/content/dutch-language-learning-toolkit-volunteers-and-refugees>.

made by individual case managers and said they act as mentors for all aspects of life, particularly preparing for the labour market.

Language and education

- According to respondents from all categories, learning Dutch is one of the most critical challenges for refugees.
- Refugees are not permitted to participate in official language courses if they do not possess a residence permit.⁷⁹
- CSO representatives report that the integration exam pass rate has continually decreased since the process was privatised in 2013. This raises questions about the quality of the schools delivering the courses and poses economic and other challenges for refugees. Overall, refugees and civil society actors maintain that the government overly relies on the private sector to provide language and other integration services and does not adequately evaluate these services.
- According to other CSO representatives, the same challenges apply to language courses. Refugees complained that private service providers—particularly new schools, many of which are for-profit—are not effectively monitored. Refugees are unable to select qualified schools because of a lack of guidance and information.
- Integration programmes lack a common structure and centralised organisation. In addition, participants’ differences (age, education, culture) are not considered in either the make-up and content of language and integration classes.

Housing and related issues

- Despite the huge decrease in the number of asylum seekers to the Netherlands in 2017, several CSOs report a severe housing shortage. This problem is not exclusively related to refugees and is prevalent for locals as well.
- Some new laws and legal amendments came into force on 1 January 2017. Among the main changes are that refugees are no longer automatically prioritised for housing services (as was previously the case), although

municipalities can decide to give refugees priority to fulfil their obligation to provide housing for a certain quota each year.⁸⁰

- For the first year, refugees are not permitted to change their place of residence from the municipality where they are distributed. After a year, they may move to another municipality if they have secured accommodation in advance. Some refugees suggested tightening this rule to prevent refugees from becoming concentrated in certain areas.
- Refugees in Amsterdam and other cities complained about the heavy concentration of refugees in certain communities and regions. According to the refugees, most who move into such “closed” communities have failed language and integration courses.

GOOD PRACTICES

Government

- The Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment; Security and Justice; Education, Culture and Science and Health, Welfare and Sport have begun research into residence permit holders who arrived in the Netherlands between 1 January 2014 and 1 July 2016. The objective is to chart the progress of individuals who have integrated and assess “hard” aspects of the process such as residence, knowledge, work, income, civil integration and health, as well as “soft” aspects, including attitudes toward European values, links between the Netherlands and country of origin and “feeling like” a Dutch citizen.
- As of 1 October 2017, all newcomers are required to sign a “statement of participation” in which they commit themselves to accepting the core values of Dutch society. This will become part of the formal integration process. Failure to sign the statement results in a fine of €340.⁸¹
- Refugees welcome the centralisation of offices, authorities and different service providers within the municipalities, saying it makes it easier to access facilities.
- Many organisations are currently developing training for front-line professionals to detect better signs of radicalisation among asylum

seekers and refugees; recipients of such training include IND staff and the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism.

Sociocultural integration

- *Stichting Nidos* is a Dutch organisation that provides guidance and support to unaccompanied minor asylum seekers—the first European organisation to do so. One does not need refugee status to have a *Nidos* guardian. The organisation is also responsible for the Reception and Living in Families (RLF) project, in which children under 15 years of age are placed with reception families. *Nidos* recruits families of the same ethnicity and culture as the asylum seekers who have been in the Netherlands for at least two years. Children who have been granted refugee status will be integrated into the community in which they live, and *Nidos* is responsible for them until they turn 18.
- *Nidos* trains its employees and caretakers to explain laws and values to their charges and trains all guardians to work on intercultural communication, which serves as the foundation for these conversations.
- In collaboration with War Child and UNICEF, Save the Children Netherlands runs a programme called *TeamUp* that offers children recreational activities such as sports, games and dance classes to enhance their sense of safety and wellbeing. The project currently runs in eight locations and works with almost 500 children who range in age from 6 - 18 years.
- CSO representatives reported few major tensions between refugees and host communities. They identified stereotypes and ignorance as areas that needed to be addressed.

- Several commendable initiatives focus on creating dialogue and interaction between refugees and the host community. Among those working to increase host communities' understanding of refugees is the *Stay Human!* project, which connects organisations in seven countries and raises awareness about human rights education initiatives.
- To educate local communities about refugees, COA organises open days for the public at their reception centres as well as events with local mayors.

Socioeconomic issues

- In August 2016, the government provided €1m for the implementation of the *Get to Work!*⁸² project, which promotes volunteer work by asylum seekers and permit holders in reception facilities and facilitates the exchange of information between interested parties. The goal is to have 14,000 individuals from 25 COA facilities find volunteer work. Space is made available at the facilities once a week for asylum seekers and other permit holders to be recruited for voluntary work.
- Some refugees reported that certain municipalities support projects managed by refugees themselves, including those that provide mentoring, financial support, tax exemptions etc.

Language and education

- The government provides a loan of up to €10,000 for refugees to prepare for the integration exam, which must be taken within three years of being awarded the status. If a refugee passes the exam, the loan is written off; failing the exam results in a fine of up to €1,250. Individuals are given an additional two years to retake the exam in the event of failing.⁸³

⁷⁹New Rules and Benefits: What Changes in 2017? DutchNews.nl, 31 December 2016, <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/12/new-rules-and-benefits-what-changes-in-2017/>.

⁸⁰Statement of Participation Mandatory for Newcomers, New to the Netherlands," accessed 24 October 2017, <https://www.netinederland.nl/en/artikelen/nieuws/2017/participatieverklaring.html>.

⁸¹Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, "Participation Statement to Be Mandatory Part of Civic Integration Exam," 8 July 2016, <https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2016/07/08/participation-statement-to-be-mandatory-part-of-civic-integration-exam>.

⁸²L.F. Asscher, Office of the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment, document addressed to the president of the Dutch Parliament, 27 October 2016, 8.

- Refugees occasionally train to be interpreters. For example, Manpower has successfully trained three groups of Syrian and Eritrean refugees to serve in this capacity.

Housing and related issues

- The State provides refugees with social housing, which means they need not search for accommodation on the challenging private rental market.
- Each municipality is required to house a certain number of refugees; the number depends on the size of local population centres. This policy is intended to avoid the creation of ghettos.
- In the past, establishing reception centres in certain cities has caused tensions between asylum seekers and the local population, but this is not the case everywhere. In several places where reception centres have closed, local citizens have sought to keep them open, claiming they now constitute an integral part of the community.
- There have been reports that some refugees do not wish to remain in small towns and villages. Most of the refugees we interviewed acknowledged that authorities need to disperse refugees fairly and according to the quota system and despite being obliged to live in rural villages and small towns, almost all confirmed they were eventually happy, felt welcomed and were able to interact effectively with the local community.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- The IND and the COA are both aware that criminals and jihadists could be among asylum seekers, but focusing on this is not their primary mission. The IND determines if an asylum seeker is qualified to receive refugee or other status, while the COA's responsibility is to ensure people are housed. The IND does have a legal duty to assess whether someone is a threat to national security and, if this is the case, exclude him or her from the process. COA can only report concerns, not take action. Both IND and COA should, in principle, alert security services if they have concerns about potential threats, but neither is obligated to do so.

- According to some respondents, NGOs do not always report signs of radicalisation because they struggle between needing to recognise the signs and avoid stigmatising asylum seekers. In addition, it is very difficult to identify true threats because people who work in the asylum system tend to lack the necessary experience or training. As a result, some officials report signs but are often unsure if what they have noticed is relevant.
- Some respondents said that extreme conservatism can pose a security issue, especially in reception centres where different ethnicities and religions coexist.
- Some refugees said that a number of attempts by refugees to establish “moderate” Arabic language schools have failed because authorities did not authorise or support them.
- Refugees relayed incidents where children in certain Arabic or Quranic schools were taught overly conservative narratives and mothers were verbally abused for not wearing the veil. Some refugees expressed concern about the activities of some religious organisations, asking that authorities refrain from promoting those organisations as the only legitimate ones to address the spiritual needs of Muslims in the Netherlands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sociocultural integration

- The government, NGOs and CSOs should organise more events aimed at improving the local population's awareness and understanding of immigration/refugee issues. This would help decrease refugees' sense of isolation, reduce opposition from local communities and enhance the integration process.
- Support and encourage additional research efforts by the government and NGOs/CSOs to map and profile all actors involved in supporting the refugee effort.
- Promote psychological support for asylum seekers and refugees, including integrating qualified personnel from the refugee community to offer counselling and trauma therapy.

- Continue and expand efforts to explain the host country's laws and values to refugees using intercultural communication tools.

Socioeconomic issues

- Better evaluate refugees' abilities to help them more appropriately enter the labour market.
- Continue government, NGO and CSO efforts to support initiatives that encourage volunteer work as a means of entering the labour market.

Housing and related issues

- Increase monitoring to ensure that refugees are more equally distributed throughout the country's municipalities. In cities, encourage greater distribution to avoid creating ghettos, enhance integration and decrease tensions with locals.

Education

- Introduce rigorous monitoring and qualitative evaluation criteria for private sector organisations that deliver civic orientation and integration courses and ensure they are open and transparent in their activities. Provider evaluations should be made publicly available so refugees can determine which are the most effective.
- Build on successful programmes that provide financial incentives for refugees to complete successfully the integration process.

Asylum processing

- Speed up the asylum processes to ensure applicants can learn the language as soon as possible and, thus, improve their chances of entering the labour market.
- Streamline the family reunification process to reduce stress and trauma among refugees separated from their families.

Vulnerabilities

- Support enhanced radicalisation identification training for NGO and CSO officials.
- Address and prevent the issue of missing migrant children.
- Promote greater cooperation among authorities, NGOs and the refugee community to support emerging initiatives aimed at countering extremism and ultraconservative religious teachings that encourage separation from mainstream society.
- Support refugees' efforts to establish "moderate" Arabic language schools by making authorities aware it is important to engage former refugees in the process.

⁸³"Inburgeren in Nederland—How to Integrate," Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, accessed 24 October 2017, <https://www.inburgeren.nl/en/how-do-i-integrate.jsp#>.

2.7 SWEDEN




INTRODUCTION

In 2015, Sweden, a country of just under 10 million people, recorded the highest per capita number of asylum applications of any Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country, ever: 162,877. Of these, more than 70,000 were children and more than 50 percent were unaccompanied minors. The country also received more than half the total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU/European Economic Area (EEA).⁸⁴ More than 50 percent of the annual influx of asylum seekers took place in the final quarter of 2015 and the majority of refugees came from Syria.

In 2016, 28,939 individuals applied for asylum—82 percent fewer than in 2015 and closer to the annual average of 33,000 from the years 2000–2014. Unaccompanied minors numbered 2,199 in 2016, a decrease of 94 percent from 2015's total of 35,369 and a decrease of 56 percent from 2000–2014's total of approximately 3,900.⁸⁵

At the end of 2015, the Swedish government introduced temporary measures to restrict the flow of immigrants. Passport controls for all those arriving in Sweden by land, air, or sea came into effect in July 2016 to last until 2019. Among other issues, the laws introduced temporary residence permits and imposed additional restrictions on family reunification rules. They also placed new maintenance requirements for permanent residency and family reunification.

A total of 40 interviews were conducted in Sweden. Participant breakdown was as follows:

 Refugees and asylum seekers	19
 Government officials	8
 Civil society representatives	13

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

As a result of the increase in asylum seekers, the country's case processing times have increased in recent years. In 2014, the average processing period was 142 days (4.7 months); in 2015, 229 days (7.6 months); and in 2016, 328 days (10.9 months). In the first quarter of 2017, the average processing time was 386 days (12.9 months).⁸⁶

In March 2016, a law was approved obliging all municipalities to settle asylum seekers proportionally to free up capacity within the reception system. Prior to this, it was optional for municipalities to settle asylum seekers, which resulted in several municipalities taking in minimal numbers. As a result, many refugees who had been granted residency remained in reception centres and were unable to properly integrate into Swedish society.

From the end of 2015, when more than 150,000 asylum seekers were awaiting a decision, the Swedish Migration Agency (SMA) focused on reducing the case backlog. In 2016, more than 112,000 asylum cases were determined active and the number of open cases was cut to 71,600. During 2017, the SMA planned to make decisions on all those who arrived in 2015 and most of those who arrived in 2016. By late 2017, the government expected to have tackled the backlog, with new asylum seekers receiving a decision on their applications within three or four months.⁸⁷

KEY FINDINGS AND MAIN CHALLENGES

Sociocultural issues

- The huge influx of refugees placed significant pressure on the health-care, social welfare, housing and other sectors. However, a number of government officials interviewed for this research said they believed the State has robust institutions and could manage the significant structural and societal challenges it faces. This view contrasted with that of other respondents—CSO and integration experts, primarily—who said the system

is under severe strain; they predicted the Swedish social welfare model may well collapse within the next 10 years. Refugees themselves acknowledged the system is “fair,” but in practice, integration policies do not work particularly well. They described CSOs’ provision of support services to refugees—often in lieu of the State—as “particularly chaotic.”

- Many civil society respondents said they felt the social contract between the government and its citizens was breaking down as a result of the many refugees entering the country. They reported a significant erosion of trust and a polarisation within society that is being exploited by far-right groups and organisations. Many in this category of respondents believe that the media does not realistically report how difficult it is for the country to integrate such large numbers of refugees; government respondents, on the other hand, indicated that the media focuses unduly on the negative aspects of refugee integration.
- A number of civil society respondents criticised the authorities for what they described as a “misguided policy” on integration. They also criticised the police for not being more present in immigrant communities to maintain law and order.
- The State and NGOs cooperate to welcome refugees—Sweden has a long-established tradition of civil society support for refugees. However, numerous CSO representatives mentioned that Sweden does not have as thriving a civil society tradition as exists in other European countries and in the United States and Canada. The State features prominently in all aspects of society and funds the activities of many NGOs, which are less inclined to criticise State actors, as occurs in

other countries even where the government funds or partially funds these activities.

- A number of refugees and CSOs criticised the government for allowing politico-religious organisations to take over certain tasks, such as providing refugee housing, offering Swedish language courses and facilitating other services to refugees that properly should be undertaken by the government.
- Refugees also expressed concern at the prevalence of conservative Islamic organisations providing education services at kindergarten, as well as special schools for children that teach Arabic and the Quran at the preschool level.
- Different respondents said that there has been little evaluation of the quality of these services, even though quantitative assessments have been undertaken. Some refugees complained that religious organisations have an ulterior motive for providing services, saying their objective is to recruit new members for their organisations.
- Regional and local authorities do not systematically monitor the quality of services that private sector contractors provide for refugees. (Such providers are contracted by government authorities.)
- Civic orientation courses do not feature any “values” training.

During the asylum application process

- Respondents raised concern about breaches in the standards of reception for asylum seekers. They also discussed sexual and gender-based violence, which is a problem affecting unaccompanied minors seeking asylum⁸⁸ as well as women and children living in accommodation centres. Municipalities are responsible for protecting individuals in

⁸⁴Data provided to the authors by the Swedish Ministry of Employment, January 2017.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Data provided to the authors by the Swedish Migration Agency information, March 2017.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), “This Is Who We Are Part 2—Documentation of the Secondary Findings from the Profiling Survey of Unaccompanied Afghan Children Arriving to Sweden in 2015,” October 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/581b4bb74.html>

their care. Because of the high numbers of asylum seekers in Sweden, municipalities' social services have been affected, which has led to issues with receiving unaccompanied minors. Various national agencies—including the Ombudsman for Children, which has prepared a report on transit accommodation for unaccompanied minors seeking asylum⁸⁹ and the National Audit Office⁹⁰ —have examined various aspects of asylum seekers' reception.

- Facilities at some of the asylum seeker reception centres can be crowded, with up to four individuals sharing a room and we heard reports of incidents of skirmishes and violence between Syrian Christians and Muslims in some reception centres. Reception centre authorities do not take measures to avoid such incidents, despite requests, according to refugee contributors to this research. During the 2015 refugee influx there were numerous clashes reported and a number of refugee centres were set alight. The media reported that some of these fires were started by asylum seekers themselves.
- The Arabic interpreters used by the SMA during the critical interview phase of the asylum application were widely criticised. Many individuals indicated they generally do not trust the Arabic interpreters.
- In order to work as an asylum seeker, individuals must have a certificate (AT-UND) that exempts the holder from needing a work permit. Exemptions apply if the applicant provides proof of identity, Sweden is the first Schengen country in which the applicant has claimed asylum and the application has merit. If an applicant worked while awaiting a decision on the application for asylum, he or she can, in certain circumstances, apply for a work permit if the application is rejected.
- Asylum seekers had been permitted to undertake traineeships or internships, although this was withdrawn on 1 April 2017.
- Asylum seekers lack access to Swedish language and civic orientation courses while awaiting a decision on their application.

During the postrecognition process

- The municipality to which newly arrived individuals are allocated and granted residency in is based on local labour market conditions and capacity, local population size, the number of recently arrived immigrants, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers already living there.
- Refugees tend to congregate in larger cities and lower-income neighbourhoods, and there are concerns that this creates ghettos. Large numbers of refugees/immigrants live in some suburbs, notably Rinkeby in Stockholm and Rosengård in Malmö, where there have been regular clashes with police. Authorities say this is often a result of criminal gangs feuding with one another.
- Housing for asylum seekers was a major challenge during 2015. In mid-2017, with the dramatic decrease in asylum seekers arriving in the country, the government began to close down the temporary accommodation centres created to house the large influx of individuals and once again offer regular apartments.
- When a residence permit has been granted and an individual seeks accommodation, they often find high rents and/or landlords who refuse to rent to them.
- A number of cities, particularly Malmö, have a housing shortage for refugees.

GOOD PRACTICES

Reception of asylum seekers

- SMA case officers are trained in how to investigate the identity and origin of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers do not have to prove their identity; they just need to make it plausible.
- In the event that an asylum seeker is not considered to have a manifestly well-founded claim to asylum, the SMA provides a legal representative to support the applicant.
- At the beginning of 2017, the County Administrative Boards were given the additional responsibility of coordinating the activities of asylum seekers, helping them undertake gainful activities as they wait for

their applications to be processed. The County Administrative Boards contract this work out to the private sector.

Socioeconomic issues

- The government has undertaken a number of measures to provide additional support to non-Swedish labour market entrants. These include subsidised jobs/internships where a company receives an 80 percent subsidy for the newly arrived individual's salary,⁹¹ the so-called *Step-in Job* programme, as well as complementary education and work placement programmes that are administered by the Public Employment Service. The government works with social partners and other agencies to fast-track newly arrived individuals into the labour market. This involves education, training, and internships in areas that have a high demand for labour. The first fast-track scheme took place in September 2015 and focused on chefs; since then, it has been adopted for a number of other professions, including doctors, nurses, painters, decorators and entrepreneurs, among others.
- The government has also created the *100 Club/Sweden Together* programme, which allows the Public Employment Service to offer support to large companies that wish to help integrate newly arrived individuals while strengthening their own workforce. The objective is for each company to employ or offer an internship to at least 100 new arrivals within a three-year period.
- Recognition of degrees/educational qualifications is considered a fair, if slow, process.

- To address the shortage of mentoring and teaching staff, retired Swedes are regularly recruited to work with unaccompanied minors.

Social cohesion

- NGOs have undertaken many local initiatives that aim to help integrate refugees into local society through volunteering. One is *Hej Främling!* (Hello Stranger!) in Jämtland County, which organises outdoor excursions and physical exercise for refugees and their families. These initiatives generally have a high level of participation. Other initiatives include sporting activities, where local football teams with many ethnic minority members promote antiracism in sport.

AREAS OF CONCERN

- A number of refugees stressed that they do not trust the SMA's Arabic interpreters. They cited examples in which interpreters have provided incorrect and often deliberately misleading information to the authorities on behalf of the refugees. Some also reported that the interpreters had negative attitudes, which respondents thought were the result of potential religious or ethnic biases.
- Refugees indicated that ethnic Swedish case officers in the SMA were generally more trustworthy than Arabic interpreters. One government respondent admitted it is difficult to find skilled interpreters. Most interpreters used by the SMA have an immigrant background. The refugees interviewed emphasised the need to build capacity among European interpreters and introduce a robust monitoring mechanism to evaluate their performance, particularly in the critical asylum interview phase.

⁸⁸UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "This Is Who We Are Part 2—Documentation of the Secondary Findings from the Profiling Survey of Unaccompanied Afghan Children Arriving to Sweden in 2015," October 2016, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/581b4bb74.html>

⁸⁹Barnombudsmannen, "Barn På Flykt Barns och Ungas Röster om Mottagandet av Ensamkommande," 2017, https://www.barnombudsmannen.se/globalassets/dokument-for-nedladdning/publikationer/barn_pa_flykt_webb.pdf.

⁹⁰Swedish National Audit Office, "Summary: Accommodation for Asylum Seekers—The Swedish Migration Agency's Arrangement of Accommodation for Asylum Seekers," 14 June 2016, <http://www.riksrevisionen.se/en/Start/publications/Reports/EFF/2016/-Accommodation-for-asylum-seekers--the-Swedish-Migration-Agency's-arrangement-of-accommodation-for-asylum-seekers-/>.

⁹¹Data provided to the authors by the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation).

- Municipalities that provide services to refugees work in cooperation with NGOs and civil society groups. Some religious organisations compete with the authorities by providing accommodation for refugees. One integration expert informed us that an Islamist organisation arranged a transit residence for refugees in Stockholm. This and other Islamist organisations sought to do the same in Granngården but were refused a permit to operate. The expert also reported that in Hörby, 50 kilometres from Malmö, a group of Salafists opened a refugee housing project for young men from the Middle East. According to the interviewee, the decision to close the centre was made because an experienced municipality employee had detected signs of radicalisation among the owners of the housing project. A contributory factor in deciding to close was that the men themselves had complained to the authorities that they were being subjected to harshly enforced religiously inspired rules governing their behaviour. This example underscores the importance of training personnel in public offices engaging with asylum seekers and refugees.
- Salafist organisations in Sweden are considered a threat to the social order and recognised by authorities as such. However, refugees we interviewed said that other Islamist groups that work with the newly arrived and play a role in encouraging people to remain separate from mainstream Swedish society are not recognised as a threat by the State and indeed should be.
- Islamic schools in Sweden provide education and other services to refugees and are obliged to adopt and apply the national curriculum. According to respondents, occasional spot checks have highlighted examples of radical views in certain schools, which have been addressed according to government respondents.
- Refugees reported examples of conservative, religious intolerance of certain beliefs and other faiths in some schools and mosques.
- Most of the refugees expressed concern over some Islamic organisations' focus, particularly in the new kindergartens, regarding intolerant or overly conservative Islamic teachings. These concerns extended to both Sunni and Shia organisations and to certain schools that teach Arabic and the Quran. Some refugees stressed they would not send their children to these schools because they did not trust the organisers or the curricula. Refugees reported that authorities do not adequately monitor these organisations' activities or funding sources.
- One respondent at a "folkhogskola"⁹² that had opened a prayer room recently said that while this initiative was a source of relief for some refugees, it bore signs of conservatism and some people were peer-pressured into praying.
- Some refugees mentioned that many organisations are able to secure significant funding for large, public Islamic religious events—both Sunni and Shia—while most of the secular Arabic organisations are unable to receive state funding for minor, targeted, integration-related activities. For example, the refugees said they are unable to raise even small amounts of money for a musical or an artistic or athletic activity, while Islamic organisations are able to quickly organise a city-wide religious or related event that attracts hundreds or thousands of people, features food and drink and receives police protection.
- Respondents highlighted the fact that such organisations are increasing their efforts among the newly arrived, as well as in and around the so-called "no-go zones" in Malmö, with the objective of recruiting more members. These organisations claim they are seeking to "save" young people involved in gang-like street life by providing attractive alternatives, activities and support. Refugees emphasised that these organisations know how to exploit the needs of vulnerable people, influence their loyalty and appeal to their religious emotions.
- Many respondents had heard rumours and seen press reports of groups or individuals seeking to recruit asylum seekers to join extremist activities. Government officials and a number of CSO respondents said they

believed this was not a major issue. The refugees, however, considered this a serious issue, even if it does not occur on a large scale.

- The issue of fake refugees is not considered a problem in Sweden, although many respondents said they had seen press reports about this issue and mentioned isolated cases of radicals pretending to be asylum seekers. Special training for case officers is standard, as is ongoing assessment by security services and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, which deals with threat assessments. Refugees confirmed that they had heard from other refugees about individuals of other nationalities who had successfully claimed Syrian nationality and were accepted as bona fide asylum seekers but had not heard about any radical motivation behind this.
- Respondents said they had not personally heard about or experienced any racist incidents or attacks against refugees and instead emphasised the welcoming nature of Swedish people. They highlighted occasional aggressive behaviour from individuals in public places—on the street, in parks, and on public transport—but emphasised that they do not consider these incidents to indicate widespread racism. A number of refugees said that attacks may occur in other regions of the country, but because they lived in Malmö, they have not experienced this.
- Many of the refugees mentioned being treated peremptorily by employees and officials after receiving recognition status, primarily in the employment, social assistance, and housing sectors. They said they had had the impression of being dealt with “in a racist manner.”
- CSO representatives mentioned that the Swedish government does not register the ethnicity of individuals who are detained or arrested for criminal activity; this means there is no way to evaluate if refugees or asylum seekers are involved in criminal and other activity, as some right-wing groups and certain media outlets claim.

- Refugees routinely referred to procedures that vet their identity and other documents for security purposes as “insufficiently rigorous.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Asylum process

- During the 2015 influx of asylum seekers, there were many reports of incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly affecting unaccompanied minors seeking asylum⁹³ as well as women and children living in accommodation centres. The government should institute more targeted protective measures for women and unaccompanied minors in SMA reception centres.
- Asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their application do not have recourse to state-funded Swedish language courses. The asylum seekers often are located in remote centres and with an average wait time of 12.9 months (as of March 2017) to process a typical application, they often become bored and unmotivated. The State should provide access to language classes for asylum seekers to motivate them, relieve boredom, facilitate integration and help them prepare to access the labour market.
- Many individuals indicated a strong lack of trust in Arabic interpreters. The government should increase the numbers and training of ethnic Swedish Arabic interpreters employed at the SMA.

Postgranting of residency status

- Refugees tend to congregate in larger cities and often in lower-income neighbourhoods, which has effectively created ghettos. Regular clashes between immigrants (mostly second generation) and the police occur in these areas. Police should be provided additional resources to protect civilians, including refugees, from the violence that regularly occurs in these suburbs while a political solution is prepared to address the fact that police have identified some 55 no-go areas for their forces across the country.

⁹²Institution for adult education.

⁹³“This Is Who We Are Part 2.”

- The SMA should encourage refugees to stay in one place after they are granted residency, rather than congregating in cities or ghettos where housing is scarcer and integrating into Swedish society is more difficult or even impossible.
- Municipalities should provide more support to refugees to find affordable housing. Those who have had their residence permits granted often face high rents and landlords who refuse to rent to them.
- The government should coordinate and monitor groups and individuals that provide delegated/on-demand services.
- Politico-religious organisations that claim to represent entire communities should be treated with caution. Officials should be wary of allowing such organisations to serve as intermediaries between refugees and government ministries and agencies and insist on direct contact with refugees themselves.
- The government needs to regard nonviolent Islamist groups that discourage newcomers from integrating into mainstream Swedish society as a potential threat to the social order.
- The government must be wary of considering any Islamist group, which by definition does not adhere to the principles of liberal democracy, to be progressive in any way and prevent these organisations from providing services to refugees that the State itself should deliver.

Sociocultural

- The government should encourage a nationwide public debate on the refugee issue and deny far-right political groups and parties the opportunity to make significant gains in the next national elections, as they continue to exploit the Swedish population's concerns about refugees.
- The government should introduce a values training component to the integration process as part of civic orientation courses. Doing so can foster an appreciation for the concepts that underpin liberal democracy, including equal rights between men and women, respect for individual rights and equality of all religions and atheism.
- A robust system by which to vet and assess the CSOs that provide integration services should be established.
- The government should rigorously vet all civil society organisations that provide education services at kindergarten and special schools for children, as refugees generally do not trust these organisations.





ANNEX: DETAILS BY COUNTRY

AUSTRIA

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- In 2015, Austria received the highest number of asylum applications in its history: 85,500 first-time applicants,⁹⁴ compared to 25,675 in 2014⁹⁵ and 42,073 in 2016.⁹⁶ Applicants from Afghanistan made up 29 percent of the applications, which is slightly more than Syrians and Iraqis, with 28 percent and 15 percent, respectively.⁹⁷
- In 2015, the relevant authorities granted 14,413 applicants international protection according to the 1951 Geneva Convention (40.5 percent of all the applicants); this included 2,478 cases that were granted subsidiary protection.⁹⁸ In 2016, there were 8,845 applications from Syria and around 16,000 positive decisions.⁹⁹
- In the first three quarters of 2016, the average duration of the asylum application procedure was 8.2 months.¹⁰⁰ This figure reveals an increase in duration time from 5.3 months in September 2015 and 3.3 months in December 2014.¹⁰¹
- The application process for Iraqis and Syrians appears to be quicker, but other nationalities wait an average of 3 years before receiving an answer.¹⁰²

ASYLUM PROCESS

Legislation and responsibility

- Austria has one of the more complex legislative and regulatory systems in Europe regarding asylum and migration. In addition, it is characterised by several reforms and amendments that have been enacted since the 1960s.
- The most recent amendment was the Aliens Law Amendment Act 2016 (FrÄG 2016), enacted on 1 June 2016; it is regarded as effective.
- Additionally, about a dozen other acts and regulations are relevant to asylum procedures, reception conditions and detention—for example, the Asylum Act (AsylG), the General Administrative Procedures Act (AVG), the Federal Administrative Court Act (BVwGG), the Basic Care Act (GVG-B), among others.
- Institutional framework:
 - The Federal Ministry of Interior (BMI) is mainly responsible for asylum and migration policies and has limited participation in the implementation of the National Plan for Integration.
 - Under the responsibility of the BMI, the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum (BFA) is the first instance authority in asylum

⁹⁴Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 4 March 2016.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶ECRE, "Country Report: Austria 2016 Update," Asylum Information Database, 31 December 2016, 17, http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_at_2016update.pdf.

⁹⁷Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, "The Expert Council's Interim Evaluation, Integration Report 2016," 2016, 29, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Integration/Integrationsbericht_2016/Integration_Report_2016_EN_WEB.pdf.

⁹⁸Ibid, 22.

⁹⁹ECRE, "Country Report: Austria 2016 Update," 7.

¹⁰⁰Ministry of Interior, reply to Parliamentary Question 10831/J (XXV.GP), 11 January 2017, 1 - https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXV/AB/AB_10361/imfname_607722.pdf.

¹⁰¹ECRE, "Country Report: Austria 2016 Update," 21.

¹⁰²Ibid.

procedures. BFA is not involved in integration policies or activities.

- Appeals issues are regulated by the Administrative Court, the Administrative High Court and the Constitutional Court.

Procedure

- Further to an individual's asylum application, the public security service interrogates the applicant to check personal information, identity and itinerary.
- The application for international protection shall be deemed submitted when the BFA orders the stay of the applicant to process the application.
- The maximum duration of proceedings at the BFA was extended from 6 to 15 months.
- Individuals who are recognised as refugees in Austria obtain a residence permit for three years. Those accorded subsidiary protection status get a residence permit for one year.

Reception

- Asylum seekers are entitled to basic care immediately on submitting their application up until the final decision is taken. This includes housing in a federal reception facility, as well as meals, emergency health care and monthly pocket money (generally €40).
- Reception and basic care services are provided either by national and/or local authorities, or by contracted NGOs.
- The BFA is responsible for the distribution of asylum seekers across the country. Asylum seekers are first housed in the BMI's initial reception centres (EAST) or other type of accommodation, such as in an hotel or inn. These reception centres are run by NGOs or private operators according to contracts created by each province's department of basic care.
- Until the BFA makes a decision regarding the admissibility of their applications, asylum seekers may not leave the districts of their reception centres and are free to move across Austria only when they receive a positive response to their application.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Until the early 2000s, Austria had no significant integration policy. Integration became a policy for the first time in 2010 through the National Action Plan for Integration.
- The latest development in integration policy was a two-fold law specifically on integration, which was discussed in the Parliament during the course of conducting this research. The laws address integration policy as well as a so-called "year integration act" that will also widely regulate the integration of asylum seekers.
- Several actors are involved in integration policy development and implementation, including:
 - BMEIA
 - ÖIF
 - Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection
 - AMS
 - Provincial authorities
 - Several private sector initiatives, as well as NGOs

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

- Austria's integration policies only target recognised refugees/subsidiary protection beneficiaries. Asylum seekers are excluded from any formal integration activities. Some NGOs and initiatives organise certain activities including language and interaction with the local community.
- Asylum seekers are entitled to an employment permit—for which a potential employer applies—three months from submitting their asylum application and proving that the respective vacancy cannot be filled by an Austrian citizen, a citizen of the European Union, or a legally residing third-country national with access to the labour market. However, and keeping in mind the complexity of administrative and financial requirements and consequences of this issue, most refugees refrain from going through this process. Most

have no information about it, and the rest fear additional bureaucratic burdens.

- Asylum seekers are not registered at the AMS as unemployed. Therefore, they are not entitled to any vocational training programmes provided or financed by the AMS. Asylum seekers must take the initiative when searching for jobs and bear the financial costs of travel related to applications and interviews.
- In January 2017, the Ministry of Social Affairs delegating powers to the AMS allowing asylum seekers to undertake unpaid voluntary work and to complete practical experience and internships under certain conditions.¹⁰³
- A competency check of individuals coordinated by the AMS is conducted for most of the refugees in the form of a course delivered in the refugee's mother tongue. This programme aims to pave the way for refugees to access professional training and further education via the company undertaking the competency check and, thus, eventually integrating individuals into the labour market.
- The BMEIA has established a web portal¹⁰⁶ to help refugees and migrants go through the qualification recognition process more easily.

Integration policies and practices for refugees

- In January 2016, BMEIA adopted “50 Action Points for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria”¹⁰⁴ at the national level. It proposes an individual integration plan for each beneficiary and targets the following areas: language and education, work, the State and values and sanctions for refusal to integrate.
- A refugee is obliged to register at ÖIF immediately on receiving a positive recognition decision. ÖIF provides counselling and initial assessment for the individual's education, experience and language level. Each refugee is offered integration and language courses until he or she completes level A1, at which point the AMS takes over.¹⁰⁵
- Asylum seekers who have a high probability of remaining in Austria are included in the integration strategy. State authorities and the BMI offer language courses at this stage.
- Language courses have been updated with values-based content. However, special orientation courses remain voluntary.

¹⁰³“Asylwerber Dürfen Jetzt in Firmen Schnuppern,” Nachrichten.at, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.nachrichten.at/nachrichten/wirtschaft/wirtschaftsraumooe/Asylwerber-duerfen-jetzt-in-Firmen-schnuppern;art467,2472147>.

¹⁰⁴BMEIA, “50 Punkte—Plan zur Integration von Asylberechtigten und Subsidiär Schutzberechtigten in Österreich,” November 2015, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Integration/Publikationen/Integrationsplan_final.pdf.

¹⁰⁵Interview with ÖIF, Vienna, 4 April 2017

¹⁰⁶“Berufsanerkennung in Österreich: Startpage,” Berufsanerkennung.at, accessed 24 October 2017, http://www.berufsanerkennung.at/en/no_cache/.

BELGIUM

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- As of January 2016, the Belgian population was 11,267,910.¹⁰⁷
- In 2016, the number of first-time applicants for refugee status was 14,670, a decrease of more than 60 percent compared with 2015, when applications reached 39,064. 2015 marked a peak in first-time asylum requests in Belgium, which in 2013 and 2014 had been 12,061 and 14,131, respectively.¹⁰⁸
- Asylum seekers' top three countries of origin in 2016 were Afghanistan (2,767 applications), Syria (2,766 applications) and Iraq (1,179 applications).
- When it comes to recognising refugee status and subsidiary protection, figures for 2016 are the following: Syria: 7,051 positive decisions; Iraq: 3,298; and Somalia: 978.

ASYLUM PROCESS

According to official data provided by the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS), between 2015 and 2016, the average time to process an individual asylum application was 190 days. However, there was a substantial difference in 2015, when three to six months was not sufficient given the increase in applications. The number of decisions made in 2016 increased by more than 30 because the CGRS hired 100 additional staff members.¹⁰⁹

Procedure

Belgium's asylum procedure falls under federal responsibility as follows:

- An asylum seeker must file an application at the Immigration Office (Office des Etrangers, OdE) of the Ministry of Interior. This may be done at the border, in a detention centre, or inside the territory within eight days of entrance (legal or illegal).
- The OdE is responsible for collecting the applicant's documents and fingerprints, which are checked in the national Printrak and the EU's Eurodac databases. OdE also is

responsible for deciding whether the applicant is the responsibility of Belgium, as per the Dublin Regulation. It is worth mentioning that in the last two years, security screening has been significantly expanded, in cooperation with the security services and the police and now includes checking for aliases.¹¹⁰

- If the OdE considers an application admissible, it transfers the application to CGRS, an independent administrative service of the Ministry of Interior. CGRS examines the application and makes an initial decision, which can be appealed.

Reception and accommodation ¹¹¹

- Receiving asylum seekers is the responsibility of the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Fedasil).
- Before convening for formal registration, asylum seekers stay in a pre-reception centre that is part of Fedasil's reception network but run by a non-profit organisation.
- Following formal registration, Fedasil places the asylum seeker in a regular reception centre. Special considerations are taken into account when choosing the destination (families with children, people with disabilities, unaccompanied minors, people at risk of harassment, etc.). Reception centres may be collective (asylum centres) or individual (apartments). The collective structures are reception centres managed by Fedasil, the Red Cross of Belgium, or other partners. The individual structures are managed by the Public Social Welfare Centre or by NGOs.
- Reception centres are "open" facilities, meaning that residents are free to come and go. They receive accommodation; meals; clothing; a daily allowance (pocket money); social, medical, and psychological support; access to legal assistance and services such as interpreting and training (according to availability).
- Draft legislation is being discussed to reallocate asylum seekers among the different centres.¹¹²

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

As far as integration policies and practices are concerned, a distinction needs to be made between asylum seekers and refugees, as well as among the regions into which the federal state is divided (Wallonia, Brussels, and Flanders).

Integration policies and practices for asylum seekers

- Asylum seekers can request a work permit four months after they submit their application (unless their asylum demand has been rejected). This is an improvement over the previous term of six months.¹¹³ Indeed, according to an integration expert working with the Flemish government, the higher percentage of asylum seekers obtaining protected status (compared to the pre-Syrian crisis) has brought new focus on integrating asylum seekers with early intervention such as vocational training.
- As far as other activities are concerned, asylum seekers do not appear to be systematically involved in structured programmes. Certain programmes and activities are offered inside and outside reception centres (sports, workshops, reading classes, social orientation sessions, etc.), but this may vary from one centre to another, and on asylum seekers' engagement. Asylum seekers may perform paid community service.

- Regarding formal integration programmes, in Flanders, asylum seekers may take part in official courses on a voluntary basis as soon as they are entitled to apply for a job permit. Although Wallonia's 2016 regulation targets recognised refugees and other immigrants, some Walloon integration centres have opened their doors to asylum seekers as well.¹¹⁴
- As per the federal law of 12 January 2007, asylum seekers have the right to individual social guidance from a social worker. This is meant to inform an asylum seeker of his or her social rights, the rules of the reception centres and the asylum procedure and to provide assistance with any critical individual circumstances.
- Asylum seekers also have access to general medical screening that, if needed, can lead to dedicated psychological treatment (including post-trauma therapy). However, according to several actors, this does not occur, often due to cultural resistance from asylum seekers and the shortage of professionals who speak their native language.

Integration programmes for refugees¹¹⁵

In general terms, all integration courses from the three regions follow a common pattern. They all include language, socioprofessional orientation, an assessment of rights and duties and civic training. Furthermore, individual coaching is provided to each refugee to assess his or her specific situation and needs, and to provide tailored guidance. However, the length

¹⁰⁷"A Statistical Overview of the Belgian Population," Belgium.be, accessed 24 October 2017, https://www.belgium.be/en/about_belgium/country/Population.

¹⁰⁸Commissariaat-Generaal Voor de Vluchtelingen Een de Staatlozen, "Asylum Statistics 2016," 6 January 2017, http://www.cgrs.be/sites/default/files/asylumstat_2016_en.pdf.

¹⁰⁹Courtesy of CGRS.

¹¹⁰Theo Tuurt, "Veiligheidsscreening," *Theo Tuurt Naar Vlaanderen En de Wereld* (blog), 20 November 2017, <https://theotuurt.wordpress.com/2015/11/20/veiligheidsscreening/>.

¹¹¹Information courtesy of Fedasil.

¹¹²Ministry of Social Cohesion.

¹¹³"Les Demandeurs d'Asile Pourront Déjà Accéder au Marché du Travail Après 4 Mois," Service Public Fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation Sociale, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://www.emploi.belgique.be/defaultNews.aspx?id=43563>.

¹¹⁴Interview with Regional Integration Centre Charleroi, 7 April 2017.

¹¹⁵For a more detailed description, see Centre Bruxellois d'Action Interculturelle (CBAI), "Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel" March 2016, http://www.cbai.be/resource/docsenstock/cohesion_sociale/Parcours%20%27accueil%20-%20Rapport%202016.pdf.

and specific content of the modules may vary significantly depending on the region and each integration centre's margin of flexibility. This significantly affects the civic aspect, which may contain a variety of subjects such as everyday life, Belgium's history and politics, visits to museums and institutional centres, discussions on rights and values, etc.

Flanders

- Flanders has the most experience with integration programmes, going back as far as 2001. Programmes have been mandatory for certain categories of non-EU foreigners (including refugees) since 2004.¹¹⁶
- The primary integration programme—which includes a contract refugees must sign—includes individual coaching and social assistance, language courses to reach the A2 level, civic training (60 hours), and socioprofessional orientation that is coordinated with employment offices. Refugees must reach the A2 level of Dutch knowledge.
- This primary integration programme is compulsory for refugees but not for asylum seekers, who, in any case, have the right to join after four months from their application submission. Failure to attend (or to prove the right to exemption for certain modules) incurs a fine from €50 to €5,000.¹¹⁷
- The programme is implemented by integration offices under the authority of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration.¹¹⁸ They are autonomous but formally linked to the Flemish government.
- Since 2016, attendees' evaluation has been based not only on their participation (a minimum of 80 percent of classes), but also on the achievement of certain objectives—for example, actively participating in the classes and pursuing at least two actions put forth in an individual integration plan. The Flemish model of integration includes an individual plan with concrete steps the refugee must undertake for integration. Those goals are personally devised by the refugee in agreement with his or her counsellor.

Wallonia

- The integration programme was devised in 2014¹¹⁹ and has been compulsory in all its parts for certain categories of non-EU foreigners (including refugees) since 2016. It is relevant to mention that those actively employed are exempt from the obligation.
- The programme includes a reception module that imparts information about rights and duties, an individual social assessment (no specified length), language courses (120 hours), civic training (a minimum of 20 hours) and socioprofessional orientation course that is coordinated with the employment offices.
- The programme is coordinated by eight Regional Integration Centres that cooperate under the Platform for Consultation and Support for the Regional Integration Centres. Implementation is delivered by a network of local associations (“local integration initiatives”) that are chosen through tender procedures.
- Failure to attend the programme may have consequences, including an administrative fine of €100–€2,500. However, from our interviews, it emerged that this obligation does not seem to be enforced de facto.
- Evaluation is based on attendance; a minimum of 80 percent class attendance is sufficient to obtain the certificate.

Région de Bruxelles-Capitale¹²⁰

- Responsibility for integration courses is divided between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking communities, with different programmes directed and implemented by different authorities.
- The Brussels region does not yet have compulsory integration programmes. This is due to a lack of agreement and harmonisation between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking policymakers. Nevertheless, several respondents indicated that offices that provide social aid (CPAS) often require participation in integration programmes as a precondition for maintaining benefits.

Dutch-Speaking

- Flemish integration programmes in Brussels have existed since 2004.
- They are implemented by an agency of the Flemish Community¹²¹ called BON (*Het Brusselse Onthaalbureau voor anderstalige Nieuwkomers*).
- The programmes follow the Flemish model and are under the authority of the same Agency for Integration and the Flemish Community Commission. The only relevant difference is that courses are not compulsory. They consist of civic orientation (60 hours), Dutch courses (90 - 600 hours, with the aim of reaching A2 level), professional orientation, individual coaching, evaluation of attendance and active participation, and orientation toward appropriate external offices (for example, employment offices).
- A second module is available with more activities across the board.
- All non-Belgian individuals who enjoy the right of long residence in Belgium may attend the courses, as can Belgian citizens born abroad who have at least one parent born abroad.
- The evaluation is based on the same criteria as are evaluations in Flanders.

French-Speaking

- Integration falls under the responsibility of the *Commission Communautaire Française* (COCOF).
- In 2015, the COCOF set up a reception programme for newcomers (*parcours d'accueil primo-arrivants*). The programme is implemented by two *Bureaux d'Accueil pour Primo-Arrivants* (BAPA), which have the formal status of an NGO but have been constituted by the municipality.¹²² They were selected through an invitation to tender.
- Those who have access to the programme are adults of foreign origin with a residence permit of at least three months who have been living in Belgium for no more than three years and have been registered in a district of Brussels. Asylum seekers are excluded from the programme.
- Evaluation is based on class attendance, and the programme features two modules. The first (*volet primaire*) is composed of individual assessment, assessment of French knowledge and civic training on rights and duties (10 hours).¹²³ The second (*volet secondaire*) is optional and comprises one or more of the following: French classes to reach the A2 level (240 - 1140 hours), civic orientation (a minimum of 50 hours),¹²⁴ individual support and socioprofessional orientation with competent offices.

¹¹⁶The European Migration Network EMN, "Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection into the Labour Market in Belgium" (EMN and European Commission, February 2016), 11 https://emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/integration_of_beneficiaries_of_international_protection_into_the_labour_market_in_belgium_3.pdf.

¹¹⁷EMN 12.

¹¹⁸Translation of *Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering* provided by EMN.

¹¹⁹"Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel," 51.

¹²⁰For a detailed description of the Brussels system, see Catherine Xhardez, "L'intégration des Nouveaux Arrivants à Bruxelles: Un Puzzle Institutionnel et Politique," *Brussels Studies* no. 105, 24 October 2016, <http://brussels.revues.org/1429>.

¹²¹The Flemish Community has been fused with the Flemish Region.

¹²²They therefore are defined as *paracommunales*: they have been created by public bodies linked to Brussels' municipalities but have the status of "Asbl" (private nonprofit organisations). See "Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel," 88.

¹²³This covers the following aspects: constitutional rights and duties; European Convention on Human Rights; rights and duties in the fields of health, housing, mobility, work, training, and education. "Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel," 125.

¹²⁴The domains identified by the law are the following: Belgium's history, institutional and political framework, geography and socioeconomic organization, system of social security and labour market. "Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel," 125. It should be noted that there is no specific focus on culture and values, although the subjects are so wide that those could fall within one or more of them.

- It is important to mention that the absence of one or more of these elements in the final certificate is not indicated. It therefore is impossible to ascertain if the exemption is due to either the lack of need or will on the part of the refugees to follow a certain module.¹²⁵

The above description does not describe all of Belgium's integration programmes. The initial basic integration course may be further developed, depending on availability and individual will, with additional training, whether professional, linguistic, civic, etc. In this case, integration offices may have internal resources or could redirect concerned individuals to the appropriate services (employment offices, schools, etc). Furthermore, several NGOs complement the official programmes, providing additional support in specific domains. Because various services fall under federal, regional, or local authority, NGOs must work with different public offices depending on the service they provide.

DENMARK

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- As of January 2016, the Danish population was 5,707,251.¹²⁶
- The number of asylum seekers increased from 14,535 in 2014 to 20,825 in 2015, an increase of 43 percent.¹²⁷
- Regarding first-time asylum applicants, the top three nationalities in 2015 were from Syria (8,580), Iran (2,745) and Afghanistan (2,215).¹²⁸
- In 2015, there was an increase in the total number of applications in the area of family reunification, from 12,307 in 2014 to 16,017 in 2015. The largest nationalities were Syrian (6,872), Eritrean (1,511), and applicants who were stateless (1,073).¹²⁹
- In 2015, there were 10,200 positive decisions on asylum applications. The three main citizenships granted protection status in Denmark were Syrian (5,750), Eritrean (2,895), and people who were stateless (870).¹³⁰
- In 2016, first-time asylum applications dramatically decreased, from 20,825 in 2015 to 6,055 in 2016, a decrease of 71 percent. Applicants mainly came from Syria (1,255) and Afghanistan (1,110) and people who were stateless (490).¹³¹
- In 2016, there were 7,405 positive decisions on asylum applications, 4,475 of which were for refugee status, 2,280 were for subsidiary protection and 50 for humanitarian reasons. The three main nationalities granted protection status were Syrian (5,260), stateless (560), and Eritrean (530).¹³² Average wait time for asylum seekers is 16.6 months.

ASYLUM PROCESS

Procedure

- In Denmark, asylum can only be requested in person at police stations or at the Sandholm Accommodation Centre, which is managed by the Red Cross.
- The registration procedure is undertaken by the police, who photograph asylum seekers and take their fingerprints. During this process, the Immigration Service, a directorate within the Danish Ministry of Refugees, Immigration and Integration Affairs, determines whether the asylum seeker has been previously registered in another EU Member State to apply the Dublin Regulation. In such a case, that Member State will be asked to assume responsibility for the asylum seeker, who will subsequently be returned. This decision, however, can be appealed within seven days to the Refugee Board of Appeals, for which asylum seekers can receive free legal assistance by the Danish Refugee Council, a private humanitarian organisation. During this time, asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres.
- The Danish Immigration Service (DIS) covers expenses for health care, but only if it is necessary, urgent, or to address pain-relief. According to the Danish Refugee Council, a complete screening for every asylum seeker was mandatory until 2016; this is now at the discretion of the social worker responsible to decide if it is needed. Children of asylum seekers are entitled to the same health care as children who reside in Denmark. Asylum seekers also have the possibility of receiving treatment from a psychologist. Red Cross camps offer assistance with screening and

¹²⁵Parcours d'Accueil Pour Primo-Arrivants Rapport Annuel," 72.

¹²⁶(Statistics Denmark is the central authority for the provision of statistics on Danish society.) "Van5: Asylum Seekers by Citizenship and Type of Asylum," Statbank Denmark, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.statbank.dk/VAN5>.

¹²⁷Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 16 March 2017.

¹²⁸Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 4 March 2016.

¹²⁹Danish Immigration Service, "Statistical Overview Migration and Asylum 2015," 2016, <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/NR/rdonlyres/6460D4F5-F48B-4724-9ED6-0BCD97683104/0/StatisticalOverview2015.pdf>.

¹³⁰Eurostat, "Asylum Decisions in the EU," 20 April 2016.

¹³¹Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 16 March 2017.

¹³²Eurostat, "Asylum Decisions in the EU," 26 April 2017.

help people who suffer from psychological distress as a result of torture and general trauma.

- Newly arrived asylum seekers are obliged to participate in the reception centre's introductory course in Danish language, culture and society. Once it is decided that the application will be processed, the asylum seeker must participate in a course on the education system, the labour market and housing.
- Three procedures govern the decision-making process: normal, manifestly unfounded and the expedited manifestly unfounded procedure. In the **normal procedure**, a decision is generally made after two interviews, although more complicated cases feature a follow-up interview. When granted Asylum, applicants are assigned to local municipalities that are responsible for integration. Rejected applications are transferred directly to the Refugee Board of Appeals, where a lawyer will be assigned to each case, free of charge and whose decision is final. An application can be **manifestly unfounded** if it lacks valid grounds or if the asylum-seeking grounds do not warrant protection. The Immigration Service can decide if a claim is manifestly unfounded. However, if the Danish Refugee Council, a humanitarian non-governmental organisation, disagrees with the Immigration Service, the application will be processed following the normal procedure. The procedure for **manifestly well-founded cases** pertains to residents from certain countries. In this case, the asylum seeker is quickly granted an interview with the Immigration Service. As in the previous case, if the Danish Refugee Council does not accept the decision of the Immigration Service, the asylum seeker will be asked to follow the normal procedure.¹³³

Accommodation

- While an asylum application is processed, applicants are assigned accommodation in an asylum centre. In cooperation with operators such as municipalities and the Danish Red Cross, the Immigration Service is responsible

for accommodation and living expenses in the form of cash allowances. The amount of allowance paid depends on the availability of free meals at the accommodation, the status of the application (that is, if it still must be determined whether the application will be processed or not) and whether the person is a caregiver. The basic allowance is €6.76 a day, though cash allowances are not paid out if an individual's application is rejected. If the asylum seeker is married to a Danish resident, the spouse must support them.

- Asylum seekers sign a contract with the asylum centre that specifies cleaning tasks or office work they will undertake at the centre, as well as their participation in education programmes. Upon compliance with the contract, a supplementary allowance can be granted.
- Six months after the application has been issued and when it has been accepted for processing, asylum seekers over the age of 18 may apply for approval of an employment offer at the DIS and begin working once they enter into a contract that sets out the terms of approval. Working in certain professions, as set out in a list, represents grounds for applying for a residence permit. It is also possible for asylum seekers to participate in paid internships. In both cases, the salary will be deducted from the asylum seeker's cash allowance. Furthermore, they can be required to pay rent at the asylum centre or a centre-affiliated independent residence and to support their spouses and children.¹³⁴

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Denmark was the first EU Member State to implement a so-called Act on Integration of Aliens, which came into effect in 1999. To date, there have been several amendments to the initial act in the form of Consolidation Acts. Most notably, this legislation, which is also referred to as the Aliens Act, places the responsibility of offering integration programmes for refugees and migrants, including language and job training, on the municipalities, with the costs borne by the State.

- The DIS assigns refugees to the municipalities once their application has been granted and they have received a residence permit. This process is referred to as allocation. Refugees are mainly distributed on the basis of a quota, based on the number of migrants residing in the respective municipalities. Subsequent to receiving a residence permit, participation in a three-year integration programme is obligatory in order to receive social security benefits.
- The integration programme consists of courses in Danish language, social conditions and culture and history and features job-related activity such as internships. Language courses are conducted by private or public language schools and are offered at three different levels, depending on the recipient's educational background. Danish Education 1 specifically caters to individuals with limited educational background or limited learning capacity due to trauma. Danish Education 2 caters to those with a normal educational background and Danish Education 3 caters to those with higher education backgrounds. Four-hour classes usually take place three times a week.¹³⁵ Individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 who receive social benefits are encouraged to apply for the level that is deemed achievable for them.
- An integration contract outlining the integration activities in which the new resident will participate is signed between the beneficiary and the local government. The contract comprises a Declaration on Integration and Active Citizenship, which states information related to rights and responsibilities of Danish residents.
- At the beginning of 2016, the Danish parliament passed a bill that made it possible for police to seize migrants' valuables that exceed €1,340. It also raised language and employment requirements for permanent residence and introduced a €500 fee for the application.¹³⁶
- The Immigration and Integration Ministry was created at the end of 2016. It assumes responsibility for matters related to immigration, including asylum, humanitarian residence permits, family reunification, compatibility between EU and national laws, integration of refugees and immigrants into the labour market and education system, the introduction and integration programme and employment-related matters. Two boards operate under the Ministry: the Immigration Board and the International Recruitment and Integration Board. The latter is responsible for examining applications for residence permits for third-country nationals—that is, nationals of a non-Nordic country and the EU/EEA who are required to have a residence permit to live in Denmark. It is the board's responsibility to support the integration efforts into effective practices in the municipalities. The board also coordinates efforts to prevent extremism and radicalisation and combat honour-related conflict.¹³⁷
- Three integration-related governmental initiatives¹³⁸ deserve mention:
 - 1) *Together about Integration*: an initiative created by the government along with several companies at a September 2015 summit on integration in Marienborg. The goal is for companies to share their experiences so that more refugees will be able to get a job quickly.

¹³³Reference: "Country Profile – Denmark", European Database of Asylum Law, accessed 04 April 2018, <http://www.asylumlawdatabase.eu/en/content/country-profile-denmark>

¹³⁴On that note, see the New to Denmark website pages https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/asylum/asylum_process/asylum_process.htm and https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-us/coming_to_dk/asylum/accommodation_centres/accommodation_centres.htm.

¹³⁵See Michala Clante Bendixen, "Danish Language Education," accessed 24 October 2017, <http://refugees.dk/en/facts/the-asylum-procedure-in-denmark/danish-language-education/>.

¹³⁶"Here's What Denmark's New Immigration Bill Means for You."

¹³⁷This is our translation from the official Danish website, <http://uim.dk/siri>.

¹³⁸Information translated from the Danish Immigration and Integration Ministry website, <http://uim.dk/arbejdsomrader/Integration>.

2) *Integration Basic Education*: a two-year trial programme that will help companies train and recruit workers among refugees through a vocational education path.

3) Bonus for companies: The Integration Act has been amended so that, for a three-year period, the State pays a bonus to companies that employ a refugee or a family reunited with a refugee.

- The Ministry of Immigration and Integration presented a draft bill regarding permanent residency rules on 13 January 2017. It contains stricter rules for obtaining a permanent residence permit in Denmark. The law provides for an increase in the number of years of stay in Denmark from six to eight years, and the number of years of full-time employment from two and a half years in the last three years to three and a half years in the last four years.¹³⁹

FRANCE

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- As of December 2016, France's population was 66,990,826.¹⁴⁰
- From 2014 - 2016, applications for asylum in France increased. There were 58,845 first-time applicants in 2014¹⁴¹ compared to 70,570 in 2015¹⁴² and 76,000 in 2016.¹⁴³
- Alongside the increasing number of applications was a decrease in the rejection rate: 78.19 percent in 2013, 74.1 percent in 2015, and 66.8 percent in 2016. Despite this trend, the percentage of asylum seekers who received refugee status in 2016 remained only slightly above 21 percent.¹⁴⁴
- The number of Syrians seeking asylum in France has increased over the years. There were 458 Syrian applicants in 2012, 878 in 2013, 2,810 in 2015 and 3,562 in 2016.¹⁴⁵ It also should be noted that France agreed to host 2,696 asylum seekers relocating from Greece and Italy in 2016 and 3,005 Syrian refugees resettling from Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey. In total, under the terms of the

agreement signed by Turkey and the European Union on 18 March 2016, France committed to accommodating 10,375 Syrians who are in a highly vulnerable situation.¹⁴⁶

- In 2015, the average recognition rate for asylum seekers coming from all over the world was 23 percent. That same year, OFPRA¹⁴⁷ granted protected status to more than 96.9 percent of Syrian asylum seekers and 97.9 percent of Iraqi asylum seekers.¹⁴⁸ France prioritises those who come from countries considered unsafe (Syria, Iraq, Central African Republic, Yemen and Afghanistan) as well as migrants in Calais, which is beset by numerous social problems.¹⁴⁹ The average waiting time for Syrian asylum seekers with claims processed by OFPRA is approximately three months. Our interviews appear to confirm this trend, with some exceptions: three respondents who applied for asylum in September and October 2016 had not received any response as of May 2017. Interviewees who applied for asylum between 2013 and 2014 also reported longer wait times, but this is consistent with the fact that until 2014, Syrian asylum seekers did not get any specific treatment in France.

¹³⁹See Naqeeb Khan, "Now the Parliament Must Intervene," Danish Green Card Association (blog), 15 April 2017, <https://danishgreencard.wordpress.com/2017/04/15/now-the-parliament-must-intervene/>.

¹⁴⁰"Bilan Démographique 2016" Institut National de la Statistique et des Etudes Economiques, accessed 24 October 2017, <https://www.insee.fr/fr/statistiques/1892086?sommaire=1912926>.

¹⁴¹Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 4 March 2016.

¹⁴²Ibid.

¹⁴³Eurostat, "Asylum in the EU Member States," 16 March 2017.

¹⁴⁴ECRE, "Country Report: France 2016 Update," Asylum Information Database, 31 December 2016, 9, http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_fr_2016update.pdf.

¹⁴⁵Data taken from different reports written by Claire Salignat, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/france>, accessed 24 October 2017.

¹⁴⁶"Logement des Réfugiés," Gouvernement.fr, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.gouvernement.fr/logement-des-refugies>.

¹⁴⁷Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides (OFPRA).

¹⁴⁸Forum Réfugiés—Cosi, "Differential Treatment of Specific Nationalities in the Procedure. France," Asylum Information Database, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/france/asylum-procedure/treatment-specific-nationalities>.

¹⁴⁹Ibid. Information also emerged from the interview conducted at the Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides. (It is important to underline the difference between *prioritised procedures* and *accelerated procedures*: "[...] prioritised procedures entail a more rapid examination of claims without derogating from normally applicable procedural time limits, principles and guarantees, while accelerated procedures differ from regular procedural rules 'in particular by introducing shorter, but reasonable time limits for certain procedural steps' [...]. On the one hand, Member States are encouraged to favourably prioritise applications from persons with manifestly well-founded claims or vulnerabilities warranting special procedural guarantees. On the other, unfounded or manifestly unfounded applications can be accelerated under a less protective procedural regime, on the assumption that they will most likely be rejected." See ECRE, "Accelerated, Prioritised and Fast-Track Asylum Procedures. Legal Frameworks and Practice in Europe," May 2017, 2, https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/AIDA-Brief_AcceleratedProcedures.pdf.

- Asylum seekers' main country of origin in 2016 was Sudan. Syria was in fifth place, after Afghanistan, Haiti and Albania.

Table A.1: Applications and Protection Status by Country of Origin, 2016

Country of Origin	Number of Applicants	Refugee Status	Subsidiary Protection	Rejection
Sudan	5,868	2,280	415	3,405
Afghanistan	5,641	915	2,835	800
Haiti	4,854	110	100	3,995
Albania	4,599	120	625	4,580
Syria	3,562	2,520	2,755	150
DRC	2,549	1,145	160	3,400
Guinea	2,334	585	185	1,415
Bangladesh	2,276	330	115	3,670
Algeria	1,972	165	120	2,570
China	1,855	905	5	1,495

Source: ECRE, "Country Report: France 2016 Update," 9.

- It is interesting that Albanian asylum seekers comprise such a high number of applicants, despite the fact that Albania is included in France's safe countries list.¹⁵⁰ For the French government, this means dedicating considerable resources to providing social and economic support for people who, in most cases, have no chance of being awarded refugee status. (In 2016, the rejection rate for Albanian nationals was 86 percent.) This is particularly relevant if we consider the challenges related to a lack of accommodation and unfair distribution of refugees in the country:
- 50 percent of applicants are not housed in state structures.¹⁵¹
- The majority of refugees are housed in the same location as their request for asylum.¹⁵²
- 45 percent of refugees are based in Île-de-France.¹⁵³

ASYLUM PROCESS

Procedure

- New legislation on asylum seekers and refugees in France was published in the *Official Journal* on 29 July 2015 and came into effect on 2 November 2015. Within 120 days

of their arrival in France, all foreign citizens wishing to apply for asylum must go to one of the existing guidance platforms (PADA, or *plateforme d'accueil pour demandeurs d'asile*) where they are provided with an asylum application form, which is then forwarded to the local government Prefecture office. The appointment with the Prefecture to register their claim should take place within three days. The legislation also stipulates that it is no longer mandatory to have a home address to submit an asylum application.

- The claim is registered at the *guichet unique* (a dedicate desk). There are 34 such dedicated desks throughout the country, bringing together the offices of the Prefecture and the OFII¹⁵⁴. Prefecture officials take photos and fingerprints of every asylum seeker and determine which state is responsible for each application based on the Dublin Regulation. Following this process, asylum seekers receive a file from OFPRA, which falls under the judicial control of the National Asylum Court and is the administration that reviews asylum applications. OFII agents inform them of their allocation of asylum seeker applications (ADA) and assess their vulnerability. OFII also is responsible for offering accommodation, but the supply is less than the demand so it depends on availability.
- Once the OFPRA dossier has been received and the necessary paperwork completed, it must be sent to OFPRA within 21 days. OFPRA then sends a letter informing the asylum seeker that the request is under consideration and invites him or her to attend an interview, which can feature the presence of a lawyer

or representative from a relevant organisation. OFPRA rules on the application within six months¹⁵⁵ (in the case of an accelerated procedure, 15 days after the file is registered). Three different kinds of decisions are possible:¹⁵⁶

1. The applicant is granted refugee status and is granted a 10-year residence permit.
2. The applicant is granted subsidiary protection¹⁵⁷ and gets a renewable one-year residence permit.
3. The application is rejected.

- If an asylum seeker's application is rejected, he or she has 15 days to appeal through the National Court for Right of Asylum (CNDA). If the CNDA rejects the appeal, the asylum seeker must leave France. If the appeal is successful, the asylum seeker will receive refugee or subsidiary protection status.
- As per the 2015 legislation, claims from Syrian and Iraqi asylum seekers are prioritised; OFPRA tries to process these claims within three months.
- According to our interviews, CSOs play a crucial role in helping asylum seekers obtain protection status, find appropriate housing, enter the labour market and learn the local language.

Reception

- Asylum seekers' reception centres, CADAs, offer a home to asylum seekers for the duration of their application. CADAs provide reception service, administrative assistance (support for the application procedure), social assistance

¹⁵⁰France safe countries list include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Armenia, Georgia, India, and Mongolia.

¹⁵¹Datum collected during the interview conducted at the Ministry of the Interior, Paris, 23 March 2017.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³Datum collected during the Skype interview conducted with SINGA France, 21 April 2017.

¹⁵⁴Office français de l'immigration et de l'intégration (French Office for Immigration and Integration)

¹⁵⁵In case of a particular control need, due to security concerns, a maximum of another 15 months (21 months in total) could be added.

¹⁵⁶OFPRA, "Guide des Procédures à l'OFPRA," 2015, 44, https://www.ofpra.gouv.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/161215_-_guide_de_procedures.pdf.

¹⁵⁷People who do not qualify for refugee status may receive subsidiary protection because of a serious risk of death, torture, or degrading treatment if they return to their country of origin.

(access to care, schooling for children, etc.) and food assistance. CADAs are usually managed by NGOs or companies.¹⁵⁸

- CADAs include housing units in apartment buildings (private housing) as well as formal reception centres.
- As of 30 June 2016, the national reception programme included 303 reception centres, 1 centre specifically for unaccompanied children, 2 transit centres, 91 central emergency centres (ATSAs) and 171 decentralised emergency shelters (HUDAs).¹⁵⁹ HUDAs and ATSAs offer a lower quality level of support.¹⁶⁰
- The reception of asylum seekers in France follows the establishment of the 1951 Geneva Convention, which also requires the State to finance CADAs.¹⁶¹ These centres are subject to the code of social action and families and associated regulations (Article L.312-1, paragraph 13).¹⁶²
- Refugees may apply to OFII for a place in a temporary accommodation centre but for nine months only (renewable for three additional months).
- In the Paris region, there are 40,000 accommodation spaces in emergency structures (shelters and social integration centres) managed by NGOs.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Legislation introduced on 7 March 2016 reformed the reception and integration system for asylum seekers who wish to settle permanently in France. Several measures came into effect on 1 July 2016, such as the CIR¹⁶³, which envisages a five-year integration path, reinforced by the required language level and a redefinition of the services provided by OFII.¹⁶⁴ It is too early to judge the effectiveness of the new system. Some of the new measures to promote newcomers' integration into French society include the following:¹⁶⁵

- 1) A booklet of information, translated into several languages, available at <http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr> and <http://www.ofii.fr>.

- 2) A less standardised and more personalised OFII interview that aims to determine accurately newcomers' linguistic needs and guide them toward the most appropriate public services.
- 3) During their interview, newcomers sign the CIR, which prescribes a compulsory civil society course.
- 4) It is mandatory for refugees to obtain the A1 level in the French language. If the newcomer does not reach this level, a language course is prescribed. Previously, the required level was lower (A1.1).
- 5) Migrants must demonstrate their commitment to participation in the CIR's civic and linguistic training to achieve a multiannual residence permit. When the permit expires, the migrant can receive a residence permit if high levels of integration (not rejecting the values of society and the French Republic) and the A2 language level have been achieved.

- The regional responsibility for asylum seekers' reception and integration falls to the Prefecture.
- By exercising their various powers, local and regional authorities—such as the town hall, county councils, and regional councils—participate in the integration process (for example, enrolling children in kindergarten and primary schools, processing applications for social housing and dealing with requests for financial aid).
- Nearly 1,500 NGOs contribute to implementing the reception and integration policy.¹⁶⁶

Integration policies and practices for asylum seekers

- Asylum seekers can benefit from universal health coverage (CMU).
- Asylum seekers may benefit from ADA (the asylum seeker's allowance).
- Asylum seekers may apply for a work permit if OFPRA has not made its decision within nine months.

- Asylum seekers can benefit from accommodation in CADAs (or HUDAs/ATSAs), depending on availability.
- Asylum seekers can benefit from the many CSOs offering help with administrative procedures and primary needs. The level of help these organisations provide varies greatly from city to city.
- The integration process for refugees in France is largely delivered by CSOs. Testimony gathered from the Ministry of the Interior emphasised this. The main challenge facing the French government is a lack of political engagement with and understanding of these issues. Some of our interviewees indicated that talking about the integration of millions of refugees would mean tackling the fear of attacks provoked by Islamist extremism and would not be accepted by significant parts of the French population. Because of this, authorities and policymakers delegate most of the responsibility for integrating refugees to nongovernmental actors. For instance, DIHAL's Migrants Pole works with hundreds of NGOs that advise refugees throughout the integration process.

Integration programmes for refugees

- Refugees can continue to benefit from CMU.
- Refugees can benefit from RSA (in-work welfare payments).
- Entering the labour market is not easy for refugees and civil society plays a fundamental role in organising work guidance, courses and online platforms for connecting refugees and employers.
- Refugees are required to attend a two-day civil society course that features two modules. Module 1 is titled "Principles and Institutions of the French Republic" and Module 2 is "Living and Entering the Labour Market in France." It is important to note that, although this training is compulsory, there are no consequences if refugees do not attend classes, according to interviews we conducted with the Ministry of Interior. This is an issue of political debate.

¹⁵⁸"Annuaire des Centre d'Accueil de Demandeurs d'Asile (CADA)," Action-Sociale, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://annuaire.action-sociale.org/etablissemments/readaptation-sociale/centre-accueil-demandeurs-asile--c-a-d-a---443.html>.

¹⁵⁹ibid.

¹⁶⁰Juliette Delaplace, "Asylum Reform in France and the Evolving Role of the Homeless Sector, FNARS, France, 2016," Presented during the "Access to Adequate Accommodation for Asylum Seekers and the Role of the Homeless Sector" at the FEANTSA Annual European Policy Conference. 10 June 2016. <https://www.slideshare.net/FEANTSA/asylum-reform-in-france-and-the-evolving-role-of-the-homeless-sector>.

¹⁶¹"Annuaire des Centre d'Accueil de Demandeurs d'Asile (CADA)."

¹⁶²"Accompagnement et Hébergement en Cada," France Terre d'Asile, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.france-terre-asile.org/centre-d-accueil-pour-demandeurs-d-asile/flexicontent/que-faisons-nous/accompagnement-et-hebergement-en-cada>.

¹⁶³Contrat d'intégration républicaine

¹⁶⁴"Le Droit des Étrangers et la Réforme de l'Asile," Gouvernement.fr, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-droit-des-etrangers-et-la-reforme-de-l-asile>.

¹⁶⁵The following information is included in Ministère de l'Intérieur—Direction Générale des Étrangers en France, *Le Contrat d'Intégration Républicaine*, Dossier de Presse (2016), 3.

¹⁶⁶"Les Associations," Gouvernement.fr, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Accueil-et-accompagnement/Les-acteurs-de-l-integration/Les-associations>.

GERMANY

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

At the end of 2016, Germany had a population of approximately 82.8 million.¹⁶⁷ From 2015 to 2016, the country experienced a more than 35 percent increase in first-time asylum applications. However, these numbers do not reflect the actual number of asylum seekers in the country, as they do not include those who were waiting for appointments to file their applications with the BAMF and sometimes need to wait for several weeks,¹⁶⁸ depending on the jurisdiction. In any case, 2015 and 2016 marked a peak in asylum requests in Germany, with 441,899 and 722,370 first-time applications, respectively.¹⁶⁹ Between January and April 2017, 69,605 first-time asylum applications were filed, while 232,493 asylum procedures, both first-time and subsequent applications, were still undecided as of April 2017.¹⁷⁰

It must be noted that available data on asylum seekers in Germany for 2015 cannot be regarded as completely accurate. This is due to duplicate registrations of some individuals, which occurred during the initial registration in the EASY system.¹⁷¹ Although 1.1 million people were initially registered in EASY in 2015, the German Interior Ministry in retrospect adjusted this number, claiming that 890,000 asylum seekers actually arrived that year.¹⁷²

Table A.2: Top Nationalities of First-Time Applicants

Year	Countries	Number of First-Time Applications
2016	1. Syria	266,250
	2. Afghanistan	127,012
	3. Iraq	96,116
2015	1. Syria	158,657
	2. Albania	53,805
	3. Kosovo	33,427
2014	1. Syria	39,332
	2. Serbia	17,172
	3. Eritrea	13,198

Source: "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2014"; "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2015"; and "Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2016."

Table A.3: Top Nationalities Receiving Protection, 2016

Year	Countries	Number of Individuals
2016	1. Syria	228,992
	2. Iraq	48,152
	3. Eritrea	20,437
2015	1. Syria	101,419
	2. Iraq	14,880
	3. Eritrea	9,300
2014	1. Syria	23,859
	2. Afghanistan	3,403
	3. Iraq	3,389

Source: “Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2014”; “Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2015”; and “Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2016.”

Family reunification is generally available for those who received refugee status and those who receive subsidiary protection. However, for individuals granted subsidiary protection after 17 March 2016, family reunification has been suspended for a period of two years.¹⁷³

ASYLUM PROCESS

Procedure

The Asylum Procedure Act governs the German asylum procedure.¹⁷⁴ Its provisions include the following:

- Asylum seekers arriving in Germany must register either at a border security agency or within the country at police stations, foreigner’s registration offices, communal shelters, or BAMF outposts. All asylum seekers should

¹⁶⁷“Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2016.”

¹⁶⁸Frida Thurm, “Lageso: Ein Bisschen Weniger Frieren,” Die Zeit, 15 October 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2015-10/lageso-asylpolitik-fluechtlinge-berlin>.

¹⁶⁹“Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2015”; “Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat Dezember 2016.”

¹⁷⁰BAMF, “Asylgeschäftsstatistik für den Monat April 2017,” April 2017, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Statistik/Asyl/201704-statistik-anlage-asyl-geschaeftsbericht.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

¹⁷¹Erstverteilung von Asylbegehrenden (initial distribution of asylum seekers).

¹⁷²“Erhebliche Unschärfen bei den Asylzahlen 2015,” Pro Asyl, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.proasyl.de/news/erhebliche-unschaeferen-bei-den-asylzahlen-2015/>.

¹⁷³“Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge—Familienasyl und Familiennachzug,” BAMF, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Fluechtlingsschutz/FamilienasylFamiliennachzug/familienasyl-familiennachzug-node.html>.

¹⁷⁴“Asylgesetz (AsylG),” Juris, 2017, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/asylvfg_1992/AsylG.pdf.

be registered in the EASY system. As of July 2016, EASY was not gathering any personal data, allowing individuals to be registered multiple times, prolonging the situation that led to tallying inaccurate numbers in 2015.¹⁷⁵

- Distribution to the federal states via EASY is anonymous and occurs according to the “*Königstein Schlüssel*”,¹⁷⁶ a quota system that determines how many asylum seekers each federal state receives. The quota is calculated annually on the basis of the previous year’s fiscal revenue and population numbers.
- At their initial registration, asylum seekers are provided with transportation tickets to the closest reception centre in the federal state to which they have been allocated. Registration in the initial reception centres consists of collecting personal data, a photograph and taking fingerprints of those over the age of 14. Since February 2016, asylum seekers receive a document that confirms their arrival in Germany.

Reception

- Following registration, the individual federal state is responsible for caring for the asylum seekers. It covers their minimum subsistence in terms of food and shelter, within the scope of the Act on Benefits for Asylum Seekers.¹⁷⁷ In 2015, 974,551 individuals received such benefits.¹⁷⁸ In October of the same year, the Act on the Acceleration of Asylum Procedures¹⁷⁹ came into effect, which replaced allowances with noncash benefits, distributed during the six-month period that applicants may remain in communal shelters. If an individual does not report to his/her assigned reception centre within a week of registering in the EASY system, they are reported to the police as being illegal. In 2016, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia processed the largest share of first-time applications (27.2 percent), while the Saarland processed the smallest (0.9 percent).
- The federal states commission private contractors and organisations experienced in catastrophe relief to administer the initial reception centres and communal shelters. CSOs also are very active in advising asylum seekers with regards to the asylum procedure.

- The asylum procedure consists of filing an application, attending a hearing, and receiving the decision at the BAMF. In response to the large influx of asylum seekers in 2015, the number of decision-makers was temporarily increased from 370 in October 2015 to 3,370 in November 2016. According to the Interior Ministry, the asylum procedure for newly arriving asylum seekers currently takes less than three months.¹⁸⁰ However, some of the older applications have been going on for more than 18 months.¹⁸¹
- Asylum seekers who have filed their application with the BAMF receive a temporary stay permit,¹⁸² which entails an obligation to reside in the district of the reception facility responsible for them. After three months, the area expands to the entire federal territory. Those who have a low prospect of staying are bound by the residential obligation until their case has been decided. In cases where their application was manifestly unfounded, however, individuals are bound by the residential obligation until their departure.¹⁸³

- In Germany, education is compulsory from the age of six, as well as before recognition. Education is the responsibility of the federal states, for which each has different programmes, such as *Willkommensklassen*, where children learn German before they attend the same classes as local children.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- On 31 July 2016, Germany’s first integration law¹⁸⁴ came into effect as a reaction to what the country experienced in 2015. The law affects a variety of areas governed by different laws, such as social security statutes, asylum laws, and the Central Register of Foreign Nationals. It enacts changes that pertain to asylum seekers and integration measures.
- Those recognised as refugees must take integration courses, although these can be taken earlier by select groups of asylum seekers. A place of residence is assigned and settlement permits are extended only if refugees show a willingness to integrate. A Refugee Integration Measures programme

was initiated to create 100,000 positions of gainful employment. Due to low implementation by employers, however, the programme has since been cancelled.¹⁸⁵ Benefits can be cut should an asylum seeker fail to cooperate—that is, does not submit identity documents, misses an appointment at the BAMF, or refuses to provide other information regarding identity or citizenship. Failing to take the obligatory integration course also constitutes grounds for losing benefits.

- Federal integration measures are available to asylum seekers conditional on their respective legal status, some of them from day one.
- In 1993, Germany established in its Asylum Act the legal terminology *secure country of origin*. This is generally defined as a country in which the German legislature assumes that political persecution is not taking place. On this basis, a distinction is made between

individuals with a good prospect of staying¹⁸⁶ and those from a secure country of origin. Currently, those with good prospects of staying are nationals of Syria, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, and Eritrea.¹⁸⁷ Integration measures are available to asylum seekers if indeed they have a good chance of remaining.

- The BAMF offers integration courses that consist of 600 teaching units of language training aimed at acquiring the B1 level, as well as 100 units of an orientation course on German law, culture and history. Such courses aim to promote a positive image of democracy and the fundamental rights outlined in basic German law.¹⁸⁸ Course providers can be both public and private contractors who are commissioned for up to three years. They are assessed based on a list of standards, such as having experience conducting subsidised programmes, having qualified teaching staff or, having certain technical equipment.¹⁸⁹

¹⁷⁵"Asylzahlen und Halbjahresbilanz," BAMF, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/DE/2016/20160707-asylgeschaefsstatistik-juni.html>.

¹⁷⁶Königsteiner Schlüssel "Glossar," BAMF, accessed 25 October 2017, http://www.bamf.de/EN/Service/Left/Glossary/_function/glossar.html?lv3=1504234&lv2=1450778

¹⁷⁷"Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz (AsylbLG)," Juris GmbH, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/asylbgl/BJNR107410993.html>.

¹⁷⁸"Statistische Daten zu Flüchtlingen," Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), accessed 25 October 2017, https://www.destatis.de/DE/ZahlenFakten/_Querschnitt/Fluechtlinge/Fluechtlinge.html.

¹⁷⁹"Asylverfahrenbeschleunigungsgesetz," Bundesgesetzblatt Teil, no. 40 (23 October 2015): 1722, http://www.bgbl.de/xaver/bgbl/start.xav?startbk=Bundesanzeiger_BGBl&jumpTo=bgbl115s1722.pdf.

¹⁸⁰Information provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

¹⁸¹"Asylverfahren Dauern Länger, Ausbildung der Entscheider Wird Immer Kürzer," Pro Asyl, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.proasyl.de/pressemitteilung/asylverfahren-dauern-laenger-ausbildung-der-entscheider-wird-immer-kuerzer/>.

¹⁸²Aufenthaltsgestattung.

¹⁸³"Persönliche Asylantragstellung," BAMF, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Fluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylv/PersoelicheAntragstellung/persoeliche-antragstellung-node.html>.

¹⁸⁴"Integrationsgesetz."

¹⁸⁵"Nur 25.000 Neue Stellen: Andrea Nahles Stampft Flüchtlings-Job-Programm Ein," FOCUS Online, accessed 25 October 2017, http://www.focus.de/finanzen/news/arbeitsmarkt/fluechtlingsintegrationsmassnahmen-nur-25-000-neue-stellen-andrea-nahles-stampft-fluechtlings-job-programm-ein_id_6991183.html.

¹⁸⁶The designation person with a good perspective of staying describes nationals from countries with a protection quota of more than 50 percent and is determined biannually. It can be applied once the asylum procedure has been initiated and the asylum seeker has received a residence permit. "FAQ: Integrationskurse für Asylbewerber," BAMF, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Infothek/FragenAntworten/IntegrationskurseAsylbewerber/integrationskurse-asylbewerber-node.html>.

¹⁸⁷"Somalia Ist 'Herkunftsland mit Guter Bleibeperspektive,'" Flüchtlingsrat Sachsen-Anhalt e.V. (blog), 5 August 2016, <http://www.fluechtlingratsa.de/2016/08/somalia-ist-herkunftsland-mit-guter-bleibeperspektive/>.

¹⁸⁸"Curriculum für Einen Bundesweiten Orientierungskurs Überarbeitete Neuauflage für 100 UE—April 2017," BAMF, April 2017, https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/KonzepteLeitfaeden/curriculum-orientierungskurs-pdf.pdf?jsessionid=F522497CD1B5C4920997134010B72B8B.1_cid368?__blob=publicationFile.

- In response to the 2015 demand, course hours and numbers have increased, although there is unmet demand.¹⁹⁰ Individuals who receive a residence permit are obliged to register for a nearby integration course and should start classes no more than six weeks following registration. There is a fee for such courses, but eligible individuals can apply for a cost exemption from the employment agency. It is the responsibility of participants to show up regularly and also to sit the final exam. Failure to attend class can result in cuts to social benefits and lead to a one-year ceiling on a residence permit extension. This, in turn, can negatively impact employability.
- Excluded from orientation offers are those who have a secure country of origin.¹⁹¹ For those who have received a deportation ban, the foreigner's registration office decides on a case-by-case basis whether to issue a work permit.
- The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is responsible for coordinating integration into the workforce, while the local branches of the Federal Employment Agency are tasked with supplying the different services. Those who were granted refugee status, and subsequently a residence permit, can access all services as long as they fulfil the requirements (for example, for certain training courses). Asylum seekers who are no longer required to remain in the reception centres can begin working after three months in Germany and on receipt of authorisation from the foreigner's registration office. These services include prevocational education, entry-level qualifications, vocational training and further education.
- None of the interviewed stakeholders described the existence of a comprehensive approach for monitoring and evaluating existing integration measures. (The BAMF has internal evaluation measures.)

THE NETHERLANDS

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- As of April 2016, the Dutch population was 17,000,716.¹⁹²
- There were 47.3 percent fewer applications for asylum in 2016 than in 2015, when applications peaked. The 24,000 applications received in 2014 marked a 66 percent increase from 2013.¹⁹³

Table A.4: First-Time Asylum Applications, 2014–2016

Year	Number of First-Time Applications
2016	31,642
2015	58,880
2014	24,000

Sources: Immigratie-en Naturalisatiedienst Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie, "Asylum Trends. Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands April 2017," April 2017, 4, https://www.ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_April_2017.pdf; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, "Last Year's Inflow Asylum Seekers into EU More Than 40 Percent Up from 2013," 12 May 2015, <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2015/19/last-year-s-inflow-asylum-seekers-into-eu-more-than-40-percent-up-from-2013>.

Table A.5: Applications by Country of Origin, 2016

Country	Number of First-Time Applications
Syria	10,604
Eritrea	2,870
Stateless	1,471

Sources: Dutch Council for Refugees, "Statistics—Netherlands," Asylum Information Database, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/netherlands/statistics>.

- Regarding recognising refugee status and subsidiary protections, figures for 2016 are as follows:¹⁹⁴

- 1) Syria: 12,865
- 2) Eritrea: 3,100
- 3) Iraq: 935

ASYLUM PROCESS

Procedure

- If an asylum seeker arrives in the Netherlands from a non-Schengen country by plane or boat, the asylum application must be submitted to AC Schiphol, located at the Justitieel Complex Schiphol.¹⁹⁵
- Asylum seekers who enter the country by land must report to the Aliens Police, Identification and People Trafficking Department (AVIM), which is located at the central application centre in Ter Apel and run by the COA, an

¹⁸⁹"Punktecatalog für den Erstantrag," BAMF, accessed 14 November 2017, http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/Zulassung/punktecatalog-erstantrag.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

¹⁹⁰Nach der Flucht, "Arbeitsmarkt-Integration von Flüchtlingen in Deutschland," OECD, March 2017, <https://www.oecd.org/berlin/publikationen/Arbeitsmarktintegration-von-Fluechtlingen-in-Deutschland-2017.pdf>.

¹⁹¹Information provided by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.

¹⁹²CBS StatLine—Population and Population Dynamics: Month, Quarter and Year," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, accessed 24 October 2017, [http://statline.cbs.nl/statweb/publication/?vw=t&dm=slen&pa=37943eng&d1=09&d2=203,220,237,254,271,288,\(1-17\)-l&hd=160114-1601&hdr=t&stb=g1](http://statline.cbs.nl/statweb/publication/?vw=t&dm=slen&pa=37943eng&d1=09&d2=203,220,237,254,271,288,(1-17)-l&hd=160114-1601&hdr=t&stb=g1).

¹⁹³"Last Year's Inflow Asylum Seekers into EU More than 40 Percent Up from 2013," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/news/2015/19/last-year-s-inflow-asylum-seekers-into-eu-more-than-40-percent-up-from-2013>.

¹⁹⁴Statistics - Netherlands," Asylum Information Database, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/netherlands/statistics>.

¹⁹⁵"Types of Accommodation—Netherlands," Asylum Information Database, accessed 24 October 2017, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/netherlands/reception-conditions/access-forms-reception-conditions/types>.

independent administrative body of the Ministry of Security and Justice. AVIM records the name, date of birth, nationality, and fingerprints of each applicant. Asylum seekers then submit their application at COA or another application centre, where they remain for up to three days.

- The National TB Control Plan 2016–2020¹⁹⁶ stipulates that the Municipal Health Services must conduct a tuberculosis (TB) screening on immigrants and asylum seekers from high-risk countries.¹⁹⁷ Once complete, the asylum seeker is transferred to a reception location for a stay of up to 12 days.
- After screening EURODAC and EU-VIS databases, the IND, another agency of the Ministry of Security and Justice, decides whether an asylum seeker falls under the jurisdiction of the Netherlands as per the Dublin Regulation.
- If the IND considers the application admissible (meaning the asylum seeker will not be returned as per the Dublin Regulation, does not come from a safe country of origin, and/or has not already received international protection in a different Member State), the asylum seeker is granted a rest and preparation period of up to six days. During this time, asylum seekers receive a medical examination from the Forensisch Medische Maatschappij Utrecht, an independent agency, to assess their physical and psychological capability to be interviewed. They also receive legal assistance from the Dutch Refugee Council and Legal Aid Council.
- The IND's typical asylum procedure takes eight days.¹⁹⁸ An extended asylum procedure applies if more time is needed to investigate and can last for six months, with a possible nine-month extension and another three-month extension. Government sources indicated that on average it took eight months for an asylum application to be processed in 2015. The wait time was less in 2017 because of the dramatic decrease in asylum seekers. Most refugees to the Netherlands today come to join family members already resident.¹⁹⁹

- Asylum seekers can appeal rejected applications at a regional court (Rechtbank).²⁰⁰ This process can be difficult to navigate, however, and requires a lawyer to be involved.

- According to some respondents, the quality and availability of lawyers poses challenges. Many lawyers with appropriate expertise have, it appears, too many cases. However, it is critical for applicants to have a lawyer involved throughout the process. If an application is rejected within the typical eight-day procedure, the appeal at the regional court may move slowly, depending on the grounds for rejection. To prevent deportation while the appeal is underway, the legal representative can request a temporary measure to suspend removal pending the appeal. If this is not requested, the asylum seeker can be deported before the court rules on the appeal.²⁰¹

- The treatment of unaccompanied children is guided by a specific procedure in the Netherlands. Children under 15 years of age are placed in family-appropriate receptions. Children older than 15 go to a “process location” where asylum procedures are applied. They reside here until they receive an assessment, which should happen within three months.

Reception

There are different kinds of reception venues depending on the stage of the asylum application process at which seekers are.²⁰²

- **Central reception location:** in Ter Apel, as soon as they arrive.
- **Process reception location:** the first phase of the asylum process, situated near the IND's office.
- **Asylum seekers' centre:** constitutes most reception centres; accommodates about 400 people of 40 different nationalities, on average.
- **Freedom-restricting location:** those denied a residence permit are housed here and can stay for up to 12 weeks.
- **Family location:**²⁰³ specifically for families with young children who have been refused their request for asylum; families can stay

here until they leave the Netherlands or the youngest child turns 18.

- **Special reception location:** specifically for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.
- Municipalities can offer refugees temporary accommodation until they are assigned a place of residence and permit holders may look for accommodation themselves. Each municipality must provide houses for a certain number of refugees each year and can decide to prioritise certain groups.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Integration policies and practices for asylum seekers

- The Netherlands has just one institution—the NGO Stichting Nidos—that provides professional guardianship for unaccompanied minor asylum seekers.
- Nidos places children younger than 15 years of age with reception families, and care is taken to place children with families of the same ethnicity and culture. The organisation recruits families who have been in the Netherlands for at least two years and have achieved a certain level of integration. In this way, the family can help the child integrate.

- Asylum processes move relatively quickly. The typical process takes eight days. If an asylum seeker's credibility is in doubt, the process is extended to accommodate the IND's investigation.
- Some respondents felt that not enough was being done for asylum seekers. They said that early integration should feature language courses, labour integration and interaction with the host community.
- At the end of 2015, the government and municipal authorities adopted the Increased Asylum Influx Administrative Agreement²⁰⁴ to deal with the reception, process, housing and social support of asylum seekers. This was expanded in 2016 to include schooling, health care and integration. The agreement focuses on work and education. A screening support system was developed to record individuals' education and work experience at an early stage of the asylum process. An asylum seeker's employability is assessed and his or her entry into the labour market is fast-tracked as he or she is assigned to a municipality. Asylum seekers also are encouraged to perform volunteer work.
- The government and the Dutch municipal authorities cooperate with the main social

¹⁹⁶Gerard de Vries, "Programmatic Management of LTBI in the Netherlands," KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, 27 April 2016, <http://www.who.int/tb/areas-of-work/preventive-care/netherlands.pdf>.

¹⁹⁷In general, regarding the medical examination of asylum seekers: "Dutch law and policy provide that a medical examination has to be done if the IND finds this necessary for the examination of the asylum application. If this is the case, the IND asks an independent third party, namely the Dutch Forensic Institute (Nederlands Forensisch Instituut—NFI) or the Dutch Institute for Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology (Nederlands Instituut voor Forensische Psychiatrie en Psychologie), to conduct the examination. The IND bears the costs of this examination. If the asylum seeker is of the opinion that an examination has to be conducted, but the IND disagrees, the asylum seeker can proceed but on his own initiative and costs." ECRE, "Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update," Asylum Information Database, 31 December 2016, 39, http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_nl_update_v_final.pdf.

¹⁹⁸ECRE, "Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update," 16.

¹⁹⁹Interview with a COA official.

²⁰⁰ECRE, "Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update," 16.

²⁰¹ECRE, "Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update," 16.

²⁰²"Types of Reception Centres," Centraal Orgaan Opvang Asielzoekers, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.coa.nl/en/reception-centres/types-of-reception-centres>.

²⁰³"Types of Accommodation—Netherlands." "UNICEF, the Dutch Council for Refugees and Defence for Children have criticised the family housing centers stating that this form of reception in conjunction with the restricted measure is not in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child."

²⁰⁴Klaver, "Local Responses to the Refugee Crisis in the Netherlands, Reception and Integration," 5: "In November 2015 an administrative agreement was reached between various layers of government focusing both on the short term need of providing sufficient reception capacity and (regular) housing for permit holders and the mid-terms needs regarding integration into the work force and issues related to education and health care. This agreement forms the basis for further collaboration between the central and local government the reception and integration of refugees."

workers and other partners in the sector, consulting under the RWITF.²⁰⁵ The RWITF involves the most relevant ministries - Social Affairs and Employment; Security and Justice; Education, Culture and Science; the Association of Dutch municipalities; Social and Economic Council; the Dutch Council for Refugees; Dutch refugee organisations; COA and the Dutch Asylum Reception Organisation, among others. Working groups within the RWITF focus on recording and matching education and work experience and strengthening the focus on language and integration. In cooperation with the RWITF, the Social and Economic Council pioneered the *Werkwijzer Vluchtelingen* website (<http://werkwijzervluchtelingen.nl>) in May 2016, which provides information on legislation, policy initiatives, opportunities for volunteer work, civil integration and education and a link to relevant organisations. The target audience is employers, educational institutions and social organisations.

- In April 2016, the RWITF launched its “Hallo” Facebook page²⁰⁶ to help asylum seekers integrate, find volunteer work, or go to school. Many organisations (such as Refugee Company and Refugee Talent Hub) have launched initiatives that support the page. Businesses also are involved and provide refugees the opportunity to gain work experience. One such company is in the Westland area, where 78 refugees have been placed in a work-study programme.
- Dutch legislation distinguishes between asylum seekers and refugees. Asylum seekers have no right to integration courses whereas refugees are required to integrate and must follow procedures for doing so. The integration process includes an exam that tests the refugee’s command of the Dutch language, knowledge of Dutch society and understanding of the rights and obligations of living in the Netherlands. Loans of up to €10,000 are available to support refugees’ integration efforts.²⁰⁷ If a refugee passes the exam, there is no obligation to repay the loan; failing the exam results in a fine of up to €1,250, and individuals are given an additional two years to retake the test.

- Adults can attend programmes and counselling sessions intended to support them through each stage of the application process. They also can help maintain their accommodation centre (for example, clean the common areas) for a small wage (up to €14 per week).²⁰⁸

Integration policies and practices for refugees

General background

- Integration is currently regulated by the Civic Integration Act (*Wet Inburgering*).²⁰⁹
- Since 2013, the Education Executive Agency (DUO), under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, has been responsible for implementing the Civic Integration Act.
- Individuals are responsible for their own integration path and for fulfilling the necessary requirements to achieve this. The State regards passing the integration exam within three years as a sign that integration has been successful.
- In 2016, Parliament approved a proposal from L.F. Asscher, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, which made it mandatory to commit to Dutch values and responsibilities as part of the integration process. As of 1 July 2017, all newcomers (who are required to take an integration course) were required to sign a “participation declaration”, attend the Participation Certification Programme and pass the integration exam.²¹⁰ Municipal authorities also will provide social training to permit holders, which includes practical support on becoming familiar with the municipality and advice on the civic integration course.
- Refugees need to begin learning Dutch as soon as possible. In 2016, Dutch language classes were extended to 121 hours within the early civil integration programme. Other resources include a module on learning about the Dutch labour market and allowing refugees and other permit holders to begin working while still living in a reception centre.
- According to some CSO representatives, private sector organisations play a key role in helping asylum seekers begin their studies and are integral to the integration process.

- All children are obliged to attend school. If they are younger than 15, they live with a family; those older than 15 live in a “process location” that provides international schools for refugees. Because refugees usually do not speak Dutch, these locations have special schools that are prepared to teach them the language and about Dutch society so they can eventually enter the Dutch education system.
- The organisation DUO keeps a list of approved schools. Although it is not compulsory to attend these schools, there are three significant advantages in doing so:
 - 1) attendance at those schools only qualifies an individual for a loan;
 - 2) the fine for failing the exam is lower if an individual attends one of these programmes; and
 - 3) these schools are the only ones that qualify for an exemption if there is “proof of effort.” Individuals are exempt from taking the integration exam if they can demonstrate that they have tried to learn the language and failed to make sufficient progress.

Integration Exam

- As per the Civic Integration Act, refugees between the ages of 18 - 65 are required to pass the integration exam within three years of obtaining their residence permit. The exam features three main topics: knowledge of the Dutch language (reading, listening, writing and speaking), of Dutch society and of the Dutch labour market (which became compulsory in 2015).

Preparing for the Integration Exam

- It is a refugee’s responsibility to prepare for the exam. There are no compulsory courses to attend, nor does the State organise any. Refugees must find private courses if they need help preparing for the exam.
- There is a fee for both the integration courses and the exam itself. Asylum seekers may get a loan to pay these costs, which they do not need to repay if they pass the exam within three years.

Exemptions and exceptions

- Exemptions from the three-year integration period are granted for certain categories of individuals, such as students enrolled in Dutch programmes or workers fluent in Dutch who have lived in the Netherlands for at least 10 years and worked there for at least 5 years.
- “Proof of effort” may warrant an exemption if the individual has attended at least 600 hours of integration courses in one of the approved schools and has tried to pass the exam at least four times. In other cases, such as pregnancy, illiteracy, or in the event of having a chronic medical condition, extra time may be allocated (unless the medical reason itself qualifies for an exemption).
- It is important to stress that an exemption is not automatic; the DUO assesses requests on a case-by-case basis.

²⁰⁵L.F. Asscher, Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, policy initiative addressed to the president of the Dutch Parliament, 27 October 2016.

²⁰⁶“Hallo Werk en Integratie,” Facebook, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/HalloWerkEnIntegratie>.

²⁰⁷“Paying for Your Integration,” Inburgeren.nl, accessed 25 October 2017, <https://inburgeren.nl/en/pay-for-integration.jsp>.

²⁰⁸ECRE, “Country Report: Netherlands 2016 Update,” 57.

²⁰⁹“Inburgering en Integratie van Nieuwkomers,” Rijksoverheid, 26 June 2014, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/nieuw-in-nederland/inburgering-en-integratie-van-nieuwkomers>.

²¹⁰EMN, “EMN Bulletin,” European Commission, March 2017, 7, <http://www.emncz.eu/files/books/160.pdf>; “Newcomers Must Pledge to Uphold Dutch Values, Sign Contract,” DutchNews.nl, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/11/newcomers-must-pledge-to-uphold-dutch-values-sign-contract/>.

SWEDEN

MAIN FACTS AND STATISTICS

- As of January 2017, Sweden's population was 9,850,000.²¹¹
- In 2015, Sweden recorded the highest per capita number of asylum applications of any OECD country, ever—162,877. Of these, 70,384 were children and 35,369 were unaccompanied minors.
- In 2015, 43 percent of all asylum seekers to Sweden were children. More than 50 percent of the annual influx took place in the final quarter of 2015. The country also received more than half the total number of unaccompanied minors in the EU/EEA.²¹²
- In 2016, there were 28,939 asylum applications, an 83 percent decrease from 2015 (162,877).
- Between 2000 and 2014, the annual average number of applications from unaccompanied minors was 3,905.
- In 2016, 28,939 asylum applications were submitted, similar to the annual average of 33,000 applications during the period 2000–2014. Of these, 2,199 applications were from unaccompanied minors, a decrease of 94 percent from the previous year.
- In 2016, the top three countries of origin for unaccompanied minors were Afghanistan (665), Somalia (421), and Syria (180).
- In 2016, 67,258 people were provided with refugee, international, humanitarian, or subsidiary protection recognition. The top three designations of origin were Syria (44,218), Eritrea (5,995) and those who were stateless (5,833).
- Some 15,148 people were granted residence permits as family member(s) of an individual granted international, humanitarian, or subsidiary protection.
- In 2016, 61 percent of all asylum applications were approved and 100 percent of Syrian applications were accepted.²¹³
- At the end of 2015, the Swedish government introduced temporary measures to restrict the

flow of immigrants. Passport controls for all people arriving in Sweden went into effect in July 2016 for three years. Among other issues, the new laws introduced temporary residence permits and imposed additional restrictions on family reunification rules. They also placed new maintenance requirements for permanent residency and family reunification. The new rules allow an employed individual to be granted permanent residence when his or her temporary permit expires.²¹⁴

- The SMA (Swedish Migration Agency) or Migrationsverket increased its capacity from 3,500 staff members in 2012 to 8,500 in 2017. Asylum case processing was accorded priority. In 2016, 112,000 asylum cases were processed.

ASYLUM PROCESS

Procedures

- Asylum seekers first register with the police at the point of entry into Sweden—at international airports, ferry terminals, train depots, and bus stations. Individuals are then referred to the SMA, where they apply for asylum. A number of SMA offices are located around the country.²¹⁵ Individuals already in the country need to go to one of the SMA facilities located in Boden, Flen, Gävle, Gothenburg, Malmö, Märsta, Norrköping, or Stockholm.
- The SMA provides temporary accommodation while the applicant awaits a decision on his case.
- Asylum applicants are photographed and fingerprinted. The photo is added to the SMA's register and used on the asylum seeker card (the LMA card), which proves the individual is an asylum seeker. Children under the age of six are not fingerprinted. Fingerprinting is necessary to determine if the individual has applied for asylum in a Schengen country and has residency or is indeed a criminal or other sanction originating in another country.
- For each individual, the SMA holds an oral hearing that lasts two/three hours. The SMA bears the primary responsibility for investigating an individual's asylum

application. Cases are screened and sorted in different tracks based on specific profiles. Manifestly unfounded applications, Dublin Regulation cases and cases with a high percentage of rejections are referred directly to the units that can quickly handle them.

- A reception officer with the SMA interviews the applicant about personal details, health, family and general background and also can request that any supporting documents be provided. Since mid-2015, asylum seekers' identification documents are transferred to a special national unit of the SMA to be checked for authenticity before an initial decision is made. There is a system for quality control and regular follow-ups of decisions made to ensure that the requirements are met. According to the SMA, assessments undertaken in 2017 show that identity and origin investigations are generally accurate.
- After approximately eight days, applicants are sent to a specific municipality. Children are immediately put into school and any health-care needs (of children and adults) are addressed.
- In 2014, it took an average of 142 days (4.7 months) to process an asylum application. In 2015, this had increased to 229 days (7.6 months) and in 2016, 328 days (10.9 months). In the first quarter of 2017, the average processing time was 386 days (12.9 month). The lengthy wait period is the result of the knock-on effect of the large influx of refugees in 2015. From the end of 2015, when there were more than 150,000 asylum seekers awaiting a decision, the SMA focused on reducing the case backlog. In 2016, more than 112,000 asylum cases were determined active and the

number of open cases was reduced to 71,600. The SMA's goal was to reduce this waiting period to four months by the end of 2017.²¹⁶

Reception

- It is the SMA's responsibility to receive asylum seekers. Sweden's reception centres are open and do not require the individual to remain there during the application process. There are eight primary SMA application units to which an applicant already in the country must present him- or herself.
- Each centre includes a reception service; administrative/legal assistance that provides support for an asylum seeker's application and social support such as schools for children, health-care facilities, as well as subsistence and accommodation support.
- Temporary accommodation is provided while the applicant awaits a decision. The SMA provides accommodation if the individual cannot pay for lodging. If the asylum seeker does not wish to live in the accommodation provided, he or she can arrange an alternative. Some choose to stay with friends or relatives. Those who choose to arrange their own accommodation must pay for it.
- The SMA assigns housing in a municipality for newly arrived refugees and also operates detention centres. It also helps unsuccessful applicants return to their country of origin.

Overview of subsistence

- The SMA provides asylum seekers accommodation and a daily subsistence allowance.
- Families with more than two children receive the entire daily compensation for the two

²¹¹Data for this section provided by the Swedish Ministry of Employment, Regeringskansliet, division for integration, 23 January 2017.

²¹²Ibid.

²¹³Data provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, SMA, 30 March 2017.

²¹⁴"The New Temporary Law Has Entered into Force," Migrationsverket, 16 August 2016, <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/News-archive/News-archive-2016/2016-08-16-The-new-temporary-law-has-entered-into-force.html>.

²¹⁵The Swedish Migration Agency operational activities are organised into six geographical regions: North Sweden, Mid Sweden, Stockholm, West, East, and South Sweden. Within each region, units receive asylum seekers and examine different types of applications for residence permits.

²¹⁶Data provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, 30 March 2017.

eldest children and half the daily amount for the other children.

- Apart from food, the per diem must cover all other costs, including clothing, health care, dental care, medicines, toiletries, leisure activities, etc.
- The per diem can be reduced in cases where asylum seekers do not cooperate with authorities to establish their identity, hinder the investigation of the asylum request, or fail to cooperate with repatriation in the event of an application is rejected.

INTEGRATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- The objective of the Swedish government is to ensure that refugees are in work, education, or training within two years of receiving residency permits. This is intended to be achieved via general policy initiatives, with additional specific support measures for integrating refugees into society and the workplace. The government abolished the integration ministry some years ago and has mainstreamed integration within policy areas regardless of whether the intended recipient is an economic migrant, refugee, or EU citizen seeking work.
- In 2017, the county administrative boards, the Länsstyrelsen, were granted additional powers and budget that included taking over responsibility from the SMA in terms of providing Swedish language courses and other measures intended to promote refugees' integration. The budget appropriation is SEK 72 million²¹⁷ (€7.4 million), which was transferred from that accorded to the SMA to the Länsstyrelsen. A SEK 10 million (€1.02 million)²¹⁸ allocation was provided to the Länsstyrelsen in 2016 to prepare for structural and organisational accommodation and other responsibilities.
- The responsibility of integrating refugees into the workplace is shared at the national, regional and local levels. At the national level, the Ministry of Employment and the Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) together coordinate the introduction of new arrivals in the workplace. At the regional

level, the 21 county administrative boards (Länsstyrelsen) manage regional coordination and initial measures, such as early Swedish language learning courses and mapping asylum seekers' skills and education. At the local level, the 290 municipalities are responsible for providing, in cooperation with the county administrative boards, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language courses, civic orientation courses, housing, medical care, schooling and preschooling. Civil society groups play a key role in supporting the provision of these services.

- As of 1 January 2017, new regulations gave the County Administrative Boards responsibility of coordinating support to asylum seekers at an early stage in the process to help efforts at local and regional levels.

Integration policies and practices for asylum seekers

- The Introduction Programme²¹⁹ is intended to introduce asylum seekers rapidly into the labour market. The Swedish Public Employment Service has responsibility for managing the programme, which lasts up to 24 months and involves mapping participants' skills, education, prior work experience, training and other immediate needs; SFI language courses; and civic orientation courses, which provide an understanding of how Swedish society functions. There is no "values" training component to the programme. The municipalities are responsible for providing the latter two courses, in addition to allocating housing and placing children in preschools/schools.
- Asylum seekers granted residency are obliged to undertake civic orientation classes for at least 60 hours, beginning as soon as possible after the introduction plan has been drawn up and generally ending within 12 months. Civic orientation courses focus on human rights, gender equality, fundamental democratic values, the rights and obligations of individuals, how society is organised and practical aspects of daily life in the country.
- All child asylum seekers and young people have the right to attend preschool/school. It

is the responsibility of the municipality where the children live to ensure that they attend school under the same conditions as other students in the municipality. This applies to preschool, comprehensive school and upper secondary school. To have the right to attend upper secondary school, young asylum seekers must begin their studies before they turn 18.

Integration programmes for refugees

- As a result of the many refugees who entered Sweden in 2015, severe constraints were placed on the reception systems. Figures from 2015 show that 70 percent of newly arrived individuals participating in labour market integration activities were 20 - 39 years of age. As mentioned above, key to asylum seekers' integration into the labour market are the skills and education mapping services provided by the Swedish Public Employment Service. Sweden has labour market shortages in certain sectors, including - welfare in particular - which makes the skills/education/work experience mapping exercise essential.
- If an individual with a Swedish residence permit is included in the electoral register, he or she is entitled to SFI training. If an applicant awaiting a decision wishes to learn Swedish, a number of voluntary organisations and educational associations offer study opportunities, including language cafés and civic information for asylum seekers. The Swedish National Council of Adult Education distributes government grants to study associations and secondary schools to support the provision of language courses. The County Administrative Boards are responsible for coordinating early support and ensuring that the resources aimed at supporting asylum seekers early in the process are well used.

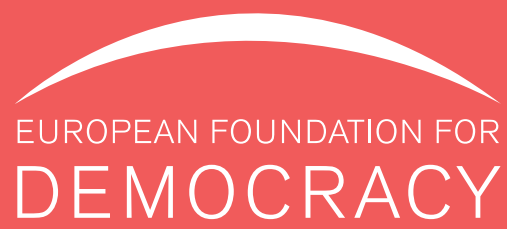
Proposed new integration measures, 2017 budget

- Additional funding for municipalities— particularly for health-care costs.
- A new system for receiving unaccompanied minors intended to simplify the regulatory framework and increase the stipend.
- Early measures for asylum seekers, including early Swedish language courses and education/skills/work experience mapping.
- Support to civil society organisations for activities offered to asylum seekers and refugees.
- Increased funding for specialised care of victims of war and torture.

²¹⁷"Initiatives in the Spring Budget for More Efficient Introduction and Reduced Unemployment," Regeringskansliet, accessed 25 October 2017, <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2016/04/initiatives-in-the-spring-budget-for-more-efficient-introduction-and-reduced-unemployment/>.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Data provided by the Swedish Ministry of Employment, Regeringskansliet, division for integration, 23 January 2017.



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