



# Experience in Dealing with Migrants/Refugees: From Emergency to the Joint Future Process

Edited by  
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# About the Authors



## Turkey

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Prof. Erdoğan's recent books include the following:

- Syrians Barometer-2019: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey (2020)
- Demographical Development of the Syrian Refugee Population and its Potential Impacts on The Education, Employment and Municipality Services in Turkey in Near Future (& M. Çorabatır) (2019) (in Turkish&English)
- Perspectives, Expectations and Suggestions of the Turkish Business Sector on Syrians in Turkey (2015)
- Syrians Barometer-2017: A Framework for Achieving Social Cohesion with Syrians in Turkey (2018)
- Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: The Case of Istanbul (2017) Perspectives, Expectations and Suggestions of the Turkish Business Sector on Syrians in Turkey (2015)
- "Turkey's Immigration History: From the 14th Century to the 21st Century Immigrants to Turkey" (with A. Kaya) (2015)
- "Syrians in Turkey: Social Acceptance and Integration" (2015)
- Turks in German Cartoons, 50 Jahre 50 Karikaturen (2012)
- Turks Abroad: Fifty Years of Migration and Integration (2010)



## Germany

### Friedrich Püttmann

Friedrich Püttmann is a researcher at Istanbul Policy Center and a PhD candidate at the European Institute of the London School of Economics (LSE). His dissertation analyzes the role of religion in host societies' reactions to refugees in Turkey and France, employing both statistical and ethnographic methods. Friedrich's research interests center around Muslims in Europe, identity politics, and processes of integration as well as Turkey and the Balkans. His professional expertise also includes migration and foreign policy. Together with the Turkish-German University in Istanbul (TAÜ), he is working on a research project on EU-Turkey cooperation on migration financed by the German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP).

In the past, Friedrich has worked as a political analyst at think tanks in Berlin and Ankara and did a traineeship with the Turkey Division of the EU's diplomatic service (EEAS) in Brussels. During his studies, he spent an exchange semester at Boğazici University, Istanbul, and interned with the Turkish Foundation for Economic and Social Studies (TESEV). Friedrich holds an MSc in Sociology from the University of Oxford as well as an MSc in European Studies from LSE, where he received prizes for best dissertation and best overall performance. He was educated in Germany and France and did a one-year volunteer service in Kosovo.

## Greece

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## Spain

### Juan Pina

Juan Pina (born in 1968) is a Spanish political scientist and writer. He holds a Masters Degree in Institutional Communication. He was Vice-President of the Liberal Youth Movement of the European Union (1990-1992), the International Federation of Liberal Youth (1991-1997) and then the Liberal International (1997-2002). He was the director of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation's "Perfiles Liberales" magazine, based in Mexico City, from 1999 to 2004. He founded Spain's Libertarian Party in 2009. Professionally, he has been Communication Director for several companies in real estate, digital and other industries. In 2014 he was the director of the world corporate communication conference (World PR Forum) held in Madrid. Since 2015 he is the Secretary-General of Spain's Fundación para el Avance de la Libertad (Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty). He personally manages the department of comparative research on freedom, which produces domestic and international freedom indices on several areas of liberty, from economic freedom at the municipal level to moral and electoral freedom by countries. A published author of two novels, his main essay books are "Una política para la Libertad" (A policy for Liberty, 2014), "Manifiesto para la autodeterminación del individuo" (Manifesto for the Self-Determination of the Individual, 2018) and "Adiós al Estado-nación" (Good-bye, nation-state, 2019). In 2021 he has co-

authored the collective book "Nacionalismo" (Nationalism) which deals with the worrisome resurfacing of national-populism in Europe and Latin America.

## What is ELF

The European Liberal Forum (ELF) is the official political foundation of the European Liberal Party, the ALDE Party. Together with 46 member organisations, we work all over Europe to bring new ideas into the political debate, to provide a platform for discussion, and to empower citizens to make their voices heard.

ELF was founded in 2007 to strengthen the liberal and democrat movement in Europe. Our work is guided by liberal ideals and a belief in the principle of freedom. We stand for a future-oriented Europe that offers opportunities for every citizen. ELF is engaged on all political levels, from the local to the European.

We bring together a diverse network of national foundations, think tanks and other experts. At the same time, we are also close to, but independent from, the ALDE Party and other Liberal actors in Europe. In this role, our forum serves as a space for an open and informed exchange of views between a wide range of different actors.

## What is FNF

The Foundation for Freedom in Germany and the World

Based on the principles of liberalism, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom offers political education in Germany and abroad. With our events and publications, we help people to become actively involved in political affairs. We support talented young students with scholarships. Since 2007, the addition "for freedom" has become an established part of our foundation's name. After all, freedom isn't exactly in trend these days. This makes it all the more important to campaign for freedom and to take on the responsibility that goes hand in hand with it. We have been doing this since our foundation on May 19th, 1958. Our headquarter is based in Potsdam, and we maintain offices throughout Germany and in over 60 countries around the world.

## Introduction

# Motivation and Framework<sup>1</sup>

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Migration is increasingly becoming a challenge to European integration. The so-called "crisis" is primarily a crisis of deficient migration management. It creates political conflicts on the transnational, national, and local levels. Tailoring integration strategies to local contexts while maintaining a coherent European approach is particularly challenging.

Local communities are the first to deal systematically with incoming migrants. Migrants' experiences at local levels determine their long-term integration. Local communities fulfil immense tasks during the integration process. However, they play a limited role in related policy debates and decision-making.

The "European Cities Network on Migration" aims at strengthening migration management along liberal principles through a transnational network of local communities. Local

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank Mrs. Tülin Haji MOHAMAD for her contribution to this section.

community stakeholders cooperate to share experiences and practices regarding the integration of migrants, and they develop inclusive, sustainable common policies based on European principles and carry these to the European level.

Representatives from local governments, entrepreneurs, academics, activists, and NGOs from Turkey, Greece, Spain, and Germany convene in a network to exchange knowledge and experiences and establish a mechanism for learning how to benefit from the opportunities of migration and support the liberal narrative for integration.

## 1. Syria Crisis and Refugees since 2011

Since the anti-government demonstrations that started in March 2011 spiralled out of control and turned into a civil war encompassing all of Syria, the tragedy surrounding the plight of Syrians who had to escape from their country to save their lives and seek asylum in neighbouring countries has been unfolding for over 10 years. UNHCR Commissioner Filippo Grandi describes what is happening in Syria as "the biggest humanitarian and refugee crisis of our time".<sup>2</sup> The number of Syrians who have escaped out of the country, which had a national population of 22.5 million in 2011, surpasses 6.7 million. Additionally, there are more than 6 million displaced people within Syria.<sup>3</sup> More than 80% of Syrian refugees are living in neighbouring countries, particularly Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Around 15% of Syrian refugees live in European countries, including Germany and Sweden. As of October 2021, it is still very difficult to predict how the situation in Syria will unfold with any degree of certainty. However, significant changes can be observed in Syrians' possible motivation and tendency to return, both due to the current conditions in Syria and the fact that they have been establishing

<sup>2</sup> UNHCR. "Syria emergency", <https://www.unhcr.org/syria-emergency.html> (accessed: 01.12.2020).

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR. "Figures at a glance", <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html> (accessed: 01.12.2020); IOM (2019), World Migration Report 2020, [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr\\_2020.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020.pdf) (accessed: 01.12.2020), p.43.

new lives for themselves in their countries of residence. This in turn demonstrates the necessity of undertaking serious planning and adopting large-scale “liberal” policies in social, economic, political, and security-related fields for those countries hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees, such as Turkey.

Having been an important challenge and problem for Turkey since April 2011, Syrian refugees started to become a problem for the EU after 2014. Nearly 1 million Syrian refugees who had passed through Turkey to the Greek islands began to settle in EU countries, primarily Germany and Sweden. More than 75% of Syrians in the EU live in Germany and Sweden. Since the agreement made with Turkey on 18 March, 2016, the process has been continuing even though the transition of Syrian refugees to the EU has decreased. Developing and implementing the refugee and integration policies of Turkey and the EU, which are suddenly faced with millions of refugees, with a liberal understanding is of the utmost importance.

In this study, experts analyze the current situation in Turkey, Germany, Greece, and Spain. The general situation emerging from the country reports, which deal with current data and policies under specific headings, is summarized below. In the last part, policy recommendations are presented within a liberal perspective. Each report provides an overview of the general and current situation of migration in these four countries. It is clear that these four countries have been affected by the wave of irregular migration and asylum that began after May 2011. Therefore, the main topics centre on refugees’, asylum-seekers’, and irregular migrants’ numbers and demographics, status, education, and economic integration, as well as legal regulations and the role played by local administrations, social acceptance and social cohesion processes, cooperation with the EU, and the EU’s refugee policies. Although the experts on the four countries work in harmony with the general concept of the subject, there are important differences between the countries on some issues, and some topics do not include enough data or policies from each of the four countries.

## 2. Summary & Comparisons of Country Report Findings<sup>4</sup>

### 2.1. Numbers and Demographics

Among the four countries, **Turkey** has the largest share of migrants and refugees, with more than four million refugees (Syrians) and asylum-seekers (non-Syrians) living inside its borders. Of course, the vast majority of this number are Syrians who came to the country after 2011. Syrians living in Turkey are mostly from the younger demographic group, with males (54.1%) considered to represent a bit more of this population than females (45.8%). In 2019, **Germany** had the most registered refugees in the world after Turkey, hosting 1.4 million in total on 31 December 2020. Most refugees receiving asylum based on the Geneva Convention who have arrived over the past five years are from Syria or Iraq. In 2020, 15,696 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece. This indicates a decrease of 78.9% compared to 2019 (74,649 arrivals). Out of those, a total of 9,714 persons arrived in Greece by sea in 2020, compared to 59,726 in 2019. The majority originated from Afghanistan (35.2%), Syria (27.7%), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (10.3%). More than half of the population were women (23.3%) and children (35.5%), while 41.2% were adult men. In **Spain**, though the country used to be comparatively less affected by migratory overflows stemming from the Syrian crisis and the migration wave than its EU partners, current statistics now show an immigration percentage far exceeding the average: almost 15.92 immigrants per one thousand inhabitants. Excluding wealthier European residents, most of the groups that immigrate to Spain are from Morocco, Algeria, Latin America, and China.

### 3. Status and Legal Regulations

**Turkey:** Although Syrians in Turkey are referred to as “refugees” or “asylum-seekers” in everyday use, the vast majority of Syrians (97%) in Turkey are under temporary protection status. In addition to temporary

<sup>4</sup> Some of the titles below do not cover 4 countries because there is no information about the subject in some countries, the subject does not cover this country, or the experts have not provided information on this subject.

protection, hundreds of thousands of Syrians in Turkey hold residency permits. Furthermore, it is estimated that around 50,000 Syrians are still living in Turkey unregistered, while the number of Syrians who have obtained Turkish citizenship is estimated to have reached 150,000 by 2021. In addition, according to UNHCR Turkey, there were 170,000 Afghans, 142,000 Iraqis, and 39,000 Iranians living in Turkey under International Protection Status in 2018.

**Germany:** Four common forms of protection are provided to refugees and asylum-seekers in Germany, where there are 741,685 refugees who arrived over the past five years (mostly from Syria and Iraq) and received asylum based on the Geneva Refugee Convention. 244,190 persons are entitled to subsidiary protection, and 120,977 people are subject to a deportation ban (mostly from Afghanistan).

**Greece:** A policy introduced by the European Commission in 2015 for Greece was the “hotspot approach” in order to identify, register, and fingerprint incoming refugees and migrants, implement the relocation scheme, and conduct return operations. Five hotspots, under the legal form of First Reception Centres – now Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) – were inaugurated in Greece, but people arriving through the Evros border are not subject to the EU–Turkey statement. The Asylum Service in Greece registered 40,559 asylum applications in 2020. Afghans were the largest group of applicants with 11,514 applications, followed by Syrians with 7,768 applications.

**Spain:** The general framework for migrants in Spain is defined by the 1978 Spanish Constitution in force and specified by Organic Law 4/2000. This law makes “all levels of government”, therefore including the regional and the municipal (local) levels, co-responsible for the implementation of the principles of migration policy. At the forefront of said principles is applying (coordinating) the policies “defined by the European Union” on this matter, and this is certainly in contrast with the relatively smaller share of refugees admitted to Spain in comparison with other EU Member States, particularly during the Syrian crisis.

## 4. Education

In **Turkey**, the number of Syrian children of compulsory schooling age, i.e., between the ages of 5 and 17, is 1.2 million. This situation corresponds to 32% of the total number of Syrians under temporary protection who live in Turkey. The sudden flow of Syrians to some areas in Turkey has required the government to exert an extraordinary effort which has challenged Turkey’s entire educational capacity. According to the most recently published data for 2021, 64.4% of Syrians in Turkey have been attending school up to now. It can be said that educational institutions in Turkey, along with the support provided from the European Union and in cooperation with local and international organizations, have achieved outstanding success in educating Syrians in Turkey since 2016 as well as in developing an emergency education strategy for newcomers to Turkey. It is an incredible achievement that 770,000 out of the 1 million Syrian children of schooling age have been included in the Turkish educational system. On the other hand, the number of Syrian university students, who study in about 100 public and 50 private universities in Turkey, reached 37,000 in the 2020–2021 academic year. In the last two years, Syrian university students have been on top in terms of numeric quantity among 140,000 international students in Turkey. According to 2017–2018 data, there are more than 2,000 PhD and post-graduate Syrians studying at public universities, while the rate of Syrian university students on a scholarship is around 15%.

The **German** Federal Office for Migration and Refugees stated that the majority of refugee children and young people of school age attended a general education or vocational school in 2016, and around one in three pupils attended a preparatory class. Only 5% of the refugee children and young people in secondary school (10–17 years) were either still waiting to start school or training or not participating in any educational option. With regard to refugee groups of particular nationalities, the report found that, controlling for various confounding factors, refugees from Syria were most likely to attend a *Realschule* or *Gymnasium*; whereas refugees from (South-)Eastern Europe were least likely to do so, and the reason behind that might be the similarities

between the Syrian and German educational systems.

Focusing on unaccompanied children's education, as it is one of the major issues that the European institutions have to take under serious consideration, the **Greek** report highlights that the immigration procedure which unaccompanied children follow has led to the current generation of children having limited or no access to the educational system, along with limited linguistic development, and this is often referred to as a "lost generation". Children living in urban areas have higher chances of attending school compared to those residing in a camp, as the necessity of going anywhere far from the camp increases feelings of insecurity among their relatives. There are also many organizations that try to help give children access to all sorts of educational levels with volunteers from Greece and also from other countries. Finally, there are many children who use the internet to attend online programs to continue educating themselves.

In **Spain**, the number of foreign students in any type of schooling below university level remained steady over 2009–2019, between 750,000 and 800,000. While this figure had slightly shrunk by the mid-2010s, reaching around 716,000 in the 2015–2016 academic year, it has now climbed back up again to an all-time record of over 795,000 students. One of the issues referred to in the Spanish report is religious education, as Spanish schools provide a choice of Catholicism as a subject or an alternative religious subject. While the trend towards even deeper secularization seems secure among Spaniards, newly arrived Latin Americans, especially those from Central America and the Andes region, tend to strengthen the return to a more religious world view. However, the main issue concerning religious education is Islam. In 2021, for the first time, a significant political row took place in the Balearic Islands, where three schools will start teaching Islam to a total of about 150 students during the 2021–2022 academic year. As the region is governed by a left-wing coalition, the ordinary conservatives and particularly the far right have claimed that this is the result of secretive manoeuvres to normalize Islam as a taught religion in the public education system.

## 5. Economic Integration

In **Turkey**, since the spontaneous settlement of Syrians in urban areas which started in 2013, those living outside the camps have had no choice but to work in urban areas. When the number of Syrians working in the informal sector reached 400,000, the Turkish state sought to make relevant arrangements and issued a labour regulation for Syrians under temporary protection living in Turkey. In line with this regulation in 2016, Syrians who are registered in Turkey for a minimum of 6 months have the right to work in a proportion of 1/10 of a workplace, based on the employer's demand and on the condition of receiving at least the minimum wage. In 2019, the number of Syrian citizens who were issued a work permit in Turkey was 60,000. On the other hand, some research shows that the total Syrian working population in Turkey is more than 30% of their total population, i.e., 1.2 million Syrians minimum are working, and more than 95% of the total number of working Syrians are working informally. All the projections indicate that because between 1 and 1.2 million Syrians in Turkey are managing to survive by working informally, their financial need from the state has decreased and they are contributing to the Turkish economy. In other words, Turkey pursued the right policy by not forcing Syrians to stay in camps and allowing for their employment (even though informally), which has contributed to the economy and facilitated refugees to lead a life compatible with human dignity, suggesting that it could be referred to as a "developmentalist refugee policy".

In **Germany**, a key element of migration policy on economic integration is the deportation ban for asylum-seekers in training and employment. The purpose of this law is to facilitate the training and employment of asylum-seekers who are awaiting the result of their application and those whose application has been rejected but whose deportation cannot be executed within the given time period. Asylum seekers who have not received such permission are not allowed to work in Germany. Next to this, the Skilled Workers Immigration Act of 1 March 2020 is the latest initiative of the German government to attract skilled workers to Germany and facilitate their integration into the labour

market. Its declared aim is to open legal ways for migrants to enter the labour market and thereby reduce illegal migration to Germany. The employment-to-population ratio (which only focuses on people between 15 and 65 years of age and employment that is subject to social security contributions) in December 2020 in Germany was 49.8% for foreign citizens and 62.8% for German citizens. By the end of 2019, there were 643,066 unemployed foreigners in Germany. Of these, 18.2% were from Syria, 6.9% from African countries, 4.5% from Iraq, and 3.7% from Afghanistan. This shows that, for example, Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Africans make up a greater share of the unemployed foreign population in Germany than of the foreign population overall. The data on start-ups in Germany founded by foreign nationals and Germans with an immigrant background remains very limited.

In **Spain**, the unemployed immigrant segment is made up of less qualified foreigners, just as in other countries. An important piece of data to bear in mind is that while foreigners are roughly 11.5% of the population, they make up roughly 10.9% of the workforce. The immigrant workforce is rather unbalanced, gender-wise, with only one third of workers being women. While the Covid-19 pandemic has heavily affected employment, both among native Spaniards and immigrants, Social Security membership had been increasing steadily from 2013 to 2019, and the current figures are 2.05 million. This also reflects a tendency to avoid the black market and work legally. Construction, which used to be a very significant driver of immigrants to Spain, now accounts for only 9% of the total foreign workforce, while a massive 79% work in the services industry. On the other hand, only about one in seven foreign workers are self-employed, and the highest level of entrepreneurship among immigrants is found in the Chinese community. One noteworthy point is that immigrant-owned businesses tend to be more successful than those launched by natives.

## 6. The Role of Local Administrations

Since 2011 in **Turkey**, a very critical and challenging process has been ongoing. Turkey does not have a special refugee quota and distribution system exclusive to Syrians living in urban areas. Therefore,

there are critical differences in the distribution of Syrians throughout the country, politically and proportionally, where it can be observed between different towns and quarters of a province. Refugees cannot benefit from the financial support of municipalities, which is calculated according to the number of citizens and makes up the main source of income for municipalities in those cities which suddenly have to co-exist with a substantial number of refugees without any control over the issue. It has been pointed out that there is a need to bolster municipalities and local authorities in Turkey to support refugees living within the borders of those municipalities.

In **Germany**, municipalities take care of crucial tasks such as health care, organizing language courses, and ensuring that children attend school, as well as assisting in finding housing and jobs. The downside of this diversity naturally includes discrepancies that can thereby arise between different regions. Thanks to Germany's national allocation mechanism of refugees to regions, this does not create a competitive incentive. The upside is clearly greater and more personalised attention to the individual refugee that arises from this.

**Spain's** municipal governments are subject to their respective regions, and this sometimes results in a duplicity of services where the local and regional administration both intervene in a given area. In the case of Spain, the leading administration in most day-to-day matters for immigrants and refugees is the regional one. Local authorities do affect immigrants in the very delicate matter of social services, which is particularly important for those with lesser qualifications, rendering them unable to find a job, or experiencing any other social disadvantages. Because of radically different views on immigration as an issue, cities governed by leftist or right-wing parties may tend to provide more services, grants, and subsidies or fewer of them. Left-wing governed local governments tend to ease registration within the legal limits, while right-wing municipal authorities tend to be stricter in complying with the requirements.

## 7. Cooperation with the EU

**Turkey:** The most important step regarding Turkey's cooperation with the EU has been the "Turkey–EU Deal", signed on the 18th of March 2016. The deal's compliance with international and EU law, the type of solution that it suggests, and its promises as well as achievements were controversial right from the start. Ultimately, the deal builds upon the goal of stopping refugees heading to the EU through Turkey in exchange for financial support to be provided by the EU for refugees in Turkey. The most significant legal grounds for Turkey–EU Deal were that "Turkey has been considered the secure third country for refugees," and the "readmission agreement" was initially used in this context, while the majority of Syrians in Turkey who intended to transit to Europe had already done so. After 2017, the number of the Syrian population in Turkey increased almost exclusively due to new births. However, it should not be forgotten that the refugee deal has resulted in many undesirable political developments in Turkey and strengthens both "Anti-European" and "Anti-Western" tendencies within the Turkish population. In this regard, an interesting dynamic between Turkey and the EU has emerged, and while the EU has externalized the refugee issue, Turkey has instrumentalized it in its interior and foreign policy. Undoubtedly, the provision of financial assistance to Turkey in terms of asylum-seekers by the EU or EU Member States is critically important for the interests of the EU. However, it is evident that it would be of significant help to Turkey, too. Therefore, it is essential that these resources, which were planned for four years as 3+3 billion euros, be continued.

**Greece:** The report stressed the need for a well-organized approach from all European countries. As was mentioned in the interviews conducted at the "Irida" shelter, the fact that the asylum procedures in Greece usually take so long to complete creates great psychological pressure and distress for refugees. Not knowing the date that the decision will be made seems vague and creates insecurity among asylum-seekers residing temporarily in Greece. Other EU Member States should agree to relocate more unaccompanied minors and vulnerable asylum-seekers from Greece. Moreover, there is no unified and absolute

legislation in the relocation scheme for each Member State.

**Spain:** Spain's reluctance to assume a proportionate share of the refugee flow towards the EU has often been justified as compensatory for the particular tension surrounding immigration resulting from the country's geographical situation. It has also been argued that Spain is coping with a high amount of Latin American refugees, mostly from Venezuela and seldom acknowledged formally as such. These refugees would, according to this view, vastly overcompensate for not doing enough on the Syrian front, or even the Afghan one. The current Spanish cabinet, a coalition of ordinary social-democrats and the far left, has been so far rather keen on taking in pro-Western Afghan refugees, although mostly as a PR effort. Nevertheless, Spain's overall record on the admission of refugees certainly presents much room for improvement.

## 8. Social Acceptance and Social Cohesion

A notable "social shock" arose as **Turkish society** came face to face with more than 4.1 million refugees. Despite this, the level of community acceptance in Turkey is still considered extremely high, in spite of all concerns that social rejection and disturbance would come to the fore, or that a desire would grow for the Syrians to go back. This acceptance within Turkish society stems from many reasons, the first of which is a cultural, religious, and poverty-oriented solidarity that has played a major role in the integration process of Syrians in Turkey, especially at the beginning. Along with these feelings of solidarity, other reasons — such as trust in President Erdoğan and his decision-making, the belief that Syrians will return to their homes, limited job loss, low crime rates among Syrians, and the regional setbacks of public services — were behind this high social acceptance rate among Turkish society. However, the issue of cohesion is problematic in many ways. When it comes to Turkey, the nation has very limited relevant experience. Although there is a high level of acceptance of Syrians in Turkey, there is also serious concern and rejection among Turks against granting Syrians citizenship. Cohesion with refugees can only be possible with the support of Turkish society. Concerns in this regard must be taken seriously, and comprehensive strategies must be developed which will relieve these concerns.

In **Greece**, Migrant Integration Councils are spread across all 325 municipalities. These Councils are responsible for identifying, investigating, and helping local authorities acquire knowledge about problems encountered by the immigrant population legally residing their municipality in relation to their integration and their contact with public or municipal authorities. However, there is no consultative body on integration at the national level. For those that live on the islands, despite the fact that they don't fall under the state's integration strategy, the living conditions there pose a challenge to social cohesion and, by extension, to the integration prospects among international protection beneficiaries and applicants in mainland Greece. Several incidents of violence and suicide attempts have been recorded in camps across the islands.

# Country Reports Turkey, Greece, Spain, Germany



## Chapter 1

## Refugees in Turkey

Prof. Dr. M. Murat  
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University



### 1. Introduction: Syrians and Other Asylum-Seekers in Turkey<sup>1,2</sup>

Turkey, which has a land border of 911 km with Syria, has been the country most affected by the refugee crisis since April 2011. Considering the numbers of Syrian refugees who stayed in and left Turkey, it can

1 In this study, the terms “refugees” or “asylum-seekers” when referring to Syrians and non-Syrians are used independently of the legal-administrative context in Turkey. Despite being a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention, Turkey imposes “geographical restriction” and only accepts those incoming from Europe as “refugees”, while it issues “temporary protection” for Syrians and provides “conditional refugee” or “secondary protection” statuses, which are different types of international protection for the other asylum-seekers.

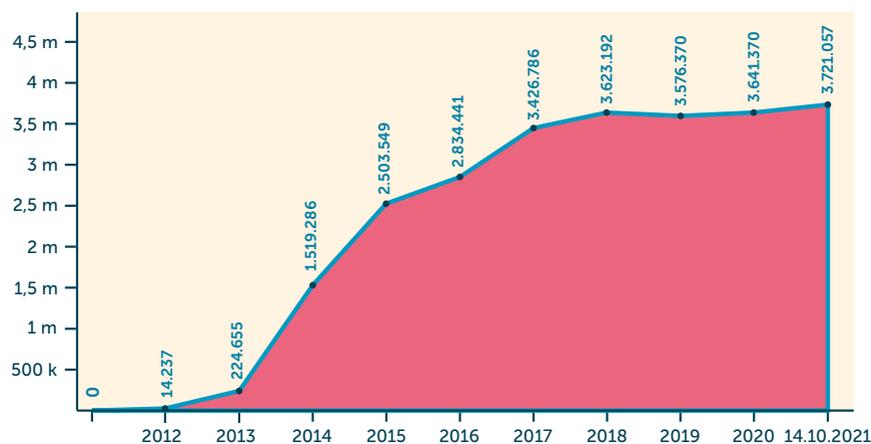
2 In some parts of the study, “Syrian Refugees in Turkey”, written by M. Murat Erdoğan in June 2017 for KAS-Turkey and “Demographical Development of The Syrian Refugee Population and its Potential Impacts on the Education, Employment and Municipality Services in Turkey in Near Future”, written in June 2019 within the scope of QUDRA Project of GIZ, were used.

be said that approximately 5 million Syrians have come to Turkey in the last ten years. As of October 2021, the number of Syrians under “temporary protection” in Turkey is more than 3,721,057. Furthermore, Turkey has been exposed to a substantial influx of defectors from other countries since 2011, especially from Afghanistan and Iraq. The most recent figure given by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM) listed the total number of those having applied for international protection (non-Syrians) between 2011–2021 as 557,000. This is to say that the number of those under international protection in Turkey, a number which was 58,018 in the year 2011, is now over 4 million, considering only those who are officially registered. These figures, which exceed 5.02% of the population (82 million) in Turkey, suggest that the “open door policy” applied by Turkey for Syrians has been available to other asylum-seekers, as well. Furthermore, it has been acknowledged that there is a serious problem with “informality”, especially among non-Syrian asylum-seekers and irregular migrants.

Although Turkey *de facto* ended the “open door policy” after 2016 — and even built a wall that exceeds 1,100 km in the last two years on its Syrian, Iraqi, and Iranian borders for both combatting terrorism and fighting against irregular migration — entry-exit operations across the Turkish borders remain ‘in progress.’<sup>3</sup> This situation manifests serious problems for Turkey’s border security, despite the walls.

“Temporary protection” is the form of international protection provided in Turkey to most Syrian refugees, since the geographical reservation imposed by Turkey in the Geneva Convention precludes the provision of “refugee” status to non-European asylum-seekers, and, furthermore, those having fled “massively” from a neighbouring country in the event of a war are expected to return after the war

3 According to the declarations of the Ministry of Interior, the number of arrested non-Syrian “irregular migrants” was 280,000 in 2018 and more than 160,000 in the first half of 2019. There is no information about those who were not arrested.

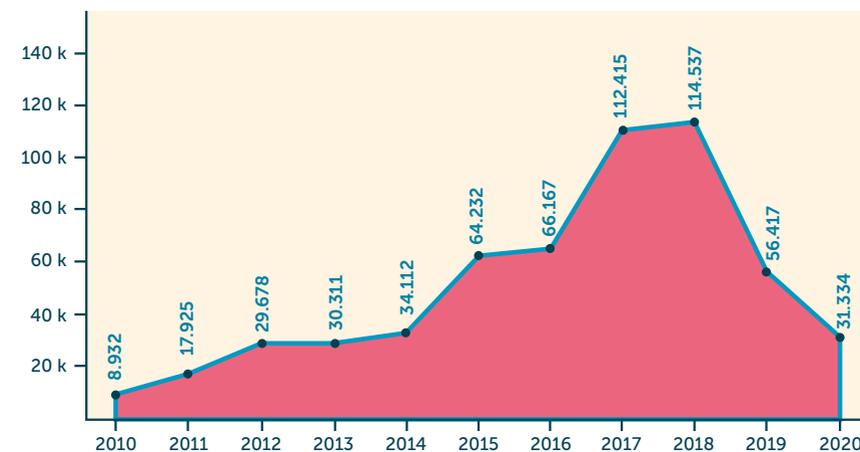


**Figure 1: Distribution of Syrians under temporary protection by year.**

T.R. Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> (Accessed: 19.10.2021).

is ended.<sup>4</sup> Although they are referred to as

<sup>4</sup> The international obligations of Turkey in terms of asylum-seekers and refugees are determined under the “1951 Geneva Convention” and the “1967 Protocol relating to the Legal Status of Refugees”. As party to the Geneva Convention, Turkey declared that it would impose a “geographical restriction” exception in the contract with a declaration dated 29 August 1961, i.e., it would not accept incomers from outside Europe for whichever reason as “refugees”. “The Law on the Foreigners and International Protection” which constituted the legal framework for migration and refugees in 2013 in Turkey and the secondary legislation, notably the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) that was drawn up later, also adopted the principle of geographical restriction. The legal status of the Syrians in Turkey has been “temporary protection” within the framework of the “Temporary Protection Regulation”. The issue of the status of the Syrians in Turkey remains a significant subject of debate. Although Turkey has defined “temporary protection” for Syrians, which is a type of international



**Figure 2: International protections applications by year.**

T.R. Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/international-protection17> (Accessed: 19.10.2021).

“refugees” or “asylum-seekers” in everyday use, Syrians in Turkey can have three different statuses. The first and largest group comprises those who sought refuge in Turkey after April 2011 and who were issued temporary protection status by the GDMM, having had their biometric records taken and whose number has climbed to 3,721,057 as of late October 2021. The second group is comprised of 100,449 people who came to Turkey before or after 2011 and reside there

protection in congruence with international law, a “temporary protection” practice without a definite period in the regulation or law has been increasingly criticized, as the period is extended and the opportunity for Syrians to return decreases. Here, it is interesting that the change of status for some Syrians in Turkey has been to become “citizens”, following a quite radical policy. The number of those who were granted citizenship in this manner exceeded 102,000 as of August 2019.

with a residence permit. The third group is comprised of around 50,000 Syrians who came to Turkey before 2011 who have, however, not yet been registered.<sup>5</sup> Syrians who have become citizens of Turkey in the last two years, whose number reaches up to 150,000 as of 2021, can be included as a fourth category.

Despite media coverage on some cases of voluntary return and those who were issued citizenship, the number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey has been increasing day by day according to the data updated by the GDMM. It is evident that the 270 Syrian babies who are born on average in Turkey every day have an effect on this increase, not to mention the ongoing border crossings. It can be noted that this is a serious shock for the Turkish state and Turkish society, as only 58,000 asylum-seekers arrived in the year 2011.

The increasing influx of asylum-seekers in Turkey that started from 29 April 2011 and fundamentally increased after 2013 was not confined only to Syrians. Some (around 500–700,000) of those asylum-seekers who are generally referred to as “irregular migrants” by the State transited to Europe between 2014–2016, and some stayed in Turkey. As of October 2021, the total number of non-Syrians in Turkey who have applied for or are currently in possession of international protection status are more than 350,000. According to UNHCR Turkey data from September 2018, this figure included 170,000 Afghans, 142,000 Iraqis, and 39,000 Iranians. However, it is unknown how exactly these figures are distributed within the updated 350,000 declared by the GDMM. Probably the number of Afghans, Iraqis, and Iranians has further increased within the “other” category in the figure below, in parallel

<sup>5</sup> Minister of Interior Soylu declared on 20 August 2019 that the number of Syrians who were granted citizenship in Turkey was 92,000 plus 10,000, which makes 102,000, 50,000 being children and 50,000 being adults, and those who were not registered yet were about 50–60,000. HABERTÜRK TV (2019). İçişleri Bakanı Soylu’dan Habertürk’e önemli açıklamalar, <https://www.haberturk.com/son-dakika-bakan-soylu-dan-onemli-aciklamalar-2514831> (accessed: 22.08.2019).

with a similar distribution.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the flow of human beings that the formal organizations in Turkey refer to as “irregular migrants”, which probably include asylum-seekers, is ongoing with a massive volume.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Syrians in Turkey: Data and Progress<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1. General Figures and Rates

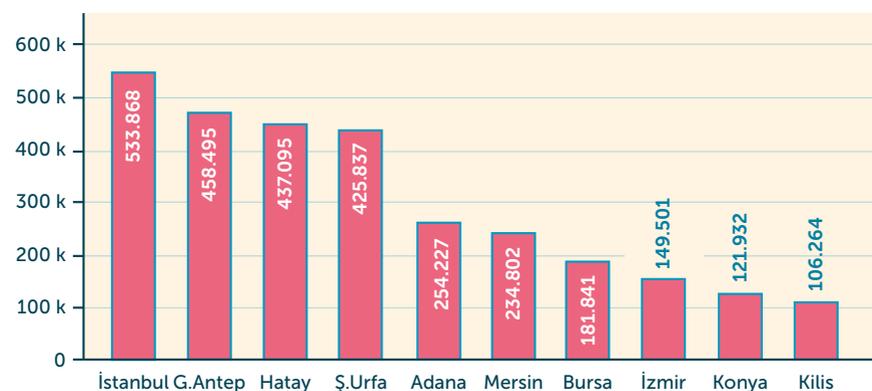
The number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey is 3,721,057 as of October 2021. This figure shows that, with an average family size of 5.8, there are around 620,000 Syrian households in Turkey.<sup>9</sup> As of October 2021, Syrians correspond to 4.52% of Turkey’s 82

<sup>6</sup> There are many arguments suggesting that informality has seriously increased since 10 September 2018 among non-Syrian asylum-seekers. The reason is that the registration operation of non-Syrian asylum-seekers was assigned from the UNHCR to the GDMM. In this way, all applications regarding international protection requests and registration operations were reassigned. This has resulted in concerns among many non-Syrian individuals seeking international protection that they will be “deported” upon being registered with the Turkish authorities. Therefore, although the data on the number of Syrians in Turkey corresponds to the real numbers for the most part, it is estimated that the number of non-Syrians on Turkish territory at present is far higher than the current official figures.

<sup>7</sup> Minister of Interior, Süleyman Soylu: “We arrested 175 thousand, 752 irregular migrants in 2017, and 268 thousand in 2018, ... the number of arrested irregular migrants has been 177 thousand, 654 as of 29 July this year. And it will increase to 300 thousand”. Muhammed Boztepe (2019). 29 Temmuz itibarıyla 177 bin 654 düzensiz göçmen yakalandı, Anadolu Agency, 2 August 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/politika/29-temmuz-itibariyla-177-bin-654-duzensiz-gocmen-yakalandi/1547989> (accessed: 20.08.2019)

<sup>8</sup> Syrians referred to here include those under temporary protection in Turkey. There is no public data on the other categories.

<sup>9</sup> In a study carried out under the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) programme, it has been expressed that 2.4 million Syrians who applied for ESSN aid constitute 413 thousand families. Here, the family size is 5.8. See: Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme (2019). Refugees In Turkey:



**Figure 3: Distribution of Syrians Under Temporary Protection by Top 10 Provinces**

T.R. Ministry of Interior General Directorate of Migration Management, <https://en.goc.gov.tr/temporary-protection27> (Accessed: 19.10.2021).

million inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> İstanbul is the city hosting the largest number of Syrians in Turkey, with 533,868. The ratio of registered Syrians to the population in İstanbul is 3.33%. However, it is estimated that 400,000 more Syrians live in İstanbul but are registered elsewhere. If this group is also included in the calculation, the rate is increased to 5.6%. In terms of hosting the most migrants, the city of Gaziantep follows İstanbul, having 458,000 registered Syrians (21.4% of the population); 437,000 Syrians live in Hatay (26.8% of the population); and 425,000 are in Şanlıurfa (21.1% of the population). The Syrian proportion of

Livelihoods Survey Findings. Ankara, Turkey.

<sup>10</sup> The GDMM calculates this rate using the ratio between two “independent variables”. If 3.6 million is added to 82 million, and the ratio of 3.6 million within the total figure of 85.6 million is identified, then the ratio to the Turkish population is 4.2%. This situation creates significant differences in some province-based data.



**Figure 4: Provincial breakdown.**

UNHCR Turkey (2021).

the population is extremely high in these provinces. Kilis province hosts the highest number of Syrians at the provincial level in proportion to its population. The population of Kilis is 142,000, while the number of Syrians there is 106,000. That means that 75% of Kilis’s population is Syrian. There are ten provinces where Syrians are present with a number higher than 100,000. The arrival of quite a high number of Syrians to urban areas which already have many structural problems has further increased poverty and problems for public services.

### 3. “Urban Refugees”

Some of the Syrian refugees in Turkey became “urban refugees” after the year 2013. As of October 2021, of the more than 3.7 million Syrians, only 1.5% (53 thousand) are staying in one of the 7 camps spread over 5 provinces:

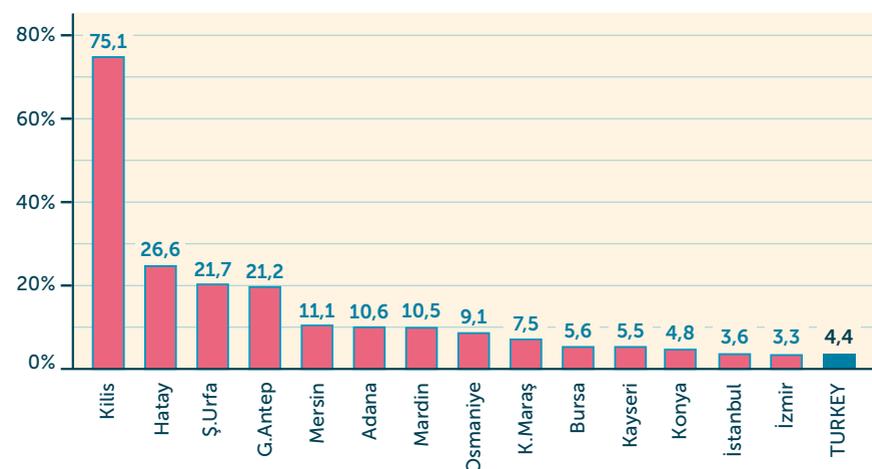


Figure 5: Proportion of Syrian population by province. (2021)

(Author's own calculation and graphing).

Hatay (3), Kilis (1), Adana (1), Kahramanmaraş (1), and Osmaniye (1). There is an ongoing decrease in the number of people living in these camps. It was probably less than 1% in 2020. That is to say, the vast majority of Syrians live outside the camps as urban refugees, distributed across almost all of Turkey. However, Turkey has not made a settlement plan for Syrians. Especially from the end of 2013, when the capacity in the camps was surpassed, Syrians were allowed to settle anywhere they liked. As expected, they spread out to the places where their relatives who could support them resided or where they could work. The belief held by the Turkish government that the war would soon end and the asylum-seekers would return home to Syria resulted in the asylum-seekers' spontaneous distribution. This "natural" and quite "liberal" settlement process resulted in an extraordinarily unbalanced distribution

of migrants between regions, provinces, towns, and even quarters and neighbourhoods. For instance, quite different figures can be seen between the 39 different districts in İstanbul. This is the case in the cities of Gaziantep, Hatay, and Şanlıurfa, too. As is the case in Kilis, the number of Syrians even exceeds the number of Turkish citizens in some towns, cities, and villages in the border region.

#### 4. Age and Gender

The age groups and gender characteristics among Syrians in Turkey are especially noteworthy. The number of those within the 0–4 age group among Syrians is 13.6% or 508,000. More than 1.7 million Syrians, i.e., 45.9% within the total figure, comprise young people and children under 18. An interesting issue is that the male population (54.1%) is quite a bit larger than the female population (45.8%). The number of those of "active working age" between 15 and 64 is over 2 million.

#### 5. Syrians Born in Turkey

The number of Syrians born in Turkey after 2011 is ever-increasing. Quite understandably, as a result of the normalization of life, this number is estimated to be around 100,000 within the total figure, despite uncertainty in the number of babies born between 2011 and 2015. However, according to the official data of the Turkish Ministry of Health, 82,850 Syrians were born within Turkey in 2016, 111,325 in 2017, 113,000 in 2018, 107,000 in 2019, and 101,000 in 2020. That is, it can be foreseen that the average number of Syrians to be born in Turkey in 2021 will be 270 per day. In this regard, it can be said with confidence that the number of Syrians born in Turkey has already exceeded 693,000 in the last 10 years.<sup>11</sup> A significant problem for Syrians born in Turkey is that they have "de facto stateless" status, since neither the Syrian state nor Turkey automatically grants them citizenship.

<sup>11</sup> Minister of Interior Mr. S. Soylu declared on 20 August 2019 that this figure was 400,000. HABERTÜRK TV (2019).

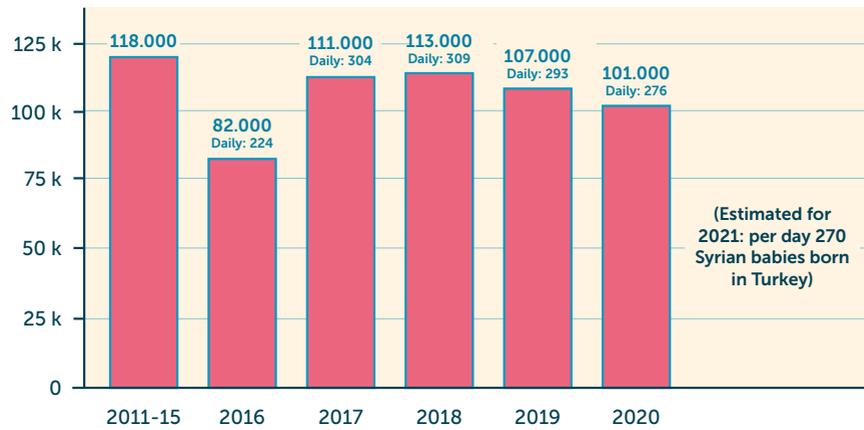


Figure 6: Syrian babies born in Turkey.

M. Murat Erdoğan (2021). Based on data obtained from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Interior.

## 6. Education

The limited data on the general education status of the Syrian population that corresponds to 4.52% of the Turkish population suggest that Syrians have a lower education level than the average in Turkey, and almost half are either illiterate or never attended school.<sup>12</sup> This can be explained by the fact that those who come to Turkey from

<sup>12</sup> Almost the only official source regarding the issue so far has been the study entitled "First Stage Needs Analysis that Covers the 2016-2018 Period for Syrians under Temporary Protection Status in Turkey", published by TR Ministry of Development in 2016 within the scope of "Turkey-EU Refugee Consensus" negotiations. The education level among Syrians coming to Turkey has quite a negative outlook, based on the current data available. Accordingly, the rate of illiterate Syrians is 33.3%, while the rate of literate yet non-graduate Syrians is 13%.

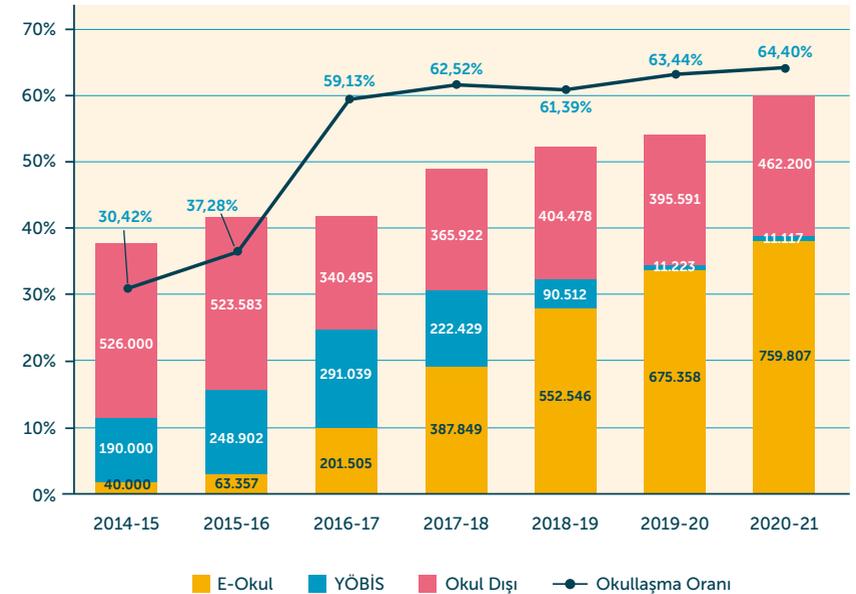


Figure 7: Syrian students' access to education in Turkey.

[https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb\\_iys\\_dosy-alar/2019\\_06/26115239\\_14\\_HAziran\\_\\_\\_2019\\_YN-TERNET\\_SUNUUU\\_.pdf](https://hbogm.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosy-alar/2019_06/26115239_14_HAziran___2019_YN-TERNET_SUNUUU_.pdf) (Accessed: 07.09.2021).

Syria are generally coming from the rural and quite traditional region of Northern Syria, where their opportunity to access education was limited for decades in line with the policy of the Syrian regime.<sup>13</sup> A second important factor is that the education level of the roughly 700,000 Syrians who left Turkey between 2014 and 2016 was comparatively higher than those

<sup>13</sup> The rate of illiterate Syrians seems to be 33.3% in Turkey, 13% in Jordan, 14% in Lebanon, and 10% in Iraq. See: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and the World Food Programme (WFP) (2017). Jobs Make the Difference Expanding Economic Opportunities for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities Egypt - Iraq - Jordan - Lebanon - Syria - Turkey, p.83.

who stayed.

General education levels are significant in the social cohesion process, especially in terms of determining the support given to families for the education of their children. The issue of the education of Syrian children in Turkey is vitally important for minimizing the extent to which young Syrians will become a ‘lost generation’ and for ensuring humane living conditions and future planning for peaceful co-existence. According to data from the GDMM and the Ministry of National Education (MEB), the number of Syrian children in the compulsory schooling age group in Turkey, i.e., between the ages 5 and 17, is 1.2 million. This figure corresponds to 32% of the total number of Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey. In places which were exposed to a sudden influx, hosting Syrians at more than 10% in proportion to their population, the situation has required Turkey to exert an extraordinary effort that has challenged the nation’s entire educational capacity. Among Syrian children, 230,000 were schooled during the 2014–2015 school year, 311,000 in 2015–2016, 492,000 in 2016–2017, 643,058 in 2018–2019, 685,000 in 2019–2020, and 770,000 in 2020–2021. According to the most recent data, 64.40% of Syrians in Turkey have attended school. However, the data on Syrian schoolchildren indicate that there is a serious imbalance in schooling rates. Although it exceeds 90% in primary grades 1 and 2, this rate decreases to 57.66% in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8 (ages 10–13), and 26.77% in grades 9–12 (the 14–17 age group).

It has been observed that the MEB made great achievements for Syrian students in the year 2016. The first significant step taken by the MEB was to sign an agreement amounting to 300 million EUR with the EU Delegation on 3 March 2016 for educational expenses, under the auspices of Financial Assistance for the Refugees (Syrians) in Turkey (FRIT). Still, the most significant step was taken in August 2016 when the MEB determined the “road map” for Syrian children’s access to education, also establishing the “Migration and Emergency Education Department” under the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning and

strengthening its institutional capacity.<sup>14</sup> In this road map, educating Syrian youth was considered as a “permanent” rather than “temporary” measure, and the main objective was to integrate Syrian children into the Turkish educational system.

There are some critical reasons for Syrian students at compulsory schooling age to keep away from school. These include the perception of being in a “temporary” situation, having financial difficulties, particularly the necessity for boys to work, capacity problems in the schools themselves, transport costs, not sending girls to school, and concerns about assimilation. In this respect, it is critically important that the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) institutions contribute to the conditional school support mechanism. This support is being paid as 40 TL for girls and 35 TL for boys attending primary school and 60 TL for girls and 50 TL for boys attending middle school. However, considering regional differences, it should not be forgotten that implementing active “conditional support” programs at even higher amounts is vital.

Undoubtedly, it is an extraordinary achievement to include 643,000 out of the 1 million Syrian children in Turkey at schooling age into the Turkish educational system. This figure is even higher than the total number of students at primary school level in many European countries. Furthermore, this achievement has been made possible only with substantial efforts, as the increase in technical capacity for the MEB is extremely limited. Education is a field in which a positive outcome has been achieved lately through rapid, targeted investments. In other words, the need for trained personnel is as high as for new schools and classrooms. General and province-based needs analyses were stated in the study carried out by the MEB in July 2017.<sup>15</sup> Here,

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.meb.gov.tr/suriyeli-cocuklarin-egitimi-icin-yol-haritasi-belirlendi/haber/11750/tr>.

<sup>15</sup> TR Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, Migration and Emergency Education Department (2021). Education Services for the Students under Temporary Protection, July 2021, slide 37.

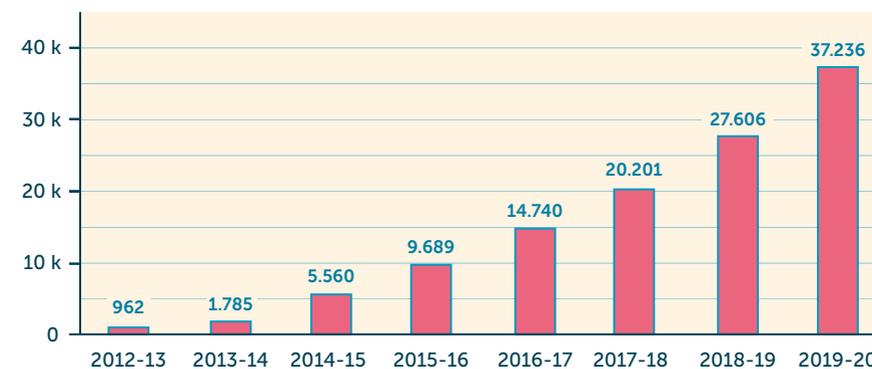
the most outstanding piece of information is that the needs identified included “1,189 new schools” for Syrian children determined to be at schooling age on the date when the analysis was carried out. However, the number of the “Schools to be built within the Scope of EU Projects” was given as only 183, which corresponds to only 15.3% of the needs.<sup>16</sup> According to the current figures, the number of schools with 24 classrooms, which are necessary for school-age Syrian children to receive a standard education, is 1,454, and the required number of teachers is 52,376. However, it is evident that it will take quite a long time to fully meet these needs, and the number belonging to this ‘lost generation’ will increase in the meantime. Undoubtedly, education is an item of capacity and cost at the same time. According to the calculations by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), the average cost of a primary–middle–high school student per year was 13,000 TL in 2021.<sup>17</sup> Based on this figure, the yearly schooling cost of more than 770,000 Syrian children amounts to 10 billion TL, which corresponds to 950 million EUR, based on the currency exchange rate on 15 October 2021 (10.5 TL = 1 EUR).

## 7. Syrian University Students in Turkey

The number of students among Syrians present in Turkey is ever-increasing, some having discontinued their education in Syria and seeking to restart their higher education and others earning a place in a Turkish university after completing their primary school and high school education in Turkey and successfully passing the Foreign Student Exams and language proficiency exams. The number of Syrian university students who studied at about 100 public and 50 private universities

<sup>16</sup> For the aim of supporting the Education Infrastructure for Syrians under Temporary Protection, the EU planned the construction of 75 concrete school buildings (150 million EUR) under FRIT, 30 school buildings prefabricated plus concrete (68 million EUR) under MADAD2, and 46 prefabricated Schools (45 million EUR) under FRIT (Additional Fund). TR Ministry of National Education (2017). slide 36.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=27600>.



in Turkey was 14,747 in the 2016–2017 academic year, 20,701 in 2017–2018, 27,606 in 2018–2019, and 32,236 in 2019–2020. Syrian students have been at the top in terms of numeric quantity among the roughly 140,000 international students in Turkey over the last two years. According to 2017–2018 data, Syrians also included 410 PhD and 1,650 post-graduate students, who may continue their education exempt from any school fees at public universities. The rate of Syrian university students on a scholarship is around 15%. The ability to attain higher education is critically important for the continuation of Syrian students in their further education and careers, as well as taking an active part in cohesion processes.<sup>18</sup>

**Figure 8: Syrian students in higher education in Turkey.**

M. Murat Erdoğan (2021). Based on annual figures published by YÖK (Council of Higher Education), <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>.

<sup>18</sup> M. Murat Erdoğan et al. (2019). “Elite Dialogue”: Dialogue with the Syrian Asylum-Seekers Present in Turkey through Syrian Academics and Post-Graduate Students, EU HOPES MADAD, Turkish-German University, Migration and Cohesion Research Center TAGU.

## 8. Business World – Employment and Entrepreneurship

One of the most critical issues of all is the massive movement of people into the labour market. Many in Turkey are concerned that newly arrived migrants/refugees/asylum-seekers, who will most probably work as cheap labour, might take their jobs. It is not an ungrounded concern, though. There wasn't much relevant experience before Turkish society was exposed to the influx of Syrians coming to Turkey in 2011. Naturally, employment will be a major issue in a nation which received refugees at a rate which is more than 5% of its population in just a few years. In the TISK report,<sup>19</sup> which was prepared in 2015 and includes opinions prevalent in the Turkish business world, it was observed that not only were workers concerned about the risk of losing their jobs due to the cheap labour supply, but corporate employers also had their concerns, highlighting the negative externalities which can arise from an informal economy. Corporate firms talked about the difficulty of competing with cheap labour and the informal economy, and they even argued that it would be more appropriate to ensure the right to work for Syrians, just for this concern.

As Syrians started to leave the camps and migrate to urban centres from 2013, the process for their inclusion in economic activities started automatically. For those living outside the camps, it has not been possible for regular or continuous financial support to be provided since 2011, except in very exceptional cases. Thus, it has become inevitable that many will begin to work in urban areas. As the number of Syrians who started to work in the informal sector reached 400,000, the Turkish state needed to make relevant arrangements, and the right to work was issued to Syrians under temporary protection living in Turkey from 15 January 2016. In line with this regulation, Syrians who are registered in Turkey for a minimum of 6 months would enjoy the right to work at a proportion of 1/10 of the workers in the given workplace, based on employer demand and on the condition that they

receive at least the minimum wage. However, this critically important step for the economic activities and cohesion of Syrians in Turkey, which provides Syrians with the opportunity for formal employment, failed to have the expected effect in terms of ensuring that Syrians working informally would move into formal employment. According to the declaration by the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services in 2019, the number of Syrian citizens who had then been issued a work permit in Turkey was 60,000.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, research shows that the total Syrian working population in Turkey is more than 30%, i.e., a minimum of 1.2 million Syrians are working. Considering the number of Syrians in Turkey who are de facto employed, these figures evidently indicate that the right to work is not functional enough for Syrians under temporary protection, and more than 95% of Syrians working at present are doing so informally.<sup>21</sup> Informality is thus, unfortunately, the undesired reality of the Turkish economy. According to May 2021 data from TURKSTAT,<sup>22</sup> the rate of those working "without being bound to any social security institution", i.e., informally, among actively working Turkish citizens is 30%. That is, among the labour force over the age of 15, comprising 28 million in total, more than 7–8 million citizens are

<sup>20</sup> It is noteworthy that this figure is lower than 32,199, which was the figure for 15 November 2018. However, it is estimated that the number of Syrians who were granted citizenship have played a role in the decreased numbers.

<sup>21</sup> Important findings were achieved regarding the working life of Syrians and others under temporary protection (especially Afghans and Iraqis). It has been found that at least 1 person is working in 84% of 413,000 families that the sampling for this study represents. Among them, the rate of those holding a work permit is 3%. "WFP and TRC developed the Livelihoods Survey to provide additional evidence to inform the design of the transition from basic needs assistance to more sustainable livelihoods opportunities for refugees in Turkey. The survey sample is drawn from the ESSN applicant pool and aims to assess the potential for refugee integration into Turkish labor markets, as well as to identify key constraints." Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme (2019).

<sup>22</sup> Turkish Statistical Institute-TURKSTAT: <http://tuik.gov.tr/HbGetirHTML.do?id=30683> (accessed: 07.07.2019)

<sup>19</sup> M. Murat Erdoğan & Can Ünver (2015). Perspectives, Expectations and Suggestions of the Turkish Business Sector on Syrians in Turkey. TISK.

working informally in Turkey. All projections regarding Syrians indicate that because many as 1.2 million Syrians in Turkey have managed to survive by working informally, their financial need from the state has decreased, and they are contributing to the Turkish economy. Many international institutions, notably the World Bank, express that Turkey pursued the right policy by not forcing Syrians to stay in camps and allowing their employment (albeit informally), which contributed to the economy and facilitated refugees to lead a life compatible with human dignity, and these institutions also suggest that it could be referred to as a “developmentalist refugee policy”.<sup>23</sup> It can thus be inferred that an informal economy creates significant opportunities and space for Syrians, although it is not very sustainable and quite controversial in terms of decent work. This can also be considered an important reason for the existing social acceptance in Turkey regarding Syrians at a considerably high level, despite being “fragile”.<sup>24</sup> The informal economy seems to have played a big part in Syrians’ possibility to live in Turkey in a relatively problem-free manner; more importantly, it has played a key role for the local community to function without the creation of unemployment.<sup>25</sup>

23 World Bank (2015). World Bank Report: Turkey’s Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Road Ahead. December 2015.

24 M. Murat Erdoğan (2018). Syrians Barometer: Framework for Living in Harmony with Syrians. İstanbul Bilgi University Publications, İstanbul.

25 Research suggests that 20% of asylum-seekers work in unqualified jobs, 19% work in textiles, 12% in construction, and 10% in handcrafts. They are followed by those working in shoemaking (6%), commercial business (5%), and repair works (5%). However, there are significant differences between provinces and regions. Almost 50% of the asylum-seekers working in İstanbul work in the textile sector, while 25% of those in Mersin work in agriculture. Research shows that there are about 45% working at regular jobs based on a long-term contract and 54% work in irregular jobs as unqualified workers. There is considerable space for regular jobs in textiles (79%). Those working in daily (irregular) jobs earn 1,058 TL as a monthly average, which is 1,312 TL for regular workers. The highest average income is 1,332 TL in the textile sector. Unqualified labor (768 TL), especially in the agricultural sector (756 TL), constitute the areas with the

Syrian entrepreneurs, of course, have made significant contributions to the economic cohesion of Syrians in Turkey. Syrians can open up businesses in Turkey in accordance with the Turkish Code of Commerce. In businesses that are formally registered in Turkey, the owner of the business can officially apply for work permits. Although some are only comprised of self-financing micro-level businesses, there is still a tendency towards increasing the number of businesses established by Syrians in Turkey. The highest number of foreign companies established in Turkey in 2017 and 2018 belong to Syrians. According to a declaration by the Ministry of Trade, the number of companies with at least one partner of Syrian origin was 15,159 as of 26 February 2019.<sup>26</sup> It is estimated that this figure is higher when including firms established informally. The established companies mainly fall into the wholesale, real estate, and construction sectors. Some research suggests that Syrian joint capital exceeds 100 million dollars.<sup>27</sup>

## 9. Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN) Program

Financial support programs for Syrians and other asylum-seekers in Turkey had not been implemented by the end of 2016, except for certain practices. The main programme in this respect was initiated with the consensus between Turkey and the EU on 16 March 2016. Owing to the fund of 998 million EUR provided by the EU between December 2016 and May 2021, the ESSN programme provided support to a total number of 1.8 million individuals under international protection in

lowest income. Turkish Red Crescent and World Food Programme (2019).

26 CNN-TÜRK: <https://www.cnnturk.com/ekonomi/bakan-pekcan-15-bin-159-suriyeli-sirket-var>.

27 Minister of Interior Soylu emphasized during a Habertürk TV Broadcast on 20 August 2019 that working informally is prohibited for Syrians, as it is for everyone, and provided guidance for 2 months for those in this situation, and this service would continue until 31 October. Noting that the required procedure would apply to those informally employing Syrians after 31 October, Soylu stated that they would keep Syrians who are registered properly in the working life of İstanbul but send the rest back. HABERTÜRK TV (2019).

608,000 households in Turkey. 89%, i.e., 1.6 million, of these recipients are Syrians. This support aims to ensure that the asylum-seekers and refugees living outside camps throughout Turkey meet their basic needs such as food, accommodation, clothing, etc. in a way compatible with human dignity. Aid is provided by means of KIZILAYCARD following the evaluation of destitution faced by each refugee. This resource, which is 155 TL (almost 15 EUR based on the exchange rate in October 2021) monthly per person, has become a regular financial resource for asylum-seekers. Although ESSN support has become a regular resource for Syrians, it can only be made available to about 44.5% out of more than 3.7 million Syrians living in about 630,000 households in Turkey. For those receiving ESSN support, ensuring self-sufficiency without working at the same time is extremely difficult in urban areas. More importantly, there is no other option but to work to make a living for the 2.1 million Syrians who fail to receive ESSN support.

## 10. Cost

It has been expressed by the formal institutions in Turkey that the country's spending for Syrians over 10 years amounts to more than 40 billion dollars.<sup>28</sup> Although the political, social, and especially financial sacrifices made by Turkey for Syrians since the beginning of the process are appreciated, the financial aspect has been debated. Undoubtedly, it is not easy to estimate the actual cost, especially when emergency management applies. However, it is not unrealistic to claim that the 4 million asylum-seekers today, in a country which has already hosted more than 3 million asylum-seekers since 2014, would create some serious costs. Turkey is certainly rightful in its calls for burden sharing. However, there are two critical emerging problems at hand. Transparency of Turkey's spending for asylum-seekers has not been enhanced efficiently, and it has not been adequately specified which

28 Kamul Bulteni (2019). President Erdoğan: "We spent 37 Billion Dollars for Syrians". 27 June 2019, <http://www.kamubulteni.com/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-suriyeliler-icin-37-milyar-dolar-harcadik-h11496.html> (accessed: 17.08.2019).

spending was made where, with which resources, and for which reason.<sup>29</sup> This results in hesitations. A second issue emerges from a problem of definition: it would be more appropriate for the Turkish state to mention "costs" rather than "spending" in its declarations. This is because accepting more than 4 million asylum-seekers has many costs other than merely direct financial spending. A calculation by Köln University in Germany provides an interesting opportunity for comparison in this regard.<sup>30</sup> According to this study, the cost of 1 refugee for Germany is 15,000 EUR per year, 1,250 EUR per month, or 41 EUR per day. When the total cost of Syrian refugees is calculated hypothetically, based on these spending figures in Germany, it exceeds 390 billion EUR.<sup>31</sup> However, only looking at the financial aspect is not efficiently descriptive. For instance, if Turkey proposes that the EU pays 100 billion EUR over 5 years, at 20 billion EUR each year, and asks to receive only half of the asylum-seekers in Turkey (2 million) in return, this would no doubt be unacceptable. Therefore, it is not only about the financial burden. The main problems with refugees all around the world include social, political, and security risks as well as costs.

## 11. Local Administrations and Local Cohesion

More than 98% of Syrians in Turkey are "urban refugees".<sup>32</sup> The UN's

29 For the declaration by the Deputy Prime Minister on 6 December 2017, see: <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/info/infografik/8044>.

30 Andreas Becker (2017). "The Costs of The Refugee Crisis". DW, 1 February 2016, <http://www.dw.com/en/the-costs-of-the-refugee-crisis/a-19016394> (accessed: Jan 10, 2017).

31 If the calculation by Köln University is taken into consideration and a calculation is made for the monthly 1,250 EUR per refugee rate in Turkey, the total cost of Syrian refugees, being 14,237 in May–December 2011, 225,000 in 2012, 1.5 million in 2013, 2.5 million in 2014, 2.8 million in 2015, 2.9 million in 2016, 3.4 million in 2017, 3.6 million in 2018, and 3.6 million in the first 6 months of 2019, exceeds 230 billion EUR.

32 For some of the most thorough research commissioned by Marmara Municipalities Union on the management process regarding municipalities and refugees in Turkey, see: M. Murat Erdoğan (2017). "Urban Refugees: From

increasingly prominent vision, the Global Compact on Refugees, also notes that local administrations are required to be one of the most significant actors on refugees and “local cohesion” models must be given priority.<sup>33</sup> Concerns over the implementation of the principles in the compact do not decrease the role which is de facto assigned to the local administrations. In this respect, a very critical and challenging process has been ongoing since 2011 in Turkey. Turkey does not have a special refugee quota or distribution system exclusive to Syrians living in urban areas. Therefore, there are significant differences in the distribution of Syrians throughout the country, both politically and proportionally. These differences can be observed between various towns and quarters of a province. Refugees cannot benefit from financial support of the municipalities, which is calculated according to the number of citizens and makes up the main source of income for municipalities in those cities which have, all of a sudden, had to co-exist with a substantial number of refugees without having any control over the issue. In this regard, it is evident that there is a need for a legislative amendment in which registered foreigners as well as Turkish citizens are taken into consideration for the distribution of financial support to local municipalities in Turkey. However, it may not be easy to apply such a claim due to political sensitivities. Therefore, it is essential that international aid institutions, mainly the EU, support the municipalities further in the short term, thereby bolstering “local cohesion” processes. In this framework, it is evident that providing a resource close to 5 EUR monthly per person under international protection to the municipalities from an amount to be allocated from EU resources, similar to the ESSN scheme, would ensure a remarkable impact within this process. Such a resource would amount to 240 million EUR on a yearly basis for 4 million asylum-seekers in Turkey.

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‘Detachment’ to ‘Harmonization’, Syrian Refugees and Process Management of Municipalities: The Case of Istanbul”. Marmara Municipalities Union Culture Publications, Istanbul.

33 UNHCR. “The Global Compact on Refugees”. <https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html> (accessed: 01.07.2019).

## 12. National and International Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs, and especially international organizations, have played a significant part during the refugee crisis in Turkey. Although problems have occurred concerning the operations of NGOs over certain periods, it is known that numerous international organizations are actively operating in Turkey at present. Strong cooperation of the Turkish state with international organizations, notably the UN, is ongoing in a profound manner. A general complaint of the Turkish government is that very limited resources have been made available to it, and many of these resources are distributed not through the institutions of Turkey but instead autonomously. There have sometimes been concerns that the aid provided serves political purposes. Reactions to projects that aim for cohesion can also be encountered from time to time, resulting from the tendency to perceive cohesion processes as a “trap”. In parallel, it is considered that spending on the part of the EU and other organizations for cohesion has largely been instrumental, and there are suspicions resulting from the notion that the cohesion process increases the tendency for refugees to stay permanently in Turkey.

It is worth noting that the UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), the World Bank, and especially the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) have a special place among the international organizations operating in the area of refugees in Turkey. Another development that has taken place since 2011 in Turkey is an extraordinary capacity increase in terms of crisis management, field operations, and especially the rights of refugees. The number of people working in international organizations and NGOs, UN bodies, and powerful local NGOs has increased to almost 50,000. This situation has both created a new labour market for Turkish young people and resulted in the development of a new and serious sector in terms of working in line with international principles, project development, project implementation, arrangement of public–NGO relations, etc. More importantly, these people have assumed a critical

role between the public institutions and international institutions, and they now have the opportunity to contribute to both parties.

### 13. Social Acceptance and Cohesion: “Acceptance is Considerably High, but it is Decreasing and Fragile”

A notable “social shock” arose as Turkish society came face to face with more than 4.1 million refugees, amounting to up to 5% of the population; that number was only 58,000 in 2011. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that, despite the social shock, the level of social acceptance within Turkish society is still extremely high, in spite of all concerns that rejection and disturbance would come to the fore or the desire would grow for Syrians to go back. Therefore, as a whole, this issue of migration has not (and could not have) been on the agenda of local and general elections in Turkey. The performance of the Turkish people in this regard, as well as their solidarity and acceptance, has been very valuable. It can be noted that the following has had an effect on the realization of high social acceptance:

1. **Being accustomed to mass problems/crises and cultural and religious solidarity:** Undoubtedly, in the initial years of the crisis, particularly up until 2014, Turkish society automatically showed extraordinary solidarity with Syrians. Although this solidarity level very rapidly deteriorated, in the beginning it helped Syrians to integrate and adapt.
2. **Leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan:** Almost half of society accepted Erdoğan’s policy on Syria and Syrians without hesitation, trusting in his leadership. This is still valid, at least in part. Therefore, any policy change by Erdoğan will be very influential.
3. **The belief that they will return:** Turkish people still wants to believe that Syrians will go back. Reactions tend to increase when such belief is lost.
4. **Solidarity in poverty:** As expected, Syrians living in Turkish communities co-exist with deprived segments of society. This substantially adds to the creation of a considerable solidarity of poverty among masses of people. Thus, the fact that Turkey is not

yet sufficiently wealthy makes acceptance easier.

5. **Loss of jobs is limited:** One of the issues that creates the most concern and challenges acceptance is the loss of jobs that results from cheap labour. However, this situation has been easily overcome with the informal economy, which accounts for 33% of economic activity in Turkey. Though the informal economy is an unacceptable area of exploitation, in the short-term, Syrians have managed to survive by benefiting from the labour opportunities available to them in Turkey and, more importantly, not causing unemployment apart from in the border regions. The fact that at least 1.2 million working Syrians have not caused mass loss of jobs among Turks so far facilitates social acceptance.
6. **Low crime rates:** A significant issue in social acceptance is the increased crime rates that can be attributable to refugees. That Syrians have been very careful during the ten year period and stayed away from crimes and gang formations facilitates social acceptance.
7. **Setback of public services have only been regional:** The potential negative impact on public services in mass migration situations can also have a very critical impact. It is known that critical setbacks and associated problems are often encountered in public services, especially in health, education, etc. in the border regions, particularly in places where more than 10% of the population are hosted Syrians. However, this situation has not been seriously evident in places other than Gaziantep, Hatay, Kilis, and Şanlıurfa.
8. **Free settlement:** Regular “settlement” policies that are based on quotas for refugees or migrants are critically important in terms of migration management. However, Turkey pursued a different policy in this regard — or could not pursue one at all — and Syrians settled according to their own free will in places where they could live, work, and feel safe. Although it is a weakness in terms of migration management, it has had a different practical effect in real life, and refugees have felt freer, not drifting apart, settling easily in their destinations without being exposed to social resistance, and they have made a life for themselves. This can be regarded as an

extremely valuable example of testing the system of spontaneity.

## 9. Discussions on Cohesion: “Cohesion” with Whom, of What, and How?<sup>34</sup>

It is the first time Turkish society has seen such an intense movement of people, and social cohesion has accordingly come to the fore. However, the issue of cohesion is problematic in many ways. Likewise, it is acknowledged that the issue of cohesion with whom, of what, and how is not very easy to answer, particularly in this day and age. When it comes to Turkey, the nation has had very limited relevant experience. Still, it is evident that some significant new phenomena stand out.

- The issue of cohesion is a problematic area for all states. Likewise, states carefully avoid developing a cohesion policy for mass populations which they do not desire to host permanently, due to the high risk that cohesion policies will increase the permanence of this settlement. This is the reason why Germany started its cohesion policies for Turks who came in 1961 only in the mid-1980s. However, the serious cost of avoiding cohesion policies manifests itself in the medium- and long-term. Therefore, visionary policies are required.
- The cohesion process is bi-directional, and it has one pillar resting with the state and the other with the society. If the society resists cohesion, whatever the state does may not be efficient. Still, if the society is ready, then the state needs to create a comprehensive cohesion policy, particularly regarding status and opportunities.
- Research studies show that Turkish society maintains substantial a social distance from Syrians and has a tendency towards “alienation”. The situation is the opposite with Syrians.
- Syrians are already convinced that they are quite harmonized within

<sup>34</sup> For the most thorough study carried out in Turkey in terms of the cohesion of Syrians in Turkey and the approach of the Turkish community to this issue, see: M. Murat Erdoğan (2018). Barometer of Syrians: Framework for Living in Harmony with Syrians. İstanbul Bilgi University Publications, İstanbul.

Turkish communities, while Turkish society is extremely concerned about this situation.

- One of the commonly held beliefs regarding cohesion activities is the approach that “cohesion is easier if there is cultural affinity”. Other examples in the world, besides Syrians in Turkey, reveal that this assumption is not very realistic, i.e., cultural affinity is but one of the elements ensuring cohesion, and the main determinant of success is rather the numeric size and level of achievement in process management. Therefore, ensuring cohesion with a sentimental approach, depending on cultural affinity, may take the form of social solidarity at the onset yet is not sustainable. Numeric sizes must be taken into consideration, and process management must be carried out without excessive sentimentality.
- Cohesion activities and discussions regarding migrants (newcomers) are commonplace throughout the world. Since the Second World War, no developed country has ever encountered a refugee influx of the scale and scope which Turkey is encountering now. As it is known, developed countries generally apply “welcoming” policies to migrants — especially to those who are qualified — while refugees are often unwelcome. Therefore, Turkey’s attempts to develop cohesion policies for “refugees” rather than for “migrants” was an endeavour that had not been experienced in recent history and needed to assume the risk of permanence. This situation stands out as one of the important handicaps for cohesion policies.

A significant aspect of discussions about Syrians in Turkey that is sometimes considered a humanitarian issue, but even more frequently is viewed as an issue of interior or foreign policy, is the debate on granting citizenship. Although there is a high level of acceptance extended to Syrians in Turkey, there is also serious concern and rejection within Turkish society against granting Syrians citizenship. Refugees’ cohesion can only be possible with the support of the Turkish people. Concerns in this regard must be taken seriously, and comprehensive strategies must be developed which will relieve these concerns.

## 10. The Turkey–EU Deal, 18 March 2016, and Financial Support Programmes

The European “problem” of Syrian refugees only started in 2014 once the refugees reached Europe. Following 2015, the EU’s efforts focused on stopping the refugee influx, making serious and comprehensive cooperation agreements, and thereby ensuring a consensus based on financial support with those countries in the Mediterranean basin where refugees were present, primarily Turkey. The most important step of the EU’s “externalism” policy following 2016 is the Turkey–EU Deal, signed on the 18th of March, 2016. The deal’s compliance with international and EU law, the type of solution that it suggests, and its promises as well as achievements were controversial right from the start. Ultimately, the deal was built on the goal of stopping refugees heading to the EU through Turkey in return for financial support to be provided by the EU for refugees in Turkey. In practice, the deal has taken the form of a “deal with EU Member States”, whereby the EU itself avoids assuming responsibility. Although there are some political commitments in the deal (e.g., visa liberalization, uplifting membership negotiations), the most significant part of the process has been financial support. Another key pillar of the deal is that Turkey is considered as a “secure third country for refugees” within the framework of the readmission agreement with Turkey. In this respect, after the deal entered into force on 4 April 2016, the EU made a distinction between those transiting to the EU via Turkey as “Syrians” and “non-Syrians”. The “1 to 1 rule” was adopted for Syrians, whereby Syrians who transit to the EU through Turkey are returned to Turkey; however, for each Syrian returned to Turkey, one Syrian from Turkey who has been identified within the scope of the UN Fragility Criteria would be resettled in the EU. An upper limit thereof has been placed at 70,000 people per year. However, this mechanism has failed due to arguments concerning its compliance with international law, quota disagreements between EU Member States, and difficulties with implementation. This agreement has only been applied to 20,002 Syrians since 4 April 2016.<sup>35</sup> The rule

35 See: European Commission (2019). “Third Yearly Report of the Financial

of the deal for non-Syrians is much more explicit. Accordingly, all other asylum-seekers that are identified to have transited to the Greek islands from Turkey will be returned to Turkey, since Turkey is considered a “secure third country” in accordance with the readmission agreement. As the other objectives of the deal regarding visa liberalization and the re-establishment of Turkey–EU relations fell behind in a short period of time, the title was changed to “Financial Assistance Program for the Refugees in Turkey”. In this way, the EU as an institution is not beholden to any commitment, and it has developed a very simple solution to an extremely complex problem: Turkey being assigned the mission to protect the EU from refugees. In other words, the EU keeps refugees in Turkey, and in return Turkey gets a financial assistance package from the EU. Therefore, Europe has decreased costs to a minimum and, more importantly, ensured that Turkey bears the political, security, and social risks which arise from a heavy refugee influx.

The most significant legal grounds for the Turkey–EU Deal are that “Turkey has been considered the secure third country for refugees,” and the readmission agreement has been used within this frame. On the other hand, it is evident that Turkey, which has a geographical restriction from the Geneva Convention and cannot issue refugee status to non-European refugees, does not fit this status in terms of the rights of refugees. There are many other objections and arguments concerning this situation.

The total budget coordinated with the Financial Assistance Programme is 6 billion EUR (being 3 billion EUR for the 2016–2017 period and 3 billion EUR for 2018–2019). In the first instalment, 1 billion EUR from the EU budget and 2 billion EUR from the Member States were provided.<sup>36</sup> In the second instalment, while 2 billion EUR was

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Assistance Program for the Refugees in Turkey”, Communique of the European Commission to the European Parliament and the EU Council. Brussels, 10 April 2019, COM (2019), 174 final. The GDMM declares this figure at 23,055 as of 14.08.2019.

36 Total distribution of the contributions of Member States can be accessed

provided from the EU budget, 1 billion EUR was provided by the Member States. In this framework, the Programme operates in these five priority areas: humanitarian aid, migration management, health, municipal infrastructure, and socio-economic support. However, prior to its implementation, the programme was contracted with its entire operational budget of 3 billion EUR for 2016–2017 committed to 72 projects that provide tangible outputs. In line with this progress, 2 billion EUR has already been paid, and the remainder will continue to be paid until mid-2021 as the projects within the scope of the Financial Assistance Programme are implemented.<sup>37</sup>

The Turkey–EU Deal seems to have stopped the refugee influx to Europe. A decrease in refugee numbers arriving in Europe indicates the same. However, it should be noted that those suggesting this deal is a very “successful” one are not efficiently paying heed to other external factors. It should be borne in mind that the main reason why the refugee influx to Europe via Turkey has stopped is rather the changing dynamics in Syria, and particularly the intervention of Russia, not the Turkey–EU Deal. Population policies determined by Russia, Iran, Turkey, ISIS, and Kurdish groups based on the changing geopolitical situation have blocked the way for new refugees. The majority of Syrians in Turkey intending to transit to Europe have already done so. Since 2017, the Syrian population in Turkey has increased almost exclusively due to new births. Meanwhile, blocking the Balkan route so harshly that it was criticized as “a post-modern *push back* practice”<sup>38</sup>, stricter protections in the Mediterranean and the dire conditions met by those who make it to the Greek islands but cannot get to Europe have decreased the demand for transit to Europe. However, it should

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here: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/02/03/refugee-facility-for-turkey/>.

<sup>37</sup> Official Website of the Delegation of the European Union to Turkey. <https://www.avrupa.info.tr/tr/node/230>.

<sup>38</sup> ‘Pushback’ is the term used to describe the practice by authorities of preventing people from seeking protection on their territory by forcibly returning them to another country.

not be forgotten that the refugee deal has resulted in many undesirable political developments in Turkey and strengthens both “Anti-European” and “Anti-Western” tendencies within the Turkish population. In this regard, an interesting dynamic between Turkey and the EU has emerged, and while the EU has externalized the refugee issue, Turkey has instrumentalized it in its interior and foreign policy.

Undoubtedly, the provision of financial assistance to Turkey in terms of asylum-seekers by the EU or its Member States is critically important for the EU’s interests. However, it is evidently a significant financial assistance to Turkey, too. The continuation of this financial assistance, which constitutes the main financial resource for much of the financial burdens associated with providing asylum-seekers in Turkey with education, health, accommodation, protection, capacity development, etc., is critically important for both Turkey and refugees. Therefore, it is essential that these resources, which were planned for four years as 3+3 billion euros, are continued. The addressee in this respect will not likely be the EU as an institution; however, it is expected that some EU Member States, most notably Germany, will continue with the financial assistance programme.

## 11. Recent Developments in Turkey and Expectations for the Near Future

The policy on Syrians pursued by Turkey since April 2011 has undergone a variety of transformations over time. It is possible to observe the process management of Turkey in four main periods: 2011–2013, 2014–2016, 2017–2018, and 2019.

**The period of 2011–2013** was spent responding to the process with emergency management and with expectations that the crisis would end shortly, using intensely sentimental discourse. During this period, Turkey hosted Syrians in camps and largely focused on developments in Syria. In 2012, the number of Syrians reached 14,000; in 2013, 224,000.

The most outstanding characteristics of the second period (**2014–2016**) were the obvious increase in asylum-seekers and their distribution and

settlement outside the border areas. Camps were congested, and the process was prolonged as the regime in Syria persevered. The wartime environment that flourished with the intervention of ISIS changed the direction of international pressure on the regime to fall; and the presence of Russia was particularly felt as a new actor in the field. This situation both increased flight from Syria and intensified the quest of Syrians who noticed that there was no hope for return to their country to start a new life in Europe. The number of Syrians in Turkey increased to 2.8 million by the end of 2016, and Turkey was heavily exposed to the influx of other asylum-seekers.

**During the 2017–2018 period**, the number of Syrian refugees in Turkey peaked and exceeded 3.6 million. There were also many non-Syrian refugees in Turkey, increasing the total number to over 4 million, while the government discourse also underwent a significant change at the same time. While the EU-led process attempted to **externalize** this situation, Turkey attempted to boost its public standing in the world and **instrumentalize** the refugee crisis as a significant part of negotiations with the EU. The perception that refugees were becoming permanent started to be accepted both among Syrians and Turkish communities. An important development during that period was the refugee deal signed between Turkey and the EU. A cohesion policy was started in Turkey that was not fully specified by name, largely ongoing only at the local level.

The issue of Syrians in Turkey originated as the political structure in Syria changed completely and initial expectations were refuted. That is, the regime that had been expected to fall became permanent with the support of Russia and Iran, Kurds supported by the USA took control of particular regions, the Free Syrian Army that Turkey supported became ineffective, and criticism within society increased as a stronger tendency among Syrians in Turkey to settle permanently was felt. The attitude of the opposition parties regarding Syrians and the Syrian policy was negative from the start, and it was frequently expressed that the government needed to reconcile with the Syrian state and send the Syrians back to Syria. However, a noticeable change in the discourse

of President Erdoğan, the most prominent actor of the process and regarded as the “protector of Syrians”, who even claimed that citizenship would be issued to Syrians on 4 July 2016,<sup>39</sup> took place in January 2018. Talking about the requirement to send Syrians back for the first time with “Operation Olive Branch”, Erdoğan stated that the operation in Syria had two objectives: one being to fight against terrorism, and the other being the creation of buffer zones so that Syrians could return and even be sent back.<sup>40</sup> Also considering societal reactions, Erdoğan himself said on the dais during the 2018 election campaign, especially in border provinces, that Syrians would be “sent back” in a short while.<sup>41</sup> During his speech on 8 February 2019, however, Erdoğan said, “*We would like brotherly refugees to return to their home land. We are not expected to keep 3.5 million here forever. They already intend to return to their land. Some of them can stay here, it is a different case*”,<sup>42</sup> which revealed a change in attitude. Throughout this process, public institutions frequently made

39 Voice of America (in Turkish) (2019). “Erdoğan insists on Citizenship to Syrians”. 5 July 2019, <https://www.amerikaninsesi.com/a/erdogan-suriyeliler-e-vatandaslik-konusunda-israrcisi/3404718.html>.

40 “Why do we enter Afrin? We are not longing to possess Syrian land. However, 3.5 million Syrians are guests in our land. We are trying to send them back home. We keep an area of 2 thousand kilometers under control. 130 thousand refugees returned to the area of 2 thousand square kilometers.” Gazete Duva R. (2018). “Erdoğan: Türkiye’deki Suriyeliler Afrin’e, İdlib’e dönecek”. 28 January 2018, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/politika/2018/01/28/erdogan-oso-ile-mehmedim-birlikte-yuruyor/>.

41 Haberler (2019). “Erdoğan Specified a Date for Syrians in Turkey. ‘We May Send Them Back after the Elections’”. During Gaziantep meeting, President Erdoğan said: ‘We aim to ensure the safety of the entire Syrian land after the election and that all of our guests can go back home’. 21 June 2019, <https://www.haberler.com/erdogan-duyurdu-suriyeli-misafirlerimizi-geri-10972558-haber/>.

42 Hürriyet TV (2018). Erdoğan’dan Suriyeli mesajı: 3,5 milyonu burada ilanihaye saklayacak değiliz.

8 February 2018, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/video/erdogandan-suriyeli-mesaji-3-5-milyonu-burada-ilanihaye-saklayacak-degiliz-40735290>.

declarations about “Syrians returning”, which can be interpreted as a step towards decreasing tensions in society. However, it is noteworthy that the GDMM, which is the relevant institution in this process, focused on operations regarding both citizenship for Syrians and “cohesion” activities. Leading up to the local elections on 31 March 2019, Syrians in Turkey were discussed much more than they had been in previous elections. After the current ruling party (AKP) failed to obtain the desired results in many locations, especially Ankara and İstanbul, the perspective that the “reason for failure” in the elections was Syrians became prominent. Over the 8 years since the beginning of the refugee crisis, it was the first time that Syrians had become such a frequent item on the political agenda. It may be expected that this issue will remain highly salient in upcoming elections, as well.

## 12. Conclusion

The likelihood that the more than 3.7 million (and growing) Syrians will be able to return to Syria is disappearing, and their permanence in Turkey is getting stronger. The possibility that Syrians who have been living in Turkey for 5.5 years on average, almost all of whom live outside the camps in coexistence with Turkish society, with more than 693,000 babies born, 770,000 pupils enrolled in school, 1.2 million workers, and, most importantly, having been distributed all over Turkey, would leave for a country in which no one knows when war will end and stability will be restored — or for a third country — is no longer present. This is due to the nature of events. Likewise, once the incoming refugees have been outside their homeland for two years on average, steps towards permanence have already been taken. People who manage to survive in the country they are living in day by day prefer to stay there, especially when the conditions are so much worse in their country of origin and there is a war situation. Although Syrians living in Turkey say that they can go back if peace and stability are restored in their country, they also accept that this has become impossible in the short- and medium-term. Thus, it is a fact that the vast majority of Syrians living in Turkey, even more than 80%, will not return and will live in Turkey permanently. It ought to be borne in mind that the Turkish policy to create “secure zones” and encourage Syrians to transfer there will work for a maximum

of 20% of them. According to UNHCR data, the number of those who returned from Turkey to Syria and stayed there during the last 5 years (between 2015 and 2021) is only 99,000. Turkey needs to face this reality and develop cohesion policies for a peaceful co-existence. It is critically important to accept this reality and let it be reflected in state policies.

Turkey, whose number of asylum-seekers was 58,000 in 2011 and yet exceeds 4.1 million only 10 years later, has made a remarkable achievement as a society and state. High, yet fragile, social acceptance is the most critical issue that remains to be dealt with. However, potential risks, weariness, and concerns among the Turkish people are on the rise. Although Turkey has developed projects to solve many of the current problems in cooperation with international partners, it is still not possible to talk about comprehensive strategic decisiveness and planning on the part of the Turkish state. However, it creates yet another challenge that Turkey endeavours to develop cohesion policies not for “migrants” but for “asylum-seekers,” whose population exceeds millions and whose future is unpredictable to all parties. The fact that the Turkish state focused on the regime in Syria rather than the asylum-seekers for such a long time, assuming that the solution laid with Damascus, resulted in the accumulation of problems and increased risks.

The Turkish state has shown a passive resistance to the reality of permanence. It is a fact that cohesion policies encourage permanence, and states around the world do avoid cohesion policies because of uncertainty or unwillingness. Such hesitations are being experienced in Turkey, just as Germany’s cohesion policy implementation only began in the mid-1980s towards Turkish people who arrived in 1961. Still, this situation causes Turkey to lose time and resources, and it risks further escalation of the current difficulties. There is a chance that the issue is still not critically high enough on the agenda of daily politics in Turkey. However, it is a significant problem for Turkey that the economic, social, political, and security risks of 3.7 million asylum-seekers are being neglected and almost ignored.

Turkey is required to face reality, make its strategic decision, consider Syrians not as “guests” but people who will continue to live here, include

refugees in its decision-making mechanisms, and develop data-based policies instead of sentimental ones. Although a cohesion policy is a risk, it should be borne in mind that it is a greater risk not to implement it, in case Syrians do become permanent residents. Although the government's rhetoric on refugees has been hardened recently due to political pressure, significant changes are not expected in practice. This situation can actually be explained with the concept of "securitization from society".<sup>43</sup> However, it is essential that the state develops a healthy communication strategy, which also encompasses transparency, to enhance the resilience of the Turkish people.

In the short- and medium-term, it will not be surprising if Turkey further increases pressure on the EU concerning Syrians and other refugees. The EU needs to exert more effort, particularly in extending the deal and elaborating upon its content.

The Syrian refugee crisis has created discrepancies in Turkey–EU relations. On the one hand, cooperative grounds have been established which protect the EU, and Turkey has proven to be a reliable partner in this respect; however, on the other hand, Turkey–EU relations have almost been reduced to the topic of refugees, and Turkey seems to have assumed the function of "protecting the West" as during the Cold War, but this time against refugees. The fact that Turkey is considered by the EU as "a cheap buffer zone" strengthens anti-European and anti-Western tendencies in Turkey. The externalization policy of the EU has been instrumentalized by Turkish politics. Unfortunately, instability and mass movements of people in the region surrounding Turkey do not seem to be nearing an end. This situation manifests the requirement to ensure that Turkey–EU relations extend beyond only the partial sharing of financial burdens to the development of strategic cooperation on more comprehensive and realistic grounds.

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43 See: M.Murat Erdoğan [2021] "Securitization from Society" and "Social Acceptance": Political Party-Based Approaches in Turkey to Syrian Refugees", *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 17, No. 68, 2020, pp. 73-92, DOI: 10.33458/uidergisi.883022

The extraordinary solidarity and patience of the Turkish people for 8.5 years have transformed into concerns and objections as the permanence tendencies of Syrians have strengthened. It is impossible for this situation not to affect politics. Therefore, regardless of the impact of international mechanisms and international law, it seems that both the ruling party and the opposition parties will pursue stricter tactics regarding Syrians. The future of Syrians and other refugees seems to depend on cooperation based on a genuine sharing of the burden between Turkey and the EU. Otherwise, these problems that have become chronic may result in more troubled periods for both Turkey and the EU.

## Chapter 2

# Refugees in Germany

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### 1. Status and Legal Regulations and Settlement System

In Germany, there are different types of humanitarian protection. The most common forms of protection are (1) protection under Article 16 of the Basic Law, (2) protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention, (3) subsidiary protection, and the (4) ban on deportation.<sup>1</sup>

While the conditions and benefits of the first three statuses are very similar, their main difference is that they result from different laws.

The right to asylum is a basic right in Germany according to Article 16a of the German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*, Germany's constitution). However, according to this law, asylum only concerns those who are politically persecuted. This includes people who are individually persecuted based on their race, religion,

<sup>1</sup> <https://mediendienst-integration.de/migration/flucht-asyl/zahl-der-fluechtlinge.html>.

nationality, political conviction, or sexual identity. Economic reasons or civil war therefore do not suffice for this status of asylum.

Most successful asylum applications in Germany, in fact, lead to asylum under the German Asylum Law or refugee protection under the Geneva Refugee Convention.

The latter status is anchored in the **Principle of Non-Refoulement**, which prohibits that a state returns a refugee to a country in which they must fear persecution. The principle also applies to asylum-seekers during their application for asylum; thus, applicants can stay in Germany while applying.

The recognised reasons for asylum are in this case identical with those for political asylum, as described above. For the applicant's eligibility for this refugee status, it is moreover irrelevant whether this persecution is exerted by state or non-state actors.

For Syrian refugees, for example, this means that both the terrorist organisation Islamic State as a non-state actor and the Syrian regime under Bashar al-Assad as a state actor are equally recognised sources of persecution.

In addition, this status is irrespective of whether the asylum-seeker entered Germany via a **safe third country** outside the EU, such as Turkey, for example.

A safe third country is considered to be one where:

The lives and freedoms of persons are not in danger on the basis of race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion;

The principle of *non-refoulement* of persons to countries, in which they will be subject to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, is implemented;

The applicant has an opportunity to apply for refugee status in

the country, and in case he or she is granted refugee status by the country authorities, he or she has the possibility of obtaining protection in compliance with the 1951 Refugee Convention;

The applicant does not incur any risk of being subjected to serious harm.<sup>2</sup>

This does not concern the EU's Dublin Regulations, however, which foresee that an irregular migrant is to apply for asylum in the EU Member State they first enter, such as Greece, for example, and may thus justify the EU-internal deportation of legitimate asylum-seekers.

However, in 2015, the Dublin Regulation had not been applied by the German authorities for the most part with regards to Syrian refugees<sup>3</sup> or refugees arriving from Hungary or Bulgaria, which is the major exception that has been made for Syrian refugees in light of the crisis in Syria. In effect, in 2015, only every 13<sup>th</sup> asylum applicant for whom a different EU Member State was responsible was eventually returned.

Moreover, when an applicant originates from a state that is classified as a *safe country of origin*, this also impacts the consideration of an applicant for the status of refugee protection under the Geneva Convention.

A safe country of origin is defined by the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees as a country where:

[...] it is possible to prove on the basis of the democratic system and of the general political situation that no state persecution is to be feared there as a rule, and that the State in question can provide protection against non-state persecution as a matter of principle. Protection against non-state persecution means

for instance that there are legal and administrative provisions in place to provide protection for the population, and that these are also made accessible to all and are actually effective. The "default presumption" then applies that there is no risk of persecution.

[However,] Even if applicants come from a safe country of origin, the personal interview is no different than those with other countries of origin. It is also by no means ruled out that they can be granted protection. Applicants from safe countries of origin are afforded the opportunity during the interview to submit facts or evidence documenting that they are nonetheless at risk of persecution in their home country, in derogation from the default presumption. If this documentation is successful, they may assert their entitlement to asylum.<sup>4</sup>

During the refugee crisis of 2015 and afterwards, however, this consideration was suspended for applicants hailing from Syria or Iraq.

Refugees who are granted either the status of refugee protection under the Geneva Convention or that of asylum under the German Basic Law are thereby also entitled to work in Germany, to receive schooling, to attend an integration course, and to receive state benefits — such as unemployment benefits, child support, parent support, housing benefits, and free education.

Lastly, applicants may receive **subsidiary protection** when they are individually threatened by the death penalty, inhumane treatment, or armed conflict in their country of origin, which are more temporary reasons for forced displacement.

For example, in recent years, this has mostly concerned asylum-seekers from Syria.

Refugees under subsidiary protection are entitled to a shorter residence

<sup>2</sup> <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/turkey/asylum-procedure/the-safe-country-concepts/safe-third-country/>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/25/it-took-on-a-life-of-its-own-how-rogue-tweet-led-syrians-to-germany>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/Sonderverfahren/SichereHerkunftsstaaten/sichereherkunftsstaaten-node.html>.

permit in Germany, i.e., their entitlement is reviewed every two years instead of three, as is the case for refugees with one of the first two statuses, and they are also not entitled to a German Refugee Passport. Moreover, unlike refugees under the Geneva Convention or the Basic Law, they do not directly qualify for unlimited settlement in Germany after three years.

In general, people who receive one of these three official statuses of international protection for refugees in Germany are entitled to bring their families to Germany, too, during the first three months after the decision has been made. The refugee's personal international protection status type will then be extended to their family members. (In this context, a family is defined as the spouse, underage children, caretakers of underage children, and siblings of underage children.)

Finally, besides the three statuses of humanitarian protection, an applicant (also unsuccessful ones) may benefit from a **ban on deportation** (*Duldung*) relating to their personal condition or the general state of their country of origin at the given point in time.

The German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees explains this rule as follows:

Should none of the three forms of protection – entitlement to asylum, refugee protection and subsidiary protection – be applicable, a ban on deportation can be issued if specific grounds apply.

A person who is seeking protection may not be returned if return to the destination country constitutes a breach of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), or

a considerable concrete danger to life, limb or liberty exists in that country.

A considerable concrete danger can be considered to exist for health reasons if a return would cause life-threatening or serious diseases to become much worse. This is not contingent on the healthcare provided in the destination state being equivalent

to that available in the Federal Republic of Germany. Adequate medical treatment is also deemed to be provided as a rule if this is only guaranteed in a part of the destination country.

If a national ban on deportation is issued, a person may not be returned to the country to which this ban on deportation applies. Those concerned are issued with a residence permit by the immigration authority.<sup>5</sup>

This status is thus not an official status of protection but merely legal proof that the holder is not currently residing in Germany illegally. The *Duldung* is meant to be followed by the person's voluntary or enforced departure from Germany. However, in many cases, this status is preliminarily further extended for an unspecified time. This status does not entitle the person to any particular rights as guaranteed by an official status of protection.

For migrants staying in Germany under this status, there are only a few ways to attain a legal and unlimited residence permit, mostly bound to the length of their stay and their integration – for example, acquisition of German language skills, involvement in the German education system (which mostly concerns minors, though, and their parents respectively), or other integration efforts. People under this status also face numerous restrictions regarding access to the labour market, integration courses, and state benefits as well as medical and psychological services. Additionally, persons holding this status are obliged to live in communal housing for refugees and cannot choose the place of residence themselves. Moreover, freedom of movement within Germany is significantly restricted for people holding this status until they have stayed in the country for three months.

A special characteristic of German migrant reception centres is the distribution mechanism, named *Königsteiner Schlüssel* ('Königstein

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylverfahrens/Schutzformen/Abschiebeverbote/abschiebeverbote-node.html>.

distribution key'), which allocates incoming irregular migrants to the German federal states based on their respective population and economic situation. Its aim is to ensure fair burden sharing among Germany's different regions and facilitate recognised refugees' future integration.<sup>6</sup>

Where a successful applicant is granted asylum under the Basic Law or refugee protection under the Geneva Convention, that refugee holds the right to stay in Germany for three years. If the conditions in their home country are unchanged after these three years, the person may stay for an unlimited duration.

This is particularly relevant in the case of Syrian refugees, as the duration of the war in Syria will decide their fate as to whether they can stay in Germany in the long run or not. In this context, a pertinent question is that of defining whether there is still a war going on in Syria and whether it will be safe for refugees to return.

People who receive subsidiary protection may initially stay for one year. After that, the need for protection is reviewed and, if the situation is unchanged, their protection will be renewed and this will continue every two years unless the need for protection ceases.

Where asylum applicants are unsuccessful, they are requested to leave and return to their country of origin. If a migrant does not do so voluntarily, the German state enforces it by means of repatriation (deportation). However, an unsuccessful applicant has the right to file a case against the decision within two weeks after receipt.

During the height of the refugee crisis, most Syrian and Iraqi applicants were granted asylum or refugee protection (about 95%). This is based on the fact that their reasons for displacement were classified as individual persecution by violent state and non-state actors such as

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylverfahrens/Erstverteilung/erstverteilung-node.html>.

the Syrian regime, the so-called 'Islamic State', or others. Moreover, for most Syrians and many Iraqis, their individual persecution by state and non-state actors was recognised without a detailed assessment, given the situation in Syria and Iraq at the time and the recommendation by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to recognise Syrian and Iraqi asylum-seekers as refugees.<sup>7</sup>

In recent years, the German courts have no longer regarded the individual persecution of applicants from Syria and Iraq as a given and therefore have increasingly granted subsidiary protection or granted no status at all. Moreover, the previously existing national ban on deportations to Syria expired on 31 December 2020.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Numbers & Demography

In 2021, the population of the Federal Republic of Germany stands at 83.1 million people.<sup>9</sup> Of these, about 13.5% (11.2 million) are of foreign nationality.<sup>10</sup> However, a whole 23% of Germany's population is considered to have an 'immigrant background'.<sup>11</sup> This term is commonly used in Germany today but remains fairly unusual in other countries, where expressions such as second- or third-generation immigrant are more frequent. What all of these notions share is the problem of conceptually capturing the experiences of migration that have occurred in the not too distant past, either in a person's own life

<sup>7</sup> See: German Office of Migration and Refugees (2016). Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015 Asyl, Migration und Integration. [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=16%20](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Statistik/BundesamtinZahlen/bundesamt-in-zahlen-2015.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=16%20).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-ban-on-syria-deportations-will-be-allowed-to-expire/a-55901604>.

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/\\_inhalt.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/_inhalt.html).

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Querschnitt/Fluechtlinge/\\_inhalt.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Querschnitt/Fluechtlinge/_inhalt.html).

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

or that of their parents/grandparents, and that may result in a range of social differences from what is commonly called the 'majority society'. According to the German Office for National Statistics (*Statistisches Bundesamt*), a migration background is thence defined as follows:

A person has a migration background if he or she or at least one parent was not "born with German citizenship. Specifically, this definition includes immigrant and non-immigrant foreigners, immigrant and non-immigrant naturalised citizens, (late) repatriates and the descendants of these groups born as Germans. [author's own translation]<sup>12</sup>

When discussing the effects of migration on individuals' lives, it is thus not only people who have migrated themselves (migrants and refugees in the strict sense) but also their children and grandchildren that may bear various consequences resulting from the migration process. Moreover, they may reflect both similarities and differences in their integration experiences in comparison to their parents, which makes accounting for their situation of special interest, too, and may provide information on the potential prospects of economic and social integration awaiting newly arriving refugees and their children. The following numbers therefore provide information about the situation of people in Germany with a migration experience more broadly.

In 2019, Germany hosted the most registered refugees in the world after Turkey, followed by Pakistan, Uganda, and the US.<sup>13</sup> By 2020, Turkey, Columbia, Pakistan, and Uganda came before Germany, which hosted 1.4 million refugees in total on 31 December 2020, according to the German Ministry of Interior.<sup>14</sup> This number comprises people with very different legal statuses:

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Glossar/migrationshintergrund.html>.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/statistics/unhcrstats/60b638e37/global-trends-forced-displacement-2020.html>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/19/224/1922457.pdf#page=3>.

- 43,927 persons entitled to asylum according to Article 16a of the Basic Law
- 741,685 refugees according to the Geneva Refugee Convention
- 244,190 persons entitled to subsidiary protection
- 120,977 people subject to a deportation ban

Another 226,000 people have been granted protection due to various circumstances - for example, because they are pursuing a profession or because they cannot be deported for humanitarian reasons. [author's own translation]<sup>15</sup>

According to the German Office for National Statistics, most refugees who receive asylum based on the Geneva Convention arrived over the past five years, coming from Syria and Iraq. The same applies to refugees under subsidiary protection. The majority of refugees that resided in Germany in 2020 because they were subject to a deportation ban are from Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

In 2020, there were 121,955 asylum applicants in Germany with outstanding applications, of whom 102,525 were first-time applicants fielding their applications that year.<sup>17</sup>

In comparison, also in 2020, Germany received a total of 312,692 regular migrants, of whom 14,345 came for professional reasons (4.6%) and 14,605 for educational reasons (4.7%). The rest moved to Germany for family (130,701) or other reasons (153,041).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://mediendienst-integration.de/migration/flucht-asyl/zahl-der-fluechtlinge.html>.

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/schutzsuchende-2010240207004.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile#page=173](https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/schutzsuchende-2010240207004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile#page=173).

<sup>17</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00191/default/table?lang=en>.

<sup>18</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00170/default/table?lang=en>.

This shows, on the one hand, that regular migration to Germany exceeds irregular migration; but it also exposes the fact that the percentage of regular migration for educational or professional purposes, directly benefitting both migrants and the German economy and education system, is strikingly low.

That said, 14.6% of the people in Germany who were born in a foreign country participated in educational training in 2020, which is the exact same rate as across the EU. In previous years, however, the rate in Germany had always been below the EU average.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Education

At the start of 2019, the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) published a detailed analysis of the integration of migrants, refugees, and Germans with an immigrant background into the German education system.<sup>20</sup>

With regard to refugees' educational integration in Germany overall, the analysis found:

The majority of refugee children and young people of school age attended a general education or vocational school in 2016, and around one in three pupils attended a preparatory class. [author's own translation]

One major positive finding of the analysis was that:

Only 5% of the refugee children and young people in secondary school (10–17 years) were still waiting to start school or training or were not participating in any educational option during the survey period. [author's own translation]

<sup>19</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng\\_lfs\\_13/default/table?lang=en](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/trng_lfs_13/default/table?lang=en).

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=12](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=12).

A major negative finding of the analysis reads:

Discrepancies were particularly evident in the secondary school sector: compared to children and young people without an immigrant background, refugees were less likely to attend a *Realschule* or a *Gymnasium*, even taking into account central influencing factors such as the federal state and the highest level of education of the parents. [author's own translation]

With regard to refugee groups of particular nationalities, controlling for various confounding factors, the analysis found that refugees from Syria were most likely to attend a *Realschule* or *Gymnasium*, whereas refugees from (South-)Eastern Europe were least likely to do so.

With regard to factors relating to the likelihood of refugees' secondary school attendance, the analysis found positive statistical effects for

1. a medium or high level of parents' education,
2. accommodation in private accommodation, and
3. female gender

and negative statistical effects for

1. frequent changes of accommodation,
2. current attendance of a preparatory class, and
3. a higher age of entry.

These factors also account for the differences in educational participation and success between refugee groups of different nationalities, except for those from (South-)Eastern Europe. As the BAMF report states:

The previously discussed differences between refugees from different groups of origin largely disappeared or lost statistical significance when the influencing factors presented were controlled. Only for children and young people from (South-)Eastern Europe did a highly significant difference remain. Despite controlling for family education level, age, gender, years in Germany, language support, attendance of a preparatory class,

type of accommodation and its number, as well as federal state and residence title, refugee pupils from this area were more than 24 percentage points less likely to attend a *Realschule* or *Gymnasium* than Syrian refugees. [author's own translation]<sup>21</sup>

As a possible explanation for these discrepancies, the BAMF report suggests the different degrees of similarity between the German and Syrian or (South-)Eastern European education systems:

The great similarities between the Syrian and German education systems may explain why they were relatively often found at *Realschule* or *Gymnasium*, whereas pupils from (South-)Eastern Europe were less than half as likely to attend these schools. [author's own translation]<sup>22</sup>

Another possible explanation may be differences in extracurricular support that students from these different refugee groups may receive from volunteering members of public or civil society organisations working with refugees.

In any case, these findings call for more detailed analysis and possible policy intervention to remedy the effects of underlying negative causal factors.

Other interesting fields for more detailed analysis and possible policy intervention that arise from the findings of the BAMF report are:

1. the diversity of rulings among the different federal states (*Bundesländer*) regarding the compulsory school attendance of refugee children;
- *In some federal states, refugee children are required to attend school immediately after their arrival, while in others, they are only*

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=12](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=12).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

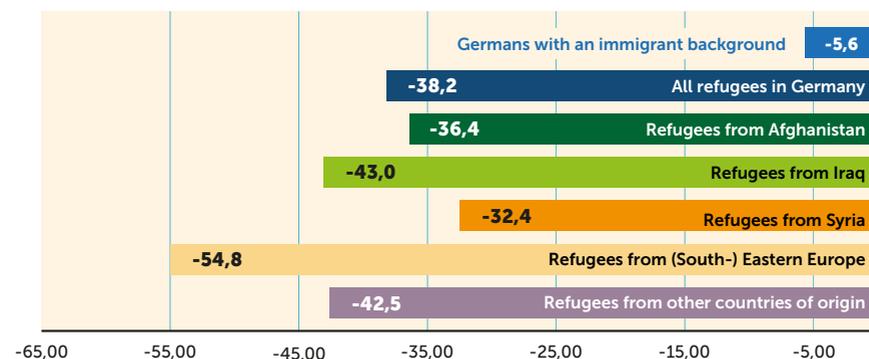
*required to do so after a certain number of months or after they leave the first arrival centre.*

2. the differences in participation in extracurricular activities among Germans without an immigrant background, Germans with an immigrant background, and refugee children;
- *While 75% of German children without an immigrant background take part in extracurricular activities, only 58% of Germans with an immigrant background and 36% of refugee children do so.*
3. the low rate of participation in German language support and training among refugee children (currently at 48%);
4. the differences in educational participation and success between refugees from different regions (notably the two extremes: Syria and Eastern Europe);
- *As the bar diagram below from a BAMF analysis shows, while Germans with an immigrant background (first bar, light blue) are only 5.6% less likely than Germans without an immigrant background to attend secondary school; all refugee groups, in particular those from (South-)Eastern Europe (sixth bar, light yellow), are drastically less likely to do so, with the difference for Syrian refugees (fifth bar, dark yellow) still being the smallest.*

#### 4. Voluntary Return

When an applicant for asylum in Germany is unsuccessful, they are requested to return to their country of origin. To assist rejected applicants' voluntary return and avoid the need for a forced return that is both stressful for the returnee and costly for the German state, the German government provides different incentives and support mechanisms to facilitate this process. As the German Ministry of Interior states:

Persons willing or required to leave Germany and return to their countries of origin have access to various forms of assistance. As part of integrated return management, governmental and non-governmental bodies provide information and advice on funds



**Figure 1: Likelihood of Secondary School Attendance for Germans with an Immigrant Background and Different Refugee Groups.**

BAMF-Kurzanalyse 02|2019, p. 10)

[https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=12](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Kurzanalysen/kurzanalyse2-2019-ankommen-im-deutschen-bildungssystem.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=12)

available for travel, start-up assistance and reintegration programmes in the countries of origin.

Germany participates in a range of programmes providing social and psychological support, training and education, employment promotion and assistance in starting own businesses.<sup>23</sup>

The mentioned programmes are often executed together with international organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), which helps returnees upon their arrival to reintegrate in their country of origin and thereby lower the incentive/need to embark on irregular migration to Germany again.

Next to the European Reintegration Network

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/migration/law-on-foreigners/return-policy/voluntary-return/voluntary-return-node.html>.

(ERIN), which is an EU-funded programme providing individual support for returnees similar in content to the above, Germany's two main national voluntary programmes are called REAG/GARP and *StarthilfePlus*. As the Ministry of Interior states:

Funded by the Federation and federal states, the Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany (REAG) was launched in 1979; the Government Assisted Repatriation Programme (GARP) was added in 1989. Through these programmes, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) organizes and supports returns. The Federation and the federal states annually determine the amount of funding for these programmes.

Supplementing the joint federal–state programme REAG/GARP, the Federal Government launched the new support programme *StarthilfePlus* in February 2017 in cooperation with the IOM. This return programme creates an additional financial incentive, making it easier for returnees to regain a foothold in their home country. It is intended for asylum seekers with little chance of being granted asylum who would prefer to go back to their home country. To be eligible for funding under *StarthilfePlus*, migrants must decide to return voluntarily within the period set for their departure.<sup>24</sup>

In providing these return support programmes, the German state thus not only tries to reduce obstacles to voluntary return (which is cheaper and less conflictual than a forcible return would be) but also to create an incentive favouring voluntary return for such asylum-seekers who have not yet been rejected but whose rejection is very likely.

That is because asylum application procedures can take a very long time, keeping the applicant in a stressful loop of uncertainty, causing additional costs to the German state, and possibly leading to a sort of *de facto* social integration that makes later return less likely, irrespective

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

of the application's outcome. In the worst cases, these loops of uncertainty can also create educational gaps for children or trigger criminal activities among applicants.

According to 2019 BAMF study, 80% of people who took part in the *StarthilfePlus* programme in 2017 and 2018 were "happy or satisfied" with the programme.<sup>25</sup>

The success of these voluntary return programmes has varied over the course of time.

As *Deutsche Welle* reported in December 2017:

Despite the German government's best efforts to incentivize rejected asylum seekers to return home, figures from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) revealed on Thursday that the number of voluntary repatriations almost halved in 2017, compared to the year before. According to German daily *Die Welt*, fewer than 28,000 failed asylum seekers voluntarily returned to their countries of origin this year, compared to the more than 50,000 who agreed in 2016.<sup>26</sup>

In reaction, then Minister of Interior Thomas de Maizière raised the funds which voluntarily returning reject asylum-seekers could receive to support their return to €3,000 for families and €1,000 for individuals.

Today, the German Ministry of Interior reports that 13,053 individuals voluntarily returned through the REAG/GARP programme in 2019, whereas 5,706 individuals voluntarily returned in 2020. According to the ministry, this "year-on-year decrease in the number of departures is due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020".<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/21024/happy-and-satisfied-voluntary-returns-from-germany>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-voluntary-return-scheme-for-rejected-migrants-misses-its-target/a-41884122>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Statistik/FreiwilligeRueckkehr/>

This fluctuation may be explained by various factors, first and foremost, of course, by the fluctuating number of rejected asylum-seekers.

## 5. Resettlement

To recall, according to the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**, **resettlement** is defined as follows:

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State, that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent residence.

UNHCR is mandated by its Statute and the UN General Assembly Resolutions to undertake resettlement as one of the three durable solutions. Resettlement is unique in that it is the only durable solution that involves the relocation of refugees from an asylum country to a third country. There were 20.7 million refugees of concern to UNHCR around the world at the end of 2020, but less than one per cent of refugees are resettled each year.<sup>28</sup>

This shows that the number of resettled refugees in comparison to that of total refugees worldwide is very low. Measured against this background, Germany's engagement on resettlement is relatively high. As the German Ministry of Interior states:

In 2020, Germany continued its commitment to the EU Resettlement Programme. The EU Commission had called on member states to provide at least 30,000 reception places across the EU and Germany had pledged up to 5,500 reception places. This total number of reception places consists of up to 1,900 resettlement places for refugees of different nationalities or stateless refugees from the initial reception countries Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon and Niger. In addition, there are up to 3,000 places under the Humanitarian Reception Programme for Syrian and stateless refugees from Turkey, up to 400 places

[freiwilligerueckkehr-node.html](#).

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement.html?query=resettlement>.

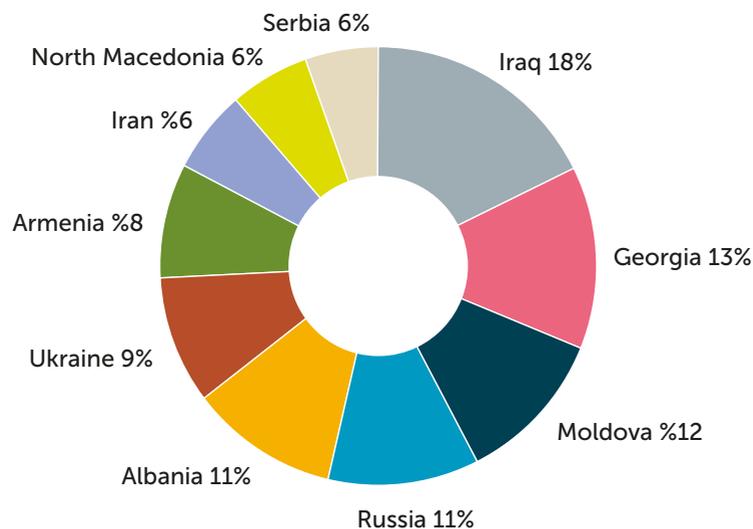


Figure 2: Top 10 REAG/GARP destination countries in 2020 (IOM and BAMF).

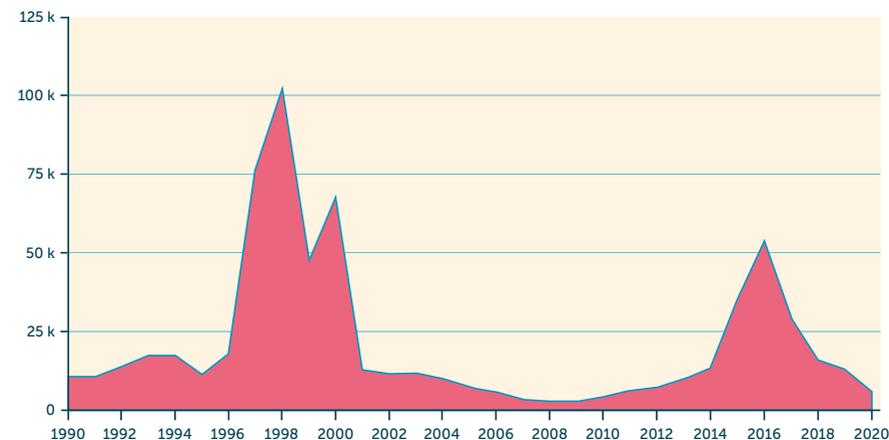
<https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Statistik/FreiwilligeRueckkehr/>

for the state civil society reception programme "Neustart im Team - NesT" and up to 200 places for a Schleswig-Holstein state reception programme. [author's own translation]<sup>29</sup>

In 2020, due to the **coronavirus pandemic**, resettlement activities in both Europe and Germany were drastically decreased.

Still, 3,253 refugees were admitted to Germany under resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes in 2020, according

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/DE/themen/migration/asyl-fluechtlingsschutz/humanitaere-aufnahmeprogramme/humanitaere-aufnahmeprogramme-node.html>.



to UNHCR,<sup>30</sup> which is below the 5,500 places Germany had provided for resettlement under the EU Resettlement Programme that year. The German government has announced that it would use some of the remaining spots in 2021.<sup>31</sup>

Most UNHCR resettlement submissions in 2020 concerned Syrian refugees (13,248 in total) from Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Egypt, with most of them being resettled to Sweden, followed by France, Norway, and Germany.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> [https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2021/03/Bi-annual-fact-sheet-2021\\_Germany\\_1103\\_final-External.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2021/03/Bi-annual-fact-sheet-2021_Germany_1103_final-External.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> <https://resettlement.de/en/current-admissions/>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Resettlement%20DEC%202020%20Final.pdf>.

Figure 3: Voluntary Departures with REAG/GARP from 1990 to 31 December 2020 (Source: IOM/BAMF)

<https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/Statistik/FreiwilligeRueckkehr/freiwilligerueckkehr-node.html>.

Moreover, UNHCR states that “in 2020, Germany took the lead with the EU relocation and admission exercises from Greece”.<sup>33</sup>

**Relocation** denotes the formal admission of refugees from one EU Member State to another and is not to be confused with resettlement, which denotes the formal admission of refugees from third countries of asylum outside the EU.

In Europe, Germany is at the forefront of both resettlement and relocation activities.

That is also because Germany has set up its own **national humanitarian admission programmes**:

Occasionally, states set up humanitarian admission programmes for persons from regions with acute conflict. They thereby declare their willingness to take up a certain number of people in need of protection. Germany has regularly set up admission programmes in the past. Since 2013, approximately 20,000 persons from Syria were able to enter Germany through three federal admission programmes. However, the admission programmes of the federation are now closed. A renewal of the programme is not currently scheduled.

[...] With the exception of Bavaria, all federal states established their own admission programmes for specific groups, particularly for family members not belonging to the core family (spouses and underage children). Most of the programmes were either limited from the beginning or not extended, so that the programmes are only still implemented in a few states (Thuringia, Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg and Berlin).<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> [https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2021/03/Bi-annual-fact-sheet-2021\\_Germany\\_1103\\_final-External.pdf](https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2021/03/Bi-annual-fact-sheet-2021_Germany_1103_final-External.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> <https://help.unhcr.org/germany/admission-to-germany/humanitarian-admission-programmes/>.

One of these German humanitarian admission programmes was instituted in 2017 and is particularly directed at Syrian refugees in Turkey. The programme is currently foreseen to continue until the end of 2021.<sup>35</sup>

The **resettlement numbers in 2019** already indicated an increased need for action.

Besides the growing number of people whose status draws concern worldwide, another reason has been the reduced commitment of the United States in recent times.

European countries have therefore been taking on an increasingly greater share of late.

Per UNHCR:

In 2019, just over 33,800 refugees were submitted by UNHCR for resettlement to 20 countries in Europe. This represents a 5% increase from the total submissions in 2018; and was nearly double the average rate of 17,800 submissions per year during the previous 10 years. [...]

Europe's proportion of UNHCR facilitated resettlement submissions globally in 2019 was 41%. Between 2009 and 2016, this proportion increased from 10% to 18%, before substantially increasing to 52% during 2017 and 40% during 2018.

The increase in 2017 is primarily due to a significant decrease globally in the scale of some States' resettlement programmes, most notably by the United States of America, in parallel with an increase of resettlement places made available by European States.<sup>36</sup>

In 2019, 67% of the refugees resettled to European countries were

<sup>35</sup> <https://resettlement.de/en/current-admissions/>.

<sup>36</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/77244>.

Syrians, followed by nationals of Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (each at 6%).<sup>37</sup>

In terms of their previous country of asylum, 30% were resettled from Turkey, 23% from Lebanon, 10% from Jordan, and 9% from Egypt, which roughly reflects the distribution of Syrian refugees across these countries.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of destination, 28% were resettled to Germany (9,640), followed by 16% to Sweden (5,408), 12% to Norway (3,949), and 10% each to the United Kingdom (3,507) and France (3,311). Together, these five European countries received 76% of all refugees that were resettled to Europe in 2019.<sup>39</sup>

This shows that Germany took up the greatest share of refugees resettled by UNHCR to Europe in absolute numbers, but it falls behind countries such as Sweden and Norway in terms of resettled refugees relative to national population.

It also shows that the greatest share of resettlement activities concerns Syrian refugees in Turkey and Lebanon.

Another central actor in the execution of resettlement next to UNHCR is the **International Organization for Migration (IOM)**.

In 2019, the only European country to which IOM resettled more refugees than Germany (5,034) as part of formal resettlement or humanitarian admission programmes was the United Kingdom (5,647), with Sweden receiving almost as many as Germany (5,005).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> <https://eea.iom.int/sites/eea/files/publication/document/IOM%20resettlement%20support%20EEA%20-%202019.pdf>.

In total, 30,264 refugees were resettled to Europe that year by IOM, which is “a record figure for this region since IOM resettlement activities started more than 65 years ago”.<sup>41</sup>

Most of these refugees resettled by IOM were Syrians previously hosted in Turkey and Lebanon. In this context, Germany received most Syrian refugees from Turkey while the United Kingdom resettled the highest number of Syrians from Lebanon.<sup>42</sup> Most other refugees resettled to Germany by IOM in 2019 were Syrians from Jordan and Lebanon.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the independent non-governmental organisation European Resettlement Network, which monitors resettlement activities in the EU, has voiced the following **criticism**:

Despite increases in resettlement to the EU in recent years, the percentage of global resettlement needs met by EU Member States has never exceeded 2%.

EU Member States are not resettling from the situations/ refugee groups with the highest resettlement needs. While EU programmes have resettled large numbers of Syrian refugees, the group representing the largest proportion of global needs in recent years, other high needs refugees (Afghans) and refugee-hosting countries (Egypt, Uganda) are being left behind.

Just nine EU Member States are resettling evacuees from Libya via the Emergency Transit Mechanism in Niger, despite the Central Mediterranean situation being a key priority for both UNHCR and EU resettlement.

Member State participation in resettlement is inconsistent. In the past 5 years, only 10 Member States have received resettled refugees every year.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> <https://eea.iom.int/resettlement>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> <http://resettlement.eu/page/global-resettlement-2020>.

In particular, both the situation in Afghanistan and fair burden-sharing among EU Member States have recurrently been the object of intense political debate on resettlement in the past and are likely to continue being so, suggesting a special need address them.

## 6. Social Acceptance & Social Cohesion

In June 2021, the charitable organisation of the German Protestant churches, *Diakonie*, commissioned the research institute Civey to conduct a nationally representative survey on the question of citizens' acceptance of refugees and immigrants in Germany that was cited by various German newspapers.<sup>45</sup> The key findings of the study were:

1. **Refugee reception:** Only one third of the German population is in favour of taking in more refugees (28%), whereas around two thirds (62.5%) are against it.
2. **Integration:** Only 12.5% of the respondents found the refugees that had arrived in Germany over the past 10 years to be well integrated, while 58% found they weren't.

In the same month, the German Federal Government announced a new policy initiative to increase social acceptance and foster social cohesion, entitled "*Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt – Vor Ort. Vernetzt. Verbunden.*" ("Social cohesion – On site. Networked. Connected."). The programme aims to finance projects that help bring the local population in touch with refugees, next to the integration services offered by the state itself (integration courses, counselling, and activities for youth).<sup>46</sup>

In contrast, a study by German civil society organisation *Bertelsmann Stiftung* found that in 2017, 72% of the respondents viewed cultural diversity as some of sort of positive addition to German society, while

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.evangelisch.de/inhalte/187399/17-06-2021/diakonie-umfrage-geringe-akzeptanz-fuer-aufnahme-von-fluechtlingen>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.bamf.de/DE/Themen/Integration/TraegerLehrFachkraefte/TraegerProjektfoerderung/Integrationsprojekte/integrationsprojekte-node.html>.

in 2011 even 78% had said so, which suggests that there still is a general social acceptance of Germany's being a country of immigration.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, data from the European Social Survey indicates that Germany had the second-highest level of social acceptance vis-à-vis immigrants in Europe in 2014, after Sweden (see Figure 4). This suggests that immigration as such may not be a problem for German citizens.

## 7. Local Administration and Local Integration Process

Local government in the shape of municipalities and the like play a big role in the German integration procedures for refugees, with growing responsibilities and possibilities for political impact. Some researchers therefore even speak of a "local turn" in German migration and refugee politics.<sup>48</sup> In Germany, municipalities take care of crucial tasks such as their health care, organising language courses, and ensuring that children attend school as well as assisting refugees in finding housing and jobs.<sup>49</sup>

Although it is first and foremost the job centres that are in charge of supporting refugees' job search, many German municipalities have developed additional support programmes specifically for refugees to translate their skills and education into 'competence profiles' adapted to the German labour market culture and to establish links with local employers. They also train employees in specialised job search advising or provide seminars for refugees to help them gain orientation on the German labour market.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Migration\\_fair\\_gestalten/IB\\_PolicyBrief\\_2017\\_12\\_Willkommenskultur.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/Migration_fair_gestalten/IB_PolicyBrief_2017_12_Willkommenskultur.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/migration/kurzdosiers/kommunale-Migrations-und-Fluechtlingspolitik/322500/der-local-turn-in-der-migrations-und-asylpolitik>.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.deutschland.de/de/topic/leben/integration-von-fluechtlingen-das-leisten-staedte-und-gemeinden>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

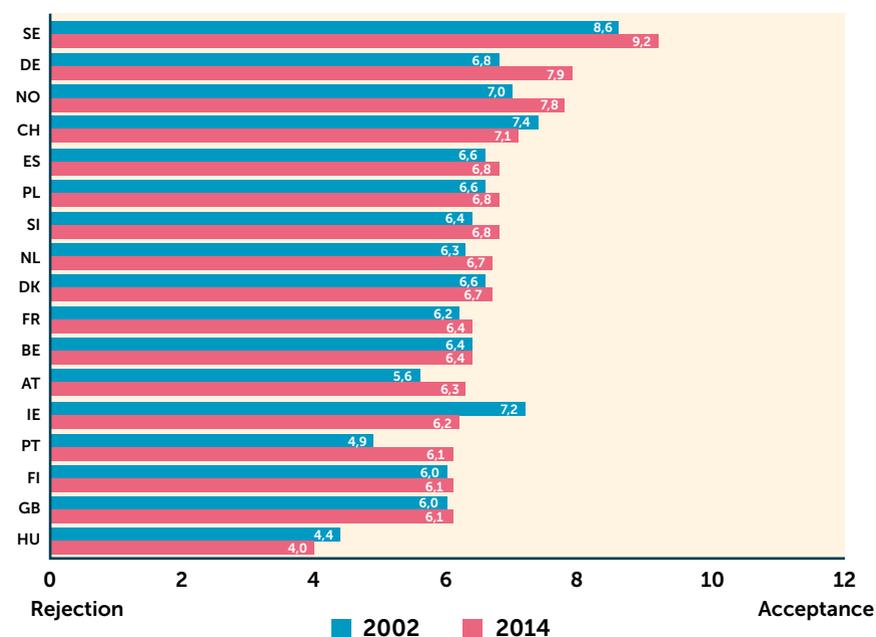


Figure 4: Medians of the ESS Immigration Index, 2002

Graph taken from Christian Schnaudt and Michael Weinhardt, 2017

[https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/51382/ssoar-isi-2017-57-schnaudt\\_et\\_al-Schaffen\\_wir\\_das\\_Zwischen\\_Akzeptanz.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-isi-2017-57-schnaudt\\_et\\_al-Schaffen\\_wir\\_das\\_Zwischen\\_Akzeptanz.pdf](https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/bitstream/handle/document/51382/ssoar-isi-2017-57-schnaudt_et_al-Schaffen_wir_das_Zwischen_Akzeptanz.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y&lnkname=ssoar-isi-2017-57-schnaudt_et_al-Schaffen_wir_das_Zwischen_Akzeptanz.pdf)

At peak times of irregular immigration, such as during 2015/16, the housing search and organisation of first-reception centres for refugees is a major challenge for German municipalities. The advantage of delegating these responsibilities to the local level, however, is that municipalities can build personal relations with 'their' refugees and also give them tailor-made support by bringing them into contact with third-party organisations that provide assistance in addition to that of the state.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.dstgb.de/publikationen/dokumentationen/nr-154-deutsche-und-tuerkische-integrationskonzepte/doku-154-web.pdf?cid=doa>.

In this sense, volunteering citizens and civil society associations play a crucial role in the social integration of refugees at the local level, as this testimony from the website *deutschland.de* that provides relevant information on refugees in Germany describes:

In many communities, very committed working groups and helpers' circles have come together. From language mentoring to homework assistance to interpreting services, they organise a wide range of support and encourage encounters between refugees and locals. Initiatives such as the federal competition *Zusammenleben Hand in Hand - Kommunen gestalten* (Living Together Hand in Hand - Shaping Communities) show that integration is particularly successful where politics and administration work closely with citizens, associations and clubs. [author's own translation]<sup>52</sup>

Taken together, this creates a great diversity of approaches to integration at the local level. The downsides of this diversity are naturally the discrepancies that can thereby arise between different regions. Thanks to Germany's national allocation mechanism of refugees to regions, this does not create a competing incentive, however. The upside is clearly the greater and more personalised attention given to the individual refugee that arises from this. It also draws on the municipalities' potential for innovation in the form of best-practice models that may also be transferred between regions and even countries.

## 8. Livelihood/Economic Integration

### 8.1. Employment

A key element of German migration policy on economic integration is the **deportation ban for asylum-seekers in training and employment** (*Gesetz über Duldung bei Ausbildung und Beschäftigung*).<sup>53</sup> The

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.deutschland.de/de/topic/leben/integration-von-fluechtlingen-das-leisten-staedte-und-gemeinden>.

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/themen/migration/anwendungshinweise-zum-gesetz->

purpose of this law is to facilitate the training and employment of asylum-seekers that are awaiting the result of their application and those whose application has been rejected but whose deportation cannot be executed at the time given. Asylum seekers that have not received such permission are not allowed to work in Germany.

Its core feature is the “3+2 rule”, which gives these migrants the right to stay in Germany for a three-year duration to complete professional training and another two years to work in the learned profession afterwards.<sup>54</sup> After that, they may apply for residence under regular skilled workers’ immigration rules; or they need to return to their home country if, in the meantime, this becomes possible.<sup>55</sup>

More precisely, this law stipulates that:

For those for whom the obligation to leave the country cannot be enforced and who are well integrated through long-term employment, German language skills and law-abidingness, this law provides legal certainty with a new reliable status. After 30 months and if the requirements are met, this new employment toleration can lead to a residence permit. [author’s own translation]<sup>56</sup>

Next to this, the **Skilled Workers Immigration Act** (*Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz*) of 1 March 2020 is the latest initiative of the German government to attract skilled workers to Germany and facilitate their integration into the labour market.

Its declared aim is to open legal ways for migrants to enter the labour

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ueber-duldung-bei-ausbildung.pdf?\_\_blob=publicationFile&v=2.

54 <https://www.faire-integration.de/de/article/28.was-bedeutet-3-2-modell.html>.

55 <https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Artikel/Wirtschaft/fluechtlingpolitik.html>.

56 <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/faqs/DE/themen/migration/fachkraefteeinwanderung/faqs-fachkraefteeinwanderungsgesetz.html>.

market and thereby reduce illegal migration to Germany. The main focus is on people who already have the professional skills needed in Germany. For them, access to the German labour market shall become easier. This does not depend on the type of job they were doing before, and there will no longer be the need to check first whether there are any German or EU citizens who could do the job, too, which used to be the rule.

Moreover, the law also intends to make it easier for people to come to Germany to do an apprenticeship. However, people wishing to migrate to Germany in order to do an apprenticeship there do not enjoy the nulled obligation of checking whether there is a German or EU citizen interested and capable to fulfil the position.

As a result, the greatest advantages are for people who already possess certified skills. According to the German Ministry of Interior,

Skilled workers under the Skilled Workers Immigration Act are third-country national foreigners who

- 1) have a domestic qualified vocational qualification or a foreign vocational qualification equivalent to a domestic qualified vocational qualification, or
- 2) have a German higher education qualification, a recognised foreign higher education qualification or a foreign higher education qualification comparable to a German higher education qualification. [author’s own translation]<sup>57</sup>

Moreover, they may also enter Germany for six months without having a work contract prior to their arrival in order to look for employment. The only additional conditions are sufficient German language skills and the ability to support themselves financially.

The Ministry of Interior specifies:

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57 Ibid.

A visa for the purpose of seeking training and employment, as well as for training or employment itself, always requires the foreigner to prove that he or she can secure his or her own livelihood during his or her stay and, if applicable, that of his or her accompanying family members. In addition, applicants over 45 years of age must earn at least 3,685 euros per month or provide evidence of adequate old-age provision.

Also, the examination of the equivalence of qualifications and the examination of working conditions remain fundamental for access to the labour market. This is important to ensure adequate pay for the new skilled workers and to prevent “wage dumping”.

[author’s own translation]<sup>58</sup>

However, the German government reserves the right to set temporary limitations on this type of immigration in light of current changes in the German labour market.

Two interesting organisations in this context are the **Network of Refugee-Integrating Enterprises** (*Netzwerk Unternehmen integrieren Flüchtlinge*)<sup>59</sup> and the **Competence Centre for Skilled Labour** (*Kompetenzzentrum Fachkräftesicherung*).<sup>60</sup>

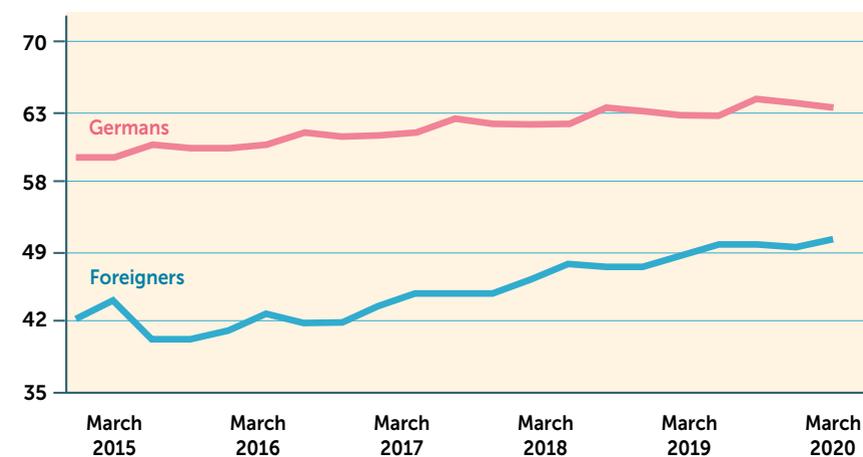
Just as with the two above-described laws, these two organisations complement each other in that they focus on fostering the regular migration of skilled workers to Germany, on the one hand, and on supporting the economic integration of recognised refugees already present in the country, on the other. They do so by providing German companies with relevant information and support about recruiting both refugees and foreign skilled workers from abroad.

Both these laws and organisations not only play a crucial role in fostering the economic integration of refugees, but they also contribute

58 Ibid.

59 <https://www.unternehmen-integrieren-fluechtlinge.de>.

60 <https://www.kofa.de>.



to Germany’s need for foreign skilled workers and help replace irregular migration with legal pathways.

According to the German Federal Employment Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*), in December 2020, 12.9% of all employees in Germany were of foreign nationality.<sup>61</sup>

The employment-to-population ratio (which only focuses on people between 15 and 65 years of age and employment that is subject to social security contributions) in December 2020 in Germany was 49.8% for foreign citizens and 62.8% for German citizens.<sup>62</sup>

**Figure 5: Evolution of Employment-to-Population Ratio for German and Foreign Citizens in Germany over time, from 2015 to 2020.**

Federal Employment Agency

[https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche\\_Formular.html?nn=25122&topic\\_f=analyse-d-arbeitsmarkt-auslaender](https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?nn=25122&topic_f=analyse-d-arbeitsmarkt-auslaender).

61 [https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche\\_Formular.html?nn=25122&topic\\_f=analyse-d-arbeitsmarkt-auslaender](https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?nn=25122&topic_f=analyse-d-arbeitsmarkt-auslaender).

62 Ibid.

The long-term trend of this ratio as displayed in Figure 5 shows that the difference between German and foreign citizens has been slowly decreasing since 2015.

By the end of 2019, there were 643,066 unemployed foreigners in Germany.<sup>63</sup>

Of these, 55.6% were from Europe (both EU [27.7%] and non-EU [27.9%]), 18.2% were from Syria, 6.9% from African countries, 4.5% from Iraq, and 3.7% from Afghanistan.<sup>64</sup>

To put this into perspective, 69.4% of the overall foreign population in Germany are from Europe, while 7% are from Syria, 5.4% from Africa, 2.3% from Afghanistan, and 2.3% from Iraq.<sup>65</sup>

This shows that, for example, Syrians, Iraqis, Afghans, and Africans make up a greater share of the unemployed foreign population in Germany than of the foreign population overall.

Especially in the case of Syrians, this difference is striking, as they constitute 18.2% of the unemployed foreign population but only 7% of the overall foreign population in Germany.

This suggests a need for more detailed analysis and political intervention with regard to the special situation of these refugee and migrant groups.

A general labour market difference between German and foreign citizens, meanwhile, is the percentage of working women, which is considerably lower among foreigners.<sup>66</sup>

Regarding the employment opportunities and challenges of

foreigners in Germany, the numbers of the Federal Employment Agency reveal a promising situation overall: 89.2% of foreigners in Germany in employment that is subject to social security contributions (*„sozialversicherungspflichtig beschäftigte Ausländer“*) are below the age of 55<sup>67</sup> and may thus make substantial contributions to the German economy and state budget over time.

Moreover, 72.2% of them work full-time and almost half hold qualifications that are recognised in Germany (2,115,401 in total), with another 4.5% currently involved in training.<sup>68</sup>

However, almost one million of them do not have any qualifications,<sup>69</sup> which indicates a lower level of professionalism and puts them at risk for automation and job loss.

Finally, the Federal Employment Agency reports that in December 2020, 39.5% of recipients of unemployment benefits in Germany had an immigrant background, which includes foreign nationals in this case (see below for the agency's definition<sup>70</sup>), in contrast to 60.5% of the

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 "A migration background exists if:

- (1.) the respondent does not have German citizenship, or
- (2.) the place of birth of the respondent is outside the present borders of the Federal Republic of Germany and immigration to the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany took place after 1949, or
- (3.) the place of birth of at least one parent of the respondent lies outside the present borders of the Federal Republic of Germany and immigration of this parent to the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany took place after 1949." [author's own translation], [https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche\\_Formular.html?nn=24416&topic\\_f=migrationshintergrund-migh](https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/SiteGlobals/Forms/Suche/Einzelheftsuche_Formular.html?nn=24416&topic_f=migrationshintergrund-migh).

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

recipients who did not.<sup>71</sup>

While this shows that people with an immigrant background do not constitute the majority of unemployment benefits recipients, it also unfortunately suggests that they may be more likely to be unemployed since the total share of people with an immigrant background in Germany's population is only 26%, according to the agency's definition, which is strongly below their share of 39.5% in the population of unemployment benefits recipients.

## 8.2. Entrepreneurship

Data on start-ups in Germany founded by foreign nationals and Germans with an immigrant background is very limited. However, different sources provide an idea of the current situation.

In 2017, the German Ministry for Economic Affairs commissioned a study on the start-up activity of foreign nationals and people with an immigrant background in Germany.

This study concludes that while the overall number of start-ups in Germany is very low, the influx of foreigners is leading to an increase in such enterprises and has untapped potential for even more.

[...] start-up activity in Germany has lost momentum in recent years, due in part to a flourishing labour market and an ageing society. The increasing employment opportunities since the middle of the last decade and the persistently high shortage of skilled workers have considerably dampened the desire to start up a business. In the longer term, demographic change is also leaving its mark, as the potential of entrepreneurial talent is dwindling along with a shrinking working population.

Beyond the shadows, however, there is also light. Immigration to Germany and the change in the population structure are increasing cultural diversity and thus the number of those who

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

are building a professional existence with new ideas, courage and creativity. More and more people of foreign origin are setting up businesses in this country. Nevertheless, there are many indications that this entrepreneurial potential has not yet been sufficiently exploited. [author's own translation]<sup>72</sup>

Quantitatively, the study finds that while the number of self-employed Germans without an immigrant background decreased by 3% from 2005 until 2016, the number of self-employed persons with an immigrant background<sup>73</sup> increased by 33%.<sup>74</sup>

In 2005, 13.9% of self-employed people in Germany had an immigrant background, whereas 18.2% did in 2016.<sup>75</sup>

Of the 755,000 self-employed people with an immigrant background in Germany in 2016, 61.7% were foreign nationals and 38.2% were German citizens.<sup>76</sup>

This suggests that newly arriving migrants are increasingly founding start-ups in Germany today.

In explaining this outcome, the researchers find "the availability of

<sup>72</sup> [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=7](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7).

<sup>73</sup> The study defines people with an immigrant background as "all immigrants to the present territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, as well as all foreigners born in Germany and all those born in Germany as Germans with at least one immigrant parent or one parent born as a foreigner in Germany" (ibid, p.13).

<sup>74</sup> [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=7](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

specific knowledge that primarily immigrants possess (due to self-selection in the migration process)” and “the access to decisive networks and markets that gives the members of certain groups of origin advantages” [author’s translations] to be of special relevance.<sup>77</sup>

This suggests that it is in particular the new skills, networks, and insights into foreign markets that migrants introduce to the German market which enable them to start new businesses.

Regarding migrant groups of specific nationalities, the study finds that it is first and foremost individuals with roots in Turkey and Poland who start their own businesses among Germans with an immigrant background and foreign nationals in Turkey.

Looking at individual nationality groups, the self-employed from Poland and Turkey in particular have contributed to the overall increase over the longer term. Those from Poland now form the largest group with 95,000 self-employed, followed by those from Turkey with 89,000. Almost half (342,000) of all migrant self-employed come from one of the 28 EU countries. [author’s own translation]<sup>78</sup>

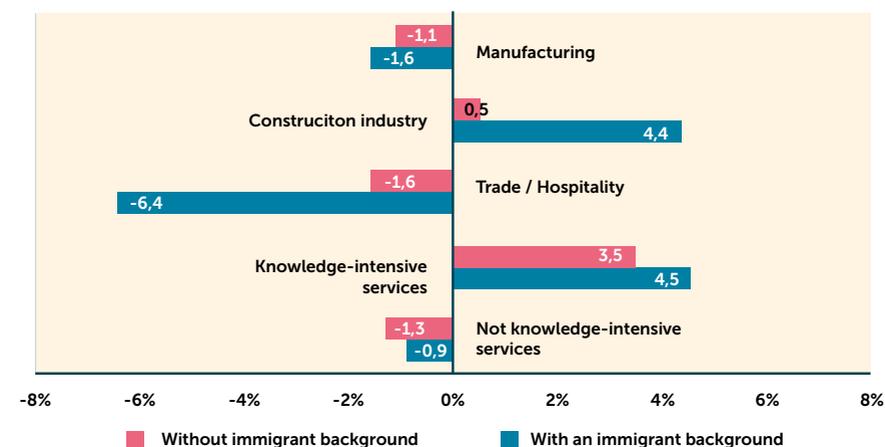
Finally, statistics from the federal state of Baden-Württemberg indicate that most start-ups by foreign nationals are in the hospitality and construction sectors, where they start more businesses than Germans.<sup>79</sup> Their data moreover reveals differences in sector preferences according to foreigners’ nationalities: while foreign entrepreneurs in the hospitality and retail sector are mostly Italian, Turkish, or Greek, most foreign business founders in the construction sector are Polish, Bulgarian, Romanian, or Hungarian.<sup>80</sup>

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 [https://www.statistik-bw.de/Service/Veroeff/Monatshefte/PDF/Beitrag12\\_01\\_03.pdf](https://www.statistik-bw.de/Service/Veroeff/Monatshefte/PDF/Beitrag12_01_03.pdf).

80 Ibid.



However, as Figure 6 from the report of the Federal Ministry displays, the sectors that people with an immigrant background in Germany start businesses in have changed over the past two decades from hospitality and retail (*Handel / Gewerbe*) to the construction industry (*Baugewerbe*) and skilled services (*wissensintensive Dienstleistungen*).

## 9. Relations & Cooperation with EU for Refugees

Although Germany is not located on an EU external border, it still receives support from the European Union in managing migration and receiving refugees. A central component of this is the **European Social Fund (ESF)** that supports Member States’ efforts at integrating refugees.

The entire volume of the ESF from 2014 to 2020 was €80 billion, of which Germany

**Figure 6: Change of Distribution of Self-Employed People in Germany across Different Sectors from 2008 to 2014.**

Grey = without immigrant background / Blue = with an immigrant background. (University of Mannheim, Office for National Statistics)

[https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=7](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Studien/gruendungspotenziale-menschen-auslaendische-wurzeln.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7).

received €7.5 billion.<sup>81</sup>

The flagship programme of the ESF support to Germany is the *ESF-Integrationsrichtlinie Bund*, whose aim is the facilitation of refugees' and second-generation immigrants' entry into the German labour market and professional training system. In doing so, the programme places a particular emphasis on migrants' professionally oriented German-language training. This way, the programme offers a mix of professional skills, language skills, and first-hand practical experience in the shape of internships at local German companies to enhance migrants' ability to participate in the German labour market.<sup>82</sup>

The programme volume totals €220.5 million, of which €105.7 million come from ESF funds and €93.6 million from funds of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.<sup>83</sup>

Next to the EFS, EU Member States such as Germany can receive financial support for immigrant integration and refugee reception from the EU's **Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)**, its **Internal Security Fund (ISF)**, the **European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)**, or in the shape of loans from the **European Investment Bank (EIB)**.<sup>84</sup>

The AMIF supports Member States in the efficient management of migration flows, in receiving refugees and displaced persons, and in bearing the consequences thereof. Its support focuses on the following areas:

*Common European Asylum System:*

Improving reception and asylum systems, enhancing the capacity of Member States to design and monitor and evaluate their asylum policies and procedures, resettlement, transfer of

81 [https://ec.europa.eu/germany/node/7111\\_de](https://ec.europa.eu/germany/node/7111_de).

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

applicants for or beneficiaries of international protection and other ad hoc reception on humanitarian grounds.

*Integration of third-country nationals and legal migration:*

Immigration and pre-departure measures, integration measures and practical cooperation and capacity building measures (e.g., policy development, cooperation between third countries and human resource agencies/ employment services/ immigration services, data collection and analysis, setting up organisational structures for integration and diversity management).

*Return:*

Measures to accompany return procedures, return measures (e.g., identification of third country nationals, cooperation with consular services and immigration authorities, assistance for voluntary return, deportations, reintegration assistance) as well as practical cooperation and capacity building measures (e.g., cooperation and exchange of information between competent services and other authorities of Member States and third countries involved, data collection and analysis, evaluation of return policies). [author's own translation]<sup>85</sup>

Another element of the co-operation between Germany and the EU on migration is the **EU resettlement programme**. As the German Federal Government states (October 2020):

Germany supports the EU Resettlement Programme, which aims to create 20,000 additional places for refugees in need of protection from Turkey, the Middle East and Africa across the EU in 2020. Germany is providing 5,500 places for people in particular need of protection within the programme. In 2018/19, the EU Member States admitted a total of 41,300 people through this route. [author's own translation]<sup>86</sup>

85 [https://ec.europa.eu/germany/node/7111\\_de](https://ec.europa.eu/germany/node/7111_de).

86 <https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/suche/migration-und-integration-1657562>.

Also included in EU–German co-operation on migration:

The **European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex** will be increased to 10,000 border guards by 2027. The new permanent reserve is to support EU countries in external border management and return tasks as well as in the fight against cross-border crime.

The **EU–Turkey Statement** of March 2016 has had an impact: in October 2015, an average of around 7,000 people a day arrived on the islands; since the EU–Turkey Declaration came into force, the figure has risen to 104.

The **EU Trust Fund for Africa** – established in 2015 to stabilise and combat the triggers of flight and irregular migration – now has a volume of 4.5 billion euros.

**EU migration partnerships:** The Federal Government supports above all the partnership with Niger, the most important African transit country. Together, they have succeeded in significantly curbing transit migration through the country. [author’s own translation]<sup>87</sup>

Like all EU Member States, Germany also takes part in efforts to form a joint European migration policy. As part of this, the heads of state of all EU Member States as well as 34 African states concluded the **Joint Valetta Action Plan** in 2015, which sets out the following five areas of transnational co-operation:

1. Reducing the causes of irregular migration and displacement;
2. Promoting legal migration channels;
3. Protection for migrants and refugees;
4. Preventing irregular migration and combat trafficking in human beings;
5. Improving cooperation on return/readmission and reintegration.

## 10. Policy Recommendations

In an article for the German newspaper *Handelsblatt* on 17 September

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

2021, German journalist Düzen Tekkal and Member of the German Parliament and deputy federal chairman of the Free Democratic Party (FDP) Johannes Vogel call on Germany to recognise its need for immigration and make more efforts to attract skilled foreign workers. They write:

[...] coping with demographic change and meeting the demand for skilled workers are only one side of the coin. Targeted immigration also secures one of the most important resources that guarantees prosperity in Germany: Innovation. [...] Immigration increases the innovation potential of a society; the diversity of people harbours a diversity of ideas [...] To date, skilled workers lack attractive and unbureaucratic access to the labour market, which we so urgently need. [...] We have strong cornerstones for a responsible migration policy: the lively discussion about our individual and social diversity and, above all, our Basic Law as a foundation of values. But there is still much to do when it comes to making Germany a safe and desirable new home for immigrants. [author’s own translation]<sup>88</sup>

As has been seen, the preceding overview backs these propositions.

What follows from the above analysis from a liberal perspective are the five points below:

1. Access to the German labour market and its training opportunities needs to be facilitated. The latest laws have already made a leap forward in this regard.

However, in practice, they make high demands towards potential migrants regarding the skills and job opportunities they already need to have prior to their arrival – skills they often cannot acquire in their countries of origin at the same level as they could in Germany – and job offers that may be difficult to obtain from

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.handelsblatt.com/meinung/gastbeitraege/gastkommentar-wir-brauchen-mehr-gezielte-einwanderung/27615114.html>.

abroad.

An alternative model that solves some of these problems can be found in the Netherlands, which issues a so-called *Orientation Visa for Highly Educated Persons*. This one-year residence permit allows foreign nationals with the right educational background to work for one year without any restrictions in the Netherlands and frees employers from the obligation to apply for a special work permit for them.<sup>89</sup>

Providing such legal pathways to immigration in this shape or another comes with two additional advantages. First, they provide alternatives to irregular migration for potential migrants abroad. Second, they may be used as an offer to third countries in negotiating return agreements. That is because one major reason why many returns of rejected asylum-seekers fail is that their countries of origin do not co-operate or are not willing to take them back. In both ways, legal pathways to immigration may thus reduce uncontrolled irregular migration to Germany.

2. Given the high entrepreneurial potential of foreign nationals in Germany that remains untapped, it should be discussed what new pragmatic and innovation-fostering offers could be made to these populations. For example, next to the deportation ban for migrants in training or employment, micro-loans specifically geared to these populations and taking into account their individual networks, knowledge, and ideas could be an option to advance the creation of new businesses.
3. As the review of the educational and economic situation of migrants in Germany shows, more policies empowering the individual (especially women and refugee children) to fully take part in German public life and economic activity are needed. This should be supplemented with more targeted analysis of the causes that underlie differences in this regard between migrant groups of different nationalities.

4. Given the many responsibilities German municipalities have in the field of migrant integration and which they have acquired in this field over the decades — in contrast to municipalities in other countries that are new to mass immigration, such as Turkey — another measure for reducing irregular migration to Germany would be to improve the situation in refugee-hosting safe third countries by establishing international partnerships at the municipal level with a focus on knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practice models in the field of social integration at the local level.
5. Finally, to sustain a liberal world order of international co-operation in the field of migration as well as to reduce incentives for irregular migration from safe third countries, Germany should commit itself to a fairer distribution of refugees across nation-states. This means, on the one hand, persuading other states such as the US and EU Member States to take in more refugees and, on the other, also further increasing its own resettlement efforts, especially from states that are on the verge of collapsing under their current humanitarian burdens, such as Lebanon and Turkey. A new binding EU resettlement programme in which Member States that are unwilling to take in refugees themselves make financial compensations to others may be a step forward.

<sup>89</sup> <https://business.gov.nl/coming-to-the-netherlands/permits-and-visa/orientation-visa-for-highly-educated-persons/>.

## Chapter 3

## Refugees in Greece

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### Introduction

From the second half of 2015 until the first months of 2016, refugee flows to Europe dramatically increased as a massive phenomenon of mobility took hold. Due to the particular geography of Greece, it took a geopolitical and humanitarian role in global affairs and in the “European refugee crisis”.<sup>1</sup> As long as the “European refugee crisis” lasts, populations from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent from Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Algeria will pass from the Turkish coastline to nearby Greek islands. More specifically, the islands of Lesbos, Samos, Chios, etc. have become stepping stones onto EU soil.<sup>2</sup> For many refugees landing in Greece,

1 Polly Pallister-Wilkins (2016). “Interrogating the Mediterranean ‘Migration Crisis’”, *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (February 2016), pp. 311–315.

2 Anna Triandafyllidou (2015). “EU migration talks: What EU governments can do to help solve the crisis”. *European Policy and Politics*, London School of Economics, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2015/09/14/eu-migration-talks-what-eugovernments-can-do-to-help-solve-the-crisis/>.

it is not their final destination. The majority of immigrants and refugees do not want to stay in Greece, being in the middle of a serious financial crisis and where opportunities for employment are practically non-existent. Many refugees have goals to join relatives in Western Europe, something that has become extremely difficult to achieve.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. The Situation in Greece

#### 1.1. Numbers and Demography

In 2020, 15,696 refugees and migrants arrived in Greece. This indicates a decrease of 78.9% compared to 2019 (74,649 arrivals). Out of those, a total of 9,714 persons arrived in Greece by sea in 2020, compared to 59,726 in 2019. The majority originated from Afghanistan (35.2%), Syria (27.7%), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (10.3%). More than half of the population were women (23.3%) and children (35.5%), while 41.2% were adult men. Moreover, 5,982 persons arrived in Greece through the Greek–Turkish land border of Evros in 2020, compared to a total of 14,887 in 2019. However, the entries for 2020 may underrepresent the number of people actually attempting to enter Greece, given that cases of alleged pushbacks at the Turkish border and on the Aegean Sea were systematically reported in 2020.<sup>4</sup> The last update available for the year 2021 is that 4,338 refugees and migrants have arrived in Greece. Out of these, 1,498 arrived by sea and 2,840 via land.<sup>5</sup>

The Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum stopped publishing monthly statistical data from the end of February 2020. In comparison to the presentation and publication of previous monthly statistical data, the Asylum Service of Greece uses Ministry press releases as the sole source

3 G.N. Christodoulou & M.T. Abou-Saleh (2016). Greece and the refugee crisis: Mental health context. *BJPsych international*, 13(4), pp. 89–91. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/bjpsych-international/article/greece-and-the-refugee-crisis-mental-health-context/5CA44CAA39B0A4930610AF212EAB0298>.

4 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.

5 Ibid.

of asylum data. In the absence of detailed statistics, little is known about the latest asylum procedures and current situation.<sup>6</sup> Last year's report reveals a great reduction in arrivals and the number of residents. The graphs below represent collectively the statistics and characteristics of applicants.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1: Applications and protection status granted in 2020. Ministry of Migration and Asylum (2021). Yearly report 2020, January 2021; Asylum Service.**

	Applicants in 2020	Pending applications at the end of 2020	Refugee status	Subsidiary protection	Rejection (on the merits)	Total number of 1st instance decisions/acts	Refugee rate	Subs. Prot. rate	Rejection rate
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.559</b>	<b>57 347</b>	<b>26.371</b>	<b>7.954</b>	<b>22.821</b>	<b>81.052</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>28%</b>
Breakdown by countries of origin of the total numbers:									
Afghan..	11.514	19.327	4.606	6.164	5.494	2.330	28,30%	37,90%	33,80%
Syria	7.768	5.563	13.478	2	1.232	3.716	91,60%	0,01%	8,40%
Pakistan	4.146	4.711	99	9	4.061	917	2,40%	0,20%	97,40%
Congo	1.929	3.546	562	77	1.413	113	27,40%	3,80%	68,90%
Source: Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Yearly Report 2020, published in January 2021, available at: <a href="https://bit.ly/3uBkAJC">https://bit.ly/3uBkAJC</a> and Information provided by the Asylum Service, 31 March 2021									

<sup>6</sup> <https://rsaegean.org/en/asylum-statistics-for-2020-should-be-published-and-unpacked/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Migration and Asylum (2021). Yearly Report 2020. (January 2021) <https://bit.ly/3uBkAJC> and Information provided by the Asylum Service, 31 March 2021.

## 1.2. Status and Legal Regulations

### 1.2.1. Policy

A policy introduced by the European Commission in 2015 for Greece was the “hotspot approach” in order to identify, register, and fingerprint incoming refugees and migrants, as well as implement the relocation scheme and conduct return operations. Five hotspots, under the legal form of First Reception Centres — now Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) — were inaugurated in Greece.<sup>8</sup> People arriving through the Evros border are not subject to the EU–Turkey statement. Therefore, they are not subject to a fast-track border procedure, their claims are not examined under the safe third country concept, and geographical restrictions are not imposed upon their release. Persons entering Greece through the Greek–Turkish land border in Evros are subject to reception and identification procedures at the RIC of Fylakio, Orestiada, which is the only RIC that continues to operate as a closed facility.<sup>9</sup>

In 2019, with the election of new Government in Greece, stricter policies were imposed in order to make the asylum procedure faster and more efficient. This was something that failed to materialize. As far as legal reforms go, Hellenic Parliament approved speeding up asylum decisions, with the expansion of an accelerated border procedure, to within 20 days. At the same time, a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was removed from the list of qualifying vulnerability conditions. Another policy that took place was the transfer of asylum-seekers and refugees from Aegean Reception to the mainland.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-identification-procedure/#\\_ftn63](https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/access-procedure-and-registration/reception-and-identification-procedure/#_ftn63).

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/greece-struggles-balance-competing-migration-demands>.

Regarding policies towards unaccompanied children, Law No. 4554, published in July 2018 in Official Government Gazette no. 130, proposes a framework for the guardianship of unaccompanied minors. At the same time, the law empowers the Best Interest of the Child Determination Procedure. Best Interest of the Child should be the guiding principle when determining if relocation would be the most appropriate solution for that child.<sup>11</sup> According to law 4554/2018, the coordination of activities related to bilateral agreements including the relocation of UAC falls under the responsibility of the Protection Unit of the UASC Department of National Centre for Social Solidarity (E.K.K.A).<sup>12</sup> Another important policy towards unaccompanied minors is family reunification, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Best Interest Assessment tool, which was drafted and launched by the Greek Dublin Unit based on previous correspondence with other EU countries and was enhanced after the provision of inputs by international and local organizations and NGOs, is an indispensable element of take-charge requests for unaccompanied minors.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2.2. Legal regulations

The asylum procedure in Greece has undergone many changes since 2016. The adoption of Law (L) 4375/2016 in April 2016 and its subsequent amendments in June 2016 have reconditioned the procedure before the Asylum Service. In early 2016, the European Union (EU) reached an agreement with Turkey aimed at stopping the massive influx of refugees and migrants into the Union. Under the deal, the EU and Turkey agreed that all new migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands after 20 March 2016 would be returned to Turkey if they were not applying or not eligible for asylum or were asylum-

seekers whose application was considered inadmissible in the EU.<sup>14</sup> The provisions of L 4375/2016 related inter alia to the implementation of the EU–Turkey statement were re-amended in March 2017, August 2017, and May 2018. The new government since July 2019 has implemented a more restrictive policy regarding asylum procedure; therefore, the national asylum legislation was re-amended in November 2019 and entered into force on 1 January 2020.<sup>15</sup>

After the entry into force of the new Law 4636/2019 (IPA) on 1 January 2020, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum submitted a bill entitled “Improvement of migration legislation” on 10 April 2020, aimed at speeding up asylum procedures and “responding to practical challenges in the implementation of the law”.<sup>16</sup> The cases that can be considered inadmissible should fall under the following categories (Article 84 IPA):

- Another EU Member State has granted international protection status;
- Another EU Member State has accepted responsibility under the Dublin Regulation;
- When the First Country of Asylum concept is applied;
- The application is a subsequent application and no “new essential elements” have been presented;
- A family member has submitted a separate application to the family application without justification for lodging a separate claim.<sup>17</sup>

### 1.2.3. Safe third country

In 2016, a radical change was implemented for Syrian refugees on

11 [http://unescochair.uom.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PAPADOPOULOU-EFTHYMIA\\_-MA-Thesis-Syrian-Refugee-Children-On-The-Move.pdf](http://unescochair.uom.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PAPADOPOULOU-EFTHYMIA_-MA-Thesis-Syrian-Refugee-Children-On-The-Move.pdf).

12 <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5c18d7254.pdf>.

13 [https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/dublin/#\\_ftn10](https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/dublin/#_ftn10).

14 [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_MEMO-16-963\\_fr.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_fr.htm).

15 Amnesty International (2020). *Annual Report 2019, Greece*: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EUR2512802019ENGLISH.pdf>.

16 Refugee Support Aegean (2020). *Comments on the Reform of the International Protection Act*. (23 April 2020), <https://bit.ly/2WrMwQR>.

17 <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/admissibility-procedure/>.

the basis that Turkey is not a safe third country for them. The goal of this decision was to provide an individualized assessment for Syrian refugees, taking into account the legal framework of Turkey. Since mid-2016, first and second instance decisions issued by the Independent Appeals Committees for Syrian applicants were systematically stated as inadmissibility decisions. In 2020, Syrian applicants examined under the fact track border procedure were rejected at the second instance as inadmissible on the basis of the safe third country concept (1,234 inadmissible and 302 admissible).<sup>18</sup>

According to the official statistics of the Ministry of Migration and Asylum published in January 2021, “[r]eturns under the EU–Turkey Joint Declaration have not been made since March [2020] due to Covid-19 and despite the lifting of the measures for the pandemic, from 01/06/2020 the requests of missions-returns of the Greek authorities have not been answered”. Moreover, article 86(5) IPA provides that, *“when the safe third country does not allow the applicant to enter its territory, his/her application should be examined on the merits from the competent Authorities”*. However, despite the suspension of returns to Turkey since March 2020 and the aforementioned provision of article 86(5) IPA, during 2020 the applications lodged by Syrians in the Eastern Aegean islands whose geographical restriction was not lifted were still examined in the context of the safe third country concept and the Fast-Track Border Procedure. On 7 June 2021, a Ministerial Decision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Migration and Asylum was issued, designating Turkey as “safe third country” in a national list for asylum-seekers originating from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Somalia. As a result, applications lodged by those nationalities can be rejected as “inadmissible” without being examined on their merits.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR_2020update.pdf).

<sup>19</sup> JMD 42799. Greek Government Gazette 2425/7-6-2021, available in Greek at: [http://www.et.gr/idocs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEzH9d6xfVpRXdtvSoClrL8FjnGp5F0IbMliYHTRwL0-OJInJ48\\_97uHrMts-zFzeyC](http://www.et.gr/idocs-nph/search/pdfViewerForm.html?args=5C7QrtC22wEzH9d6xfVpRXdtvSoClrL8FjnGp5F0IbMliYHTRwL0-OJInJ48_97uHrMts-zFzeyC)

### 1.3. Asylum procedure in Greece

#### 1.3.1. Registration

Article 65(1) IPA provides that any foreigner or stateless person has the right to apply for international protection. Following the complete registration of an asylum claim, an application for international protection is considered to have been lodged. In total, the Asylum Service registered 40,559 asylum applications in 2020. Afghans were the largest group of applicants with 11,514 applications, followed by Syrians with 7,768 applications. For applications lodged on the mainland exclusively within 2020, the average period between registration and the personal interview was 61 days, while the average period between registration and the issuance of a first instance decision was 67 days. The EU–Turkey statement, adopted in March 2016 and initially described as “a temporary and extraordinary measure”, continues to be implemented for those arriving by sea on the Aegean islands. The impact of the EU–Turkey statement has been the inter alia, de facto dichotomy of the asylum procedures applied in Greece. Asylum seekers arriving after 20 March 2016 on the Greek islands are subject to a fast-track border procedure with limited guarantees.<sup>20</sup>

#### 1.3.2. First instance procedure

Twelve Asylum Offices and twelve Asylum Units were operational at the end of 2020. The Asylum Service is also competent for applying the Dublin Procedure, with most requests and transfers concerning family reunification in other Member States. A fast-track border procedure is applied to applicants subject to the EU–Turkey statement, i.e., applicants arriving on the islands of the Eastern Aegean after 20 March 2016, and takes place in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) where hotspots have been established (Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kos) and before the RAO of Rhodes. Under the fast-track border procedure,

[iBSQOpYnTy36MacmUFCx2ppFvBej56Mmc8Qdb8ZfRjQznsIAdk8Lv\\_e6czmhEembNmZCMxLMtYz64xlDnaMqG0h9HA4mDQSBa4iDW6G7p-xy-oGs4ZOr](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR_2020update.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR_2020update.pdf).

interviews may also be conducted by EASO staff inter alia and, in urgent cases, by the Police or Armed Forces. Short deadlines are provided to applicants for most steps of the procedure. The concept of a “safe third country” is applied within the framework of this procedure for Syrian applicants.<sup>21</sup> The Asylum Service received 40,559 new applications in 2020, which amounts to a decrease of 47.5% compared to 2019. Out of the 40,559 new applications, 19,742 have been examined under the regular procedure while 20,814 were examined under the Fast-Track Border Procedure.<sup>22</sup>

### 1.3.3. Appeal

First instance decisions of the Asylum Service are appealed before the Independent Appeals Committees under the Appeals Authority. An appeal must be lodged within 30 days in the regular procedure, 20 days in the accelerated procedure – in case of an inadmissibility decision or where the applicant is detained – 15 days in the Dublin Procedure, 10 days in the border procedure and in the fast-track border procedure, and 5 days in the case of a subsequent application.<sup>23</sup> The recognition rate at first instance in 2020 was 33%, down from 55.9%, in 2019.

### 1.3.4. Relocation

In January 2020, Portugal accepted up to 1,000 asylum-seekers, and this seems to have begun a new project regarding refugee flows into Europe. A new project for the relocation of 400 vulnerable asylum-seekers to France was announced in January 2020, aiming at the completion of these relocations by the summer of 2020. In March 2020,

<sup>21</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure/#\\_ftn8](https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure/#_ftn8).

<sup>22</sup> Information provided by the Asylum Service, 31 March 2021, <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/procedures/fast-track-border-procedure-eastern-aegean/>.

<sup>23</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure/#\\_ftn8](https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/general/short-overview-asylum-procedure/#_ftn8).

**Tables 2 / 3: Gender and age breakdown of applicants in 2020 / Comparing first instance and appeal decisions. Asylum Service (2021).**

	Number	Percentage
Total number of applicants	40.559	100%
Men	27.807	68,56%
Women	12.752	31,44%
Children	14.490	35,73%
Unaccompanied children	2.799	6,90%

Source: Information provided by the Asylum Service, 31 March 2021.

The figures on children and unaccompanied children are part of the figures on men and women.

#### Comparison between first instance and appeal in-merit decision rates: 2020

	First instance		Appeal	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total number of decisions	81.052	100	25.011	100
Positive decisions	34.325	42,35%	1.045	4,20%
Refugee status	26.371	33%	481	1,92%
Subsidiary protection	7.954	10%	564	2,26%
Referral for humanitarian status	Not applicable	Not applicable	370	1,48%
Negative decisions (in merits)	22.821	28%	15.751	63%

Source: Asylum Service 31/03/2021; Appeals Authority 09/02/2021.

the Commission launched a relocation scheme under which vulnerable people from Greece would be transferred to other EU Member States, aiming to support Greece in its efforts to cope with the critical situation.

Unaccompanied children and children with severe medical conditions who are accompanied by their families are the two categories of persons of concern who could be included in the programme. Eleven EU countries are participating in this scheme, including France, Germany, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Bulgaria. Homeless children, children living in precarious conditions, such as safe zone areas in camps, and minors that were previously detained are considered eligible for the programme. By December 2020, 2,209 asylum-seekers and refugees had been relocated from Greece to other EU countries, such as Germany, Finland, Portugal, Belgium, Luxemburg, Ireland, France, Bulgaria, and Lithuania. Among these were 573 unaccompanied children and 1,292 vulnerable family members and adults.<sup>24</sup>

### 1.3.5. Dublin III Regulation

The Dublin Procedure applies to refugees and immigrants when they are eligible for international protection. The “Dublin III” Regulation determines which of the European Member States that are bound by it is responsible for examining each application.

The States implementing the “Dublin III” Regulation are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (hereafter “Dublin III” countries).

In the case of an unaccompanied minor and when a member of his/her family (parent, brother/sister, uncle/aunt, grandfather/grandmother) is legally present in a “Dublin III” country, this country is responsible

<sup>24</sup> [https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR\\_2020update.pdf](https://asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/AIDA-GR_2020update.pdf).

for the examination of the application. Adults can also apply under these regulations if a member of their family is present in one of the “Dublin III” countries as a beneficiary of international protection or as an international protection applicant. In such cases, that country is responsible for examining the application. Family members are considered to be the spouse (husband or wife) or the life partner (not in all countries) and any minor unmarried children.<sup>25</sup>

## 2. Overview of Refugees' Lives

### 2.1. Urban Refugees vs. Refugees in Camps

Since the outburst of the refugee crisis in 2014, which was a direct result of the socioeconomic conditions as well as the transformation of countries into war zones, especially in the Middle East, more than 60,000 refugees have tried to settle in Greece.<sup>26</sup> These refugees are in most cases “trapped” within the Greek territory, as European agreements have closed off their northerly path to Europe. The Greek state has made several attempts to address the problem of the grave number of refugees seeking accommodation by creating so-called “hot spots” outside of urban areas.

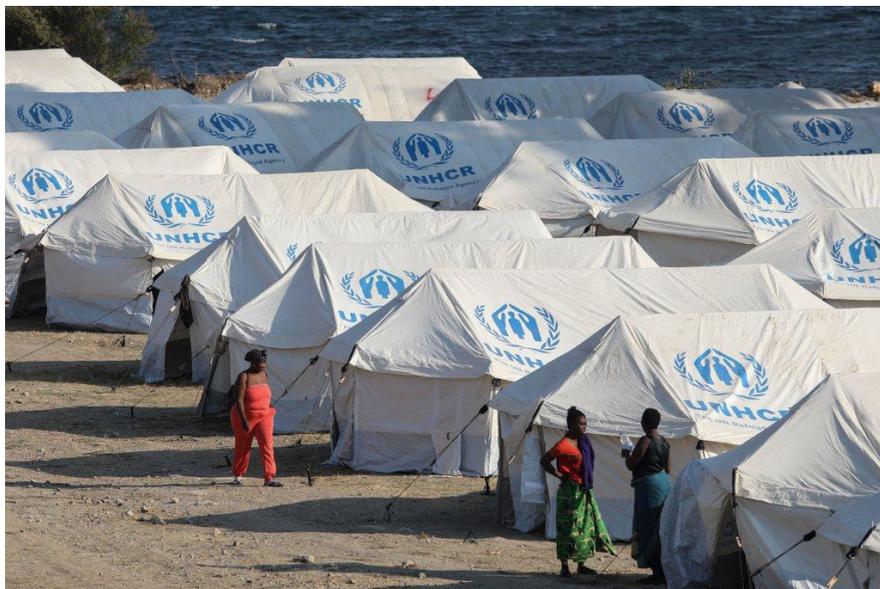
Most of the time, these “hot spots” are old military camps or other land owned by the state. The camps created there were supposed to be a temporary solution, functioning as a transitional point on refugees’ journey to the rest of Europe, but in many cases they have transformed into an almost permanent accommodation for a vast number of refugee families.<sup>27</sup> According to Ramadan,<sup>28</sup> such camps are recognized as

<sup>25</sup> <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/applying-for-asylum/can-my-application-for-asylum-be-examined-in-another-european-country/dublin-iii-family-reunification-and-other-legal-pathways/>.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2015/8/55c4d1fc2/number-refugees-migrants-arriving-greece-soars-750-cent-2014.html>.

<sup>27</sup> <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/conditions-reception-facilities/>.

<sup>28</sup> Ramadan, A. (2013). “Spatialising the refugee camp”, Transactions of the

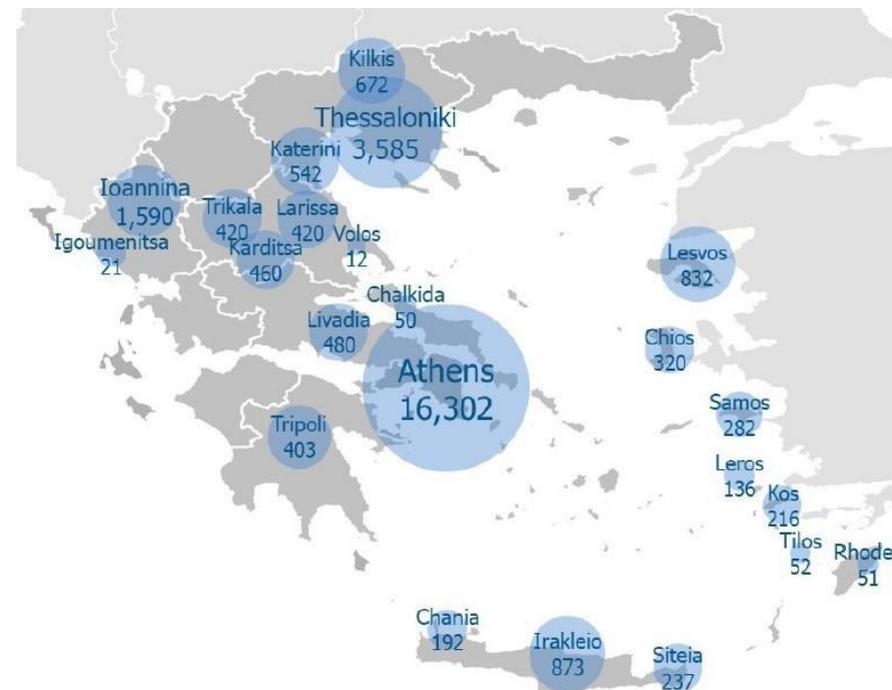


**Image 1: A temporary camp by the UNHCR and various aid organizations for migrants and asylum-seekers in made Lesbos. Elias Marcou / Reuters.**

*“temporary space[s] in which refugees may receive humanitarian relief and protection until a durable solution can be found to their situation”.* Ramadan argues that they must be viewed not only as physical spaces; they are political, cultural, and social spaces. The conditions in the camps are more often so bad that it goes beyond the imagination: people living in tents without heating and insufficient sewage disposal. The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), in its 2020 report, stated:

*The level of provision of material reception and accommodation*

Institute of British Geographers, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 65–77.



*conditions for applicants of international protection in our country has dramatically deteriorated in the last year.<sup>29</sup>*

**Figure 1: UNHCR (2020) ESTIA, 2020**

Furthermore, these camps have a heavy police presence, which can create a feeling of protection but also one of strict surveillance or even imprisonment.<sup>30</sup> The fact that these

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.nchr.gr/en/news/1131-gnchr-reference-report-on-the-refugee-and-migrant-issue.html>.

<sup>30</sup> Ehrkamp, P. (2016). Geographies of migration I: Refugees. *Progress in Human Geography*, pp. 1–10.

facilities are usually far from urban areas may lead to their residents' exclusion from social life and job opportunities.<sup>31</sup> An important factor that plays a key role in the integration of refugees is the unemployment rate in Greece. According to Eurostat, the rate of unemployment in Greece in April 2021 was 17.2%, which creates a surplus in the available workforce when there are already lots of unemployed Greeks actively seeking jobs.<sup>32</sup>

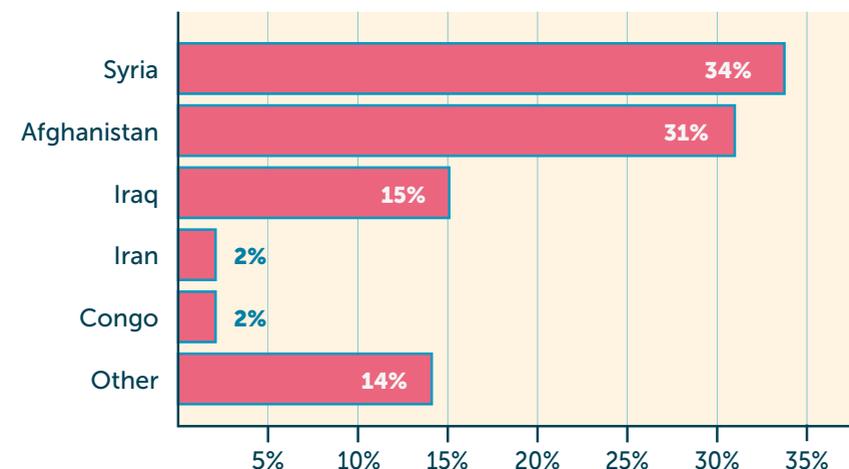
Besides the camps, there is another accommodation programme currently running in Greece called ESTIA, which provides refugees with apartments to live in. The most significant percentage of these apartments is located within urban areas and more specifically within the metropolitan area of Athens.<sup>33</sup> The refugees included in this programme are also provided with an amount of money to cover their basic needs. According to a report from UNHCR, "*the accommodation scheme provides rented housing to vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees in Greece*". It is considered to be of the utmost importance, as it restores a sense of normality and provides overall improved access to all kinds of services, such as health and education services. It also improves the chances of beneficiaries to get access to employment as well as language courses and generally improves their social interactions.<sup>34</sup> The demographics of the accommodation scheme (ESTIA) show that since November 2015, more than 73,000 individuals have benefitted; of these, 86% are Syrians, Afghans, Iraqis, Iranians, or Congolese. One of the concerning facts regarding the ESTIA programme remains the density of apartments, which has been high in neighbourhoods that already had settled migrant populations. It turns out that this has led to a reinforcement of "hyper-diversity", which at the

31 <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/reception-conditions/housing/conditions-reception-facilities/>.

32 <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>.

33 <http://estia.unhcr.gr/en/greece-accommodation-scheme-december-2020-update/>.

34 Ibid.



end of the day has more positive than negative effects on the everyday life of residents in those areas.<sup>35</sup>

Figure 2: Demographics in accommodation scheme. UNHCR (2020) ESTIA, 2020.

There is a special category in the population of refugees that the state ought to treat in a more protective way. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,<sup>36</sup> the state is obliged to provide appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance to every unaccompanied child with an orientation offering foster care, adoption opportunities, or access to private social welfare institutions (like shelters for unaccompanied minors). Due to the fact that neither foster care nor adoption

35 Alexandri G, Balampanidis D, Souliotis G, et al. (2017). *Diversity: Dealing with Urban Diversity - The case of Athens*. Athens: EKKE.

36 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

programmes in Greece are efficient enough to cover the needs accompanying the refugee crisis, the vast majority of unaccompanied minors end up in safe zones and shelters for unaccompanied children.<sup>37</sup> These shelters for unaccompanied children are considered long-term accommodation and host 1,377 out of 2,245 children as of July 2021.<sup>38</sup> Even though the shelters are recognized as long-term accommodation, they are frequently the centre of constant changes due to the fact that the mobility of unaccompanied children is very dynamic: reunification cases and relocations to other European countries, but also a lot of runaways, create an environment of instability. Regardless of the changes occurring in these shelters, the conditions there are considered safe, good, and supportive.<sup>39</sup> Another type of accommodation is the SIL (Supported Independent Living) apartments. According to the National Center for Social Solidarity (2021), 271 unaccompanied children stay in SIL apartments out of a total of 2,245 children.<sup>40</sup> In those apartments, children over 16 years of age are selected that have proven to be mature and self-sufficient enough to live on their own in a more independent environment. Such a solution is preferred in other countries, too, such as England.<sup>41</sup>

The four interviews that were conducted with unaccompanied minors from the shelter "Irida" made it clear that even though all four minors have chosen the urban environment, the most important factor for

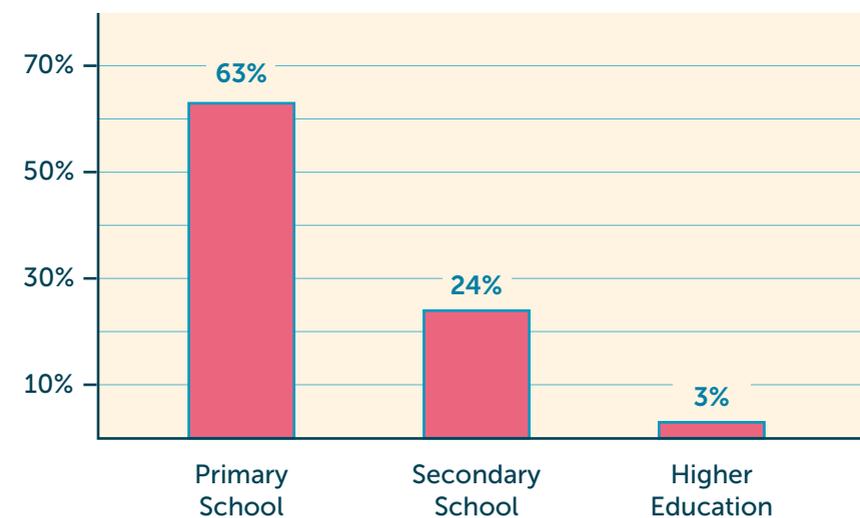
37 <https://www.unicef.org/eca/sites/unicef.org.eca/files/Infographic%20Children%20and%20UASC%20overview%202017.pdf>.

38 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88189>.

39 Mishra D, Spiegel PB, Digidiki VL, Winch PJ (2020). Interpretation of vulnerability and cumulative disadvantage among unaccompanied adolescent migrants in Greece: A qualitative study. *PLoS Med* 17(3): e1003087, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1003087>.

40 <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88189>.

41 Barrie, L., Mendes, Ph., (2011). The experiences of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in and leaving the out-of-home care system in the UK and Australia: A critical review of the literature. *International Social Work*, 54(4), 485-503.



them was safety; they cared most of all about living in a safe environment without any immediate dangers to their lives.

Figure 3: Enrolment of refugees in education.

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000251076>.

## 2.2. Education

### 2.2.1. Education for unaccompanied children

Learning is a very significant part of the developmental process of a child.<sup>42</sup> Learning is the process of coming-to-know – be that the ontogenesis of knowing across the lifespan of an individual person or the phylogenesis of social knowing. Learning is at times formal, “a premeditated agenda in the institutions of education”.<sup>43</sup> Education typically takes place

42 Kalantzis, M., Cope, B. (2013) *The SAGE Handbook of Learning*. Vol.35: Learning and New Media.

43 Ibid.

in specific institutions such as schools and universities. It is one of the major issues that European institutions have to consider quite seriously regarding unaccompanied children.<sup>44</sup>

One of the major goals for an unaccompanied minor when he/she enters Greek territory is to learn the Greek language as soon as possible. Learning the language spoken by locals is extremely helpful not only on a practical level (communicating with other people, buying things, going to the hospital, etc.) but on a psychological level, as well. Being able to communicate with the majority of people in the place you live increases feelings of security, psychological balance, and mental and general health.<sup>45</sup> It significantly enhances one's capacity for critical thinking, boosts self-esteem, and helps the person to become more open to being co-operative.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it is crucial that young people are educated in order to empower them psychologically as well as enhance their chances for successful social integration with the local population.

The immigration procedure followed by unaccompanied children has led the current generation of children to have limited or no previous access to the educational system, combined with limited linguistic development, leading to this often being referred to as a "lost generation".<sup>47</sup> The average duration of an armed conflict is approximately 17 years, which results in millions of children losing — apart from their tender childhoods — important years from an educational perspective.<sup>48</sup>

44 <https://www.unhcr.org/left-behind/>.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Deane, S. (2016). Syria's lost generation: Refugee education provision and societal security in an ongoing conflict emergency. *IDS Bulletin*, 47(3). doi:10.19088/1968- 2016.143.

48 Dryden-Peterson, S. (2015). *The Educational Experiences of Refugee Children in Countries of First Asylum*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, and more specifically Articles 28 and 29, clearly recognizes the right of all children to education and clearly states that education should be public and free for them.<sup>49</sup> All children should be motivated and helped to reach their potential for progress.<sup>50</sup> According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), all unaccompanied children that are refugees should have the same access to education as all children residing in a given country. According to Article 14, children should start their education in the country no longer than 3 months after their entrance there.<sup>51</sup>

### 2.2.2. Typical and Atypical Education in Greece

There are different schools through which an accompanied minor may gain access to education in Greece. The so-called typical education includes public schools such as General Public Schools and Intercultural Schools.<sup>52</sup> General Public Schools are the educational institutions attended by the broader population in Greece. They are free, and the classes are held in Greek. On the other hand, Intercultural Schools have classes for the non-Greek speaking population such as refugees. They are supposed to have introductory classes and to be specialized in teaching children that are not native Greek speakers. Both types of schools offer all grade levels (primary and secondary education). General Public Schools also have integration classes, as the number of refugee children is high, and Intercultural Schools do not have enough positions for all of them. These integration classes are led by special teachers trained to teach Greek as a second language.<sup>53</sup>

Because there are not enough positions in schools to cover the need

49 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (1989). *Convention about the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved on 08/09/2021 from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid.

52 <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-education/>.

53 <https://help.unhcr.org/greece/living-in-greece/access-to-education/>.

for vast numbers of refugee children, a number of NGOs operate in camps and in private buildings, providing classes for the children who for any reason cannot attend school. The shelters for unaccompanied children register the children residing with local schools, but at the same time they make sure to enhance the learning process by holding classes within the shelters with employed teachers.

There are also a lot of volunteer activities that try to help children have access to all sort of educational levels with volunteers from Greece but also from other countries. Finally, there are many children that use the internet to attend to programs online to continue educating themselves.<sup>54</sup>

According to the interviews conducted, all four minors are overall satisfied by the level of education in Greece, even if they faced a few difficulties in the beginning.

### 2.2.3. Reasons for not Attending School

Children that live in urban areas have higher chances of attending school compared to the ones that reside in camps, as the necessity of going anywhere far from the camp increases the feeling of insecurity among their relatives.<sup>55</sup> There are various other reasons for children not attending school: the different socio-cultural background which the refugees come from (including language and religion) could create feelings of anxiety, fear, and insecurity, as it could be experienced as a threat of losing one's identity/religion/language/culture.<sup>56</sup> Many children arriving in Europe as refugees also have great difficulty with the language and more specifically the alphabet; not only it is a completely different type of alphabet than the one they may be familiar with, but in some cases it is written in the opposite direction from their own.<sup>57</sup>

54 Ibid.

55 <https://www.unhcr.org/left-behind/>.

56 Ibid.

57 Yaser, I. A. (2006). *The Arabic Language for Greeks*, Thessaloniki: Zitros.

Moreover, the financial cost to support education (such as transfer costs, school material costs, clothes, etc.) is often times an obstacle that leads to children not attending school.<sup>58</sup> One more difficulty which refugee children must deal with is that there are seldom any introductory lessons to prepare children for a different language as well as a different methodology of teaching.<sup>59</sup> All these reasons could result in both not attending at all and high rates of dropouts.<sup>60</sup>

## 2.3. Economic Integration and Employment

### 2.3.1. Economic Inclusion

There are great challenges for refugees to overcome when they arrive in a foreign country. Beyond the objective difficulties that lead them to leave their country and all the obstacles in the way before they reach European soil, there are significant difficulties that have to do with their social inclusion. Xenophobia and fear are the initial motives for exclusion (and even violence), but a detrimental role is also played by the feeling that refugees are competing for already limited employment positions.<sup>61</sup> The right to work is a fundamental right, and refugees are protected by the 1951 Refugee Convention,<sup>62</sup> which is based on Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>63</sup>

Regardless of the articles that protect their right to employment, though, refugees are not allowed to work in around 50% of asylum countries or face difficulties like exploitation in the labour market.<sup>64</sup>

58 <https://www.unhcr.org/left-behind/>.

59 Ibid.

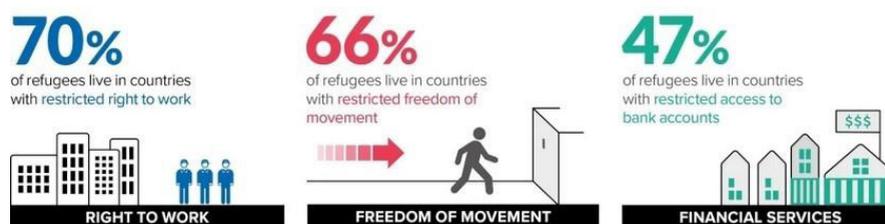
60 Ibid.

61 <https://www.unhcr.org/events/campaigns/5fc126354/supporting-social-inclusion-refugees.html?query=SOCIAL%20INCLUSION%20OF%20REFUGEES%20BACKGROUND%20GUIDE%20CHALLENGE>.

62 <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>.

63 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=grk>.

64 <https://www.unhcr.org/5df9f0bc7.pdf>



**Figure 4: Refugees' right to work, freedom of movement, and access to financial services.**

<https://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html>.

The insecurity caused by job-related issues is also linked to discrimination and social exclusion.<sup>65</sup> It is essential, in order to rebuild one's life, to gain opportunities for work to create feelings of dignity, safety, and social inclusion, as well as enhance one's well-being.<sup>66</sup> Apart from the positive outcome in the lives of refugees, their economic inclusion is also recognized as an effective way to produce economic growth in host-country economies.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the refugees that do enter the labour market will enrich it with valuable skills and experience, which overall benefit the economy of the host country.<sup>68</sup> In order for host countries to enjoy these advantages, it is of great importance for refugees to be able to exercise their right to freedom of movement, to have their experience/skills/degrees recognized, and to enjoy the right to form/join unions or labour

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> H. d'Albis, E. Boubtane & D. Coulibaly (2018). *Sci. Adv.* 4, eaaq0883.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

associations.<sup>69</sup> Empowering refugees to participate in the economies of host countries is key to their economic inclusion and, more importantly, their social inclusion.<sup>70</sup> In order for that to happen, there has to be coordination on the part of governments, the private sector, humanitarian actors, and others to enhance inclusion and opportunities for refugees.<sup>71</sup>

## 2.4. Social Acceptance & Social Cohesion

### 2.4.1. Social integration

According to the National Integration Strategy of 2019, the main objectives of the Greek model for social integration are:

- to create and maintain an open society that respects diversity;
- to protect the rights and outline the obligations of third-country nationals in a non-discriminatory manner that ensures social equality;
- to foster interaction, collaboration, dialogue, and constructive criticism between culturally or ethnically diverse communities, promulgating democracy and equality;
- to promote diversity, tolerance, and social cohesion; and
- to motivate all individuals to protect the common good and encourage the contribution of all individuals to the development of the country.

Migrant Integration Councils are consultative bodies spread across all 325 municipalities. There is no consultative body on integration at the national level. According to the Law 3852/2010, which established them, these Councils are responsible for identifying, investigating, and helping local authorities acquire knowledge on problems encountered by the immigrant population legally residing in their municipality in

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html>.

<sup>70</sup> H. d'Albis et al. (2018).

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html#economicinclusion>.

relation to their integration and their contact with public or municipal authorities.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, in 2016, the General Secretariat of Migration Policy of the Ministry of Interior created a National Registry of non-governmental organizations active in the field of migration, international protection, and social integration. Their registration is a prerequisite for their activation, accreditation, and cooperation with the services provided by the Ministry of Migration Policy.<sup>73</sup>

The main goal of integration is to ensure substantial equality of rights, opportunities, and obligations between indigenous citizens and refugees or immigrants. The concepts of assimilation, integration, and multiculturalism are fundamental factors in the integration process and social cohesion.<sup>74</sup> According to the Council of Europe (2008), the integration of refugees and immigrants has four aspects — economic, social, cultural, and political — while the ultimate goal is acquisition citizenship in the host country and the integration of third-country nationals in the economic, social, cultural, and political structures of the country combined with the sustainable development of local communities and strengthening social cohesion.<sup>75</sup>

It is quite another story for those that live on the islands. The living conditions of those who remain on the islands, despite the fact that they don't fall under the state's integration strategy, pose a challenge to social cohesion and, by extension, to the integration prospects of international protection beneficiaries and applicants in mainland Greece.<sup>76</sup> Several incidents of violence and suicide attempts have been

recorded in camps across the islands. Harsh living conditions combined with discriminatory policies and the fear of potential return to Turkey have led to various instances of violent protests and riots.<sup>77</sup>

Refugees and immigrants, after all, are people with horrifying stories that are facing mental health problems which prevent their integration into host countries. More specifically, significant rates of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are recorded and many have experienced violence, injuries, life-threatening situations, the death of relatives, displacement, torture, sexual exploitation, malnutrition, "survivors' guilt", psychosomatic disorders, depression, anxiety disorders, mourning, paranoia, culture shock and difficulty adjusting, loneliness, difficulty learning the language, social exclusion and prejudice, and difficulty accessing support services.<sup>78</sup>

#### 2.4.2. Psychological Input

Refugees and migrants experience extremely stressful events as a result of war, oppression, migration, and resettlement. This includes forced detention, violence, torture, and even witnessing death. UNHCR has repeatedly shared the testimonials of refugees and migrants suffering grave abuses at the hands of smugglers, other criminal networks, and even state authorities. Apart from the events that have taken place in refugees' hometowns, travel by sea or crossing borders is something that endangers people's lives and poses many risks. The majority of refugees have witnessed a violent incident or a death during their trip.<sup>79,80</sup> Violent incidents also often occur in Greece,

72 <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/governance/greece>.

73 <https://migration.gov.gr/en/migration-policy/integration/politiki-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/>.

74 [https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/immigration\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/immigration_report_final.pdf).

75 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/lang-migrants/guiding-principles>.

76 Skleparis, D. (2018). Refugee integration in mainland Greece: Prospects and challenges. [https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/file\\_store/production/259738/660F551C-](https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/file_store/production/259738/660F551C-)

[EC5D-420D-99F8-35100FAF3E75.pdf](https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/immigration_report_final.pdf).

77 [https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/immigration\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/immigration_report_final.pdf).

78 Ibid.

79 <https://www.unhcr.org/news/updates/2017/2/58b449f54/desperate-journeys-refugees-migrants-entering-crossing-europe-via-mediterranean.html>.

80 J. Ben Farhat, K. Blanchet, P. Juul Bjertrup, et al. (2018). Syrian refugees

mainly in camps and temporary living arrangements. All these lead to high levels of anxiety, depression, and PTSD. Studies suggest that the level of anxiety and depression observed may be attributed to living conditions and uncertainty about the future. In refugees' reports, they express experiencing suffering on an intimate, personal level: how they miss their families and how they have felt depressed or anxious as a result of their living conditions in Greece.<sup>81</sup> Uncertainty about the legal procedures is also a factor that exacerbate refugees' anxiety.<sup>82</sup> When going through official asylum procedures, refugees face new or ongoing forms of uncertainties because the different asylum procedures and processes can be unclear to them and limited or no information may be provided. An unaccompanied minor stated, *"The most difficult part is that the interview date is far. I want to give the interview to finish all the procedure and be able to go on with my life. I can't stand the insecurity and the stress."*<sup>83</sup>

### 2.4.3. Unaccompanied Minors

The terms unaccompanied children or unaccompanied refugee minors (URM) refer to forcibly displaced children and youths under the age of 18 who are "separated from both parents and not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has the responsibility to do so".<sup>84</sup>

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in Greece: experience with violence, mental health status, and access to information during the journey and while in Greece. *BMC Med* 16, 40, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-018-1028-4>, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s12916-018-1028-4#citeas>.

81 D. Sifaki-Pistolla, V.E. Chatzea, S.A. Vlachaki, E. Melidoniotis, & G. Pistolla (2017). Who is going to rescue the rescuers? Post-traumatic stress disorder among rescue workers operating in Greece during the European refugee crisis. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, 52(1), pp. 45–54.

82 J. Ben Farhat et al. (2018).

83 Data from the shelter "Irida" on unaccompanied refugees minors in Athens (reports from minors).

84 UNHCR (1997). Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum. <http://>

Unaccompanied minors are a highly vulnerable group who likely suffers from more psychiatric morbidity than accompanied minors. The loss of or separation from their parents in a crucial period of physical and mental development, while experiencing a major transition by fleeing their home country, distinguishes them from refugees in general as well as from accompanied refugee minors.<sup>85</sup> They tend to report more emotional problems and more symptoms of anxiety, depression, and PTSD, but fewer behavioural problems than accompanied migrant adolescents.<sup>86</sup>

Children in their reports refer to extremely traumatic incidents in their hometowns (torture, human trafficking, witnessing death/rape, victims of sexual assault/abuse) that led them to flee their countries. Due to their young age, there are particularly vulnerable, especially when they do not have a supportive network around them. Psychiatric disorders have a high prevalence among this group, and many teenagers have suicidal ideation and even attempts. Symptoms of PTSD such as insomnia, nightmares, and tremors disrupt their lives and stall them from integrating in a new culture and country.<sup>87</sup>

## 3. Recommendation and Expectations

### 3.1. Relation and Cooperation with EU for Refugees

The refugee crisis is a complex issue that needs to be addressed at all levels and demands a well-organized approach from all European countries. Even though Europe has made tremendous efforts to

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[www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf).

85 L.M. Mohwinkel, Nowak, A. C., Kasper, A., & Razum, O. (2018). Gender differences in the mental health of unaccompanied refugee minors in Europe: a systematic review. *BMJ open*, 8(7), e022389.

86 Huemer, J., Karnik, N.S., Voelkl-Kernstock, S. et al. Mental health issues in unaccompanied refugee minors. *Child Adolesc Psychiatry Ment Health* 3, 13 (2009). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1753-2000-3-13>

87 Data from the "Irida" shelter on unaccompanied refugee minors in Athens. (Reports from minors)

manage the crisis and apply humanitarian ideals in the best way possible, there are still a lot of things that can be done to tackle the problems that occur. European countries should try harder to cooperate and get feedback from previous years in order to make the conditions better for refugees but also for the countries that host those populations.

One of the most crucial issues that needs to be addressed at an EU level is asylum procedures, as has already been mentioned in previous chapters. The interviews conducted at the “Irida” shelter show that great psychological pressure and distress are owed to the fact that the asylum procedures in Greece usually take a lot of time before they are completed. Not knowing the date that the decision will be made seems vague and creates feelings of insecurity among asylum-seekers residing temporarily in Greece. Refugees awaiting their asylum decision are left in limbo for extended periods, and this has a direct impact on their lives: they are unable to focus on their educational progress, they are uncertain whether they should learn the local language or whether they should look for a temporary job, and generally they are in constant agony regarding their future.<sup>88</sup> That insecurity discourages them from integrating with the rest of society, while they feel helpless because they do not feel they have control over their lives.<sup>89</sup> EU Member States should agree to relocate more unaccompanied minors and vulnerable asylum-seekers from Greece. Moreover, there is no unified or absolute legislation for each Member State in the relocation scheme. To the contrary, each Member State follows an individualized screening system of refugees, with neither transparency nor a clear-cut procedure. This phenomenon causes a lot of delays and has a psychological impact on refugees, who are waiting, without any kind of update, for an answer.

88 Katrin Schock, Rita Rosner & Christine Knaevelsrud (2015). Impact of asylum interviews on the mental health of traumatized asylum seekers. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 6:1, DOI: 10.3402/ejpt.v6.26286.

89 Ibid.

The EU and its Member States must also share the responsibility of caring for asylum-seekers and refugees in the region.

Another major issue that needs to be solved has to do with the lack of funding. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), which is the main funding source for most refugee projects, has to show more consistency and stability in covering the ongoing needs of refugees. There have been great delays in 2021 regarding funding for the SIL apartments project, leading to many unaccompanied minors (16+ years old) not having the essential financial resources to get by. Furthermore, there are constant delays in the funding of shelters, which has resulted in payment delays of up to 3 months a number of times. This is one of the main reasons why many professionals have chosen to leave the field and seek more financially stable conditions. It is obvious that this creates a series of problems in the operational stability of the shelters that have to find ways to deal with these delays in funding. This is a vicious cycle that fuels despair and insecurity among refugees, having to cope in an uncertain environment without knowing if they will have even their basic needs met and, more importantly, having to deal with events and conditions that traumatize them further.

From a socio-psychological perspective (which of course is not limited and includes economical aspects, too) the most significant problem that needs to be addressed has to do with how the future of refugees is viewed by governments in European countries like Greece. Since the beginning of the current refugee crisis, the political choices made in order to tackle ongoing problems have lacked a vision or plan for the whole situation and the future. Until the moment those lines are written, the “bigger picture” of the situation has not been viewed; there are no real plans or strategies regarding the successful integration of refugees in a long-term time frame. The refugee “waves” will keep coming because the conditions that give birth to refugees will not cease to exist. The faster we realise that we need to act collectively and in a truly humanitarian way, the faster we will achieve prosperity and relieve the suffering of those who suffer.

### 3.2. Future Recommendation for Greece

There is an apparent need for the existing pre-registration programming to be simplified for asylum-seekers, together with a robust expansion of capacity for the Asylum Service to register and process applications. In addition to improving asylum procedures and reception conditions, Greece must provide integration support for recognized refugees. A new, more concrete system of integration should be established that emphasizes learning the Greek language and offers supportive services to refugees.

Targeted support should be provided to existing, qualified Greek non-governmental organizations and qualified Greek practitioners providing legal assistance, also likely to be involved in the forthcoming state-funded legal aid scheme for appeals. Such support should ensure that all unaccompanied children have access to specialized legal assistance and representation by qualified legal representatives from their initial identification and throughout the duration of their minority.

In the Greek context, community centres could be established to address issues of powerlessness, lack of information, and social isolation and to promote empowerment, agency, and the re-establishment of social networks. Such centres should be designed with the participation of refugees to foster their engagement and empowerment. This could include information sharing, recreational, and educational activities. To reduce feelings of discrimination and isolation, and to link refugees more closely to Greek and European society, international and national volunteers could also play a role in such community centres. The above-mentioned recommendations, together with a fast and transparent asylum system, would mitigate the distress experienced by refugees and could create a better foundation for mental health interventions in Greece.

Our analysis also calls for advocacy on policy changes in relation to European asylum practices and measures which have increasingly leaned towards deterrence in recent years. In Greece, this includes poor living conditions within the camps, as well as long bureaucratic and

non-transparent asylum procedures — issues that are preventable, even if the political will to alleviate them may be lacking. To create powerful, evidence-based advocacy for policy change, research needs to be done on how the politics of deterrence in European transit countries influence refugees' mental health and integration into European society. Additionally, further research should assess the impact of phased approaches to mental health interventions.

Effectively managing the situation requires a permanent, mandatory mechanism. So far, there is no plan for refugees; instead, they are waiting in temporary shelters or camps for an asylum decision. Even when a positive decision is made, due to the enormous economic crisis and a lack of integration policies, Greece is still unable to support these refugees. The EU must support frontline countries like Greece and better distribute the responsibility for asylum-seekers.

## Chapter 4

# Refugees in Spain

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### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this report is to shed some light on the current situation of migrants and refugees in Spain, as well as to suggest policy recommendations in line with the core values of liberal democracy. It is noteworthy to mention that this report is issued at a time when these core values are being heavily threatened in Spain by a new wave of nationalistic populism, which is the local expression of the broader, continental phenomenon. While the most obvious political outcome of this wave is the success of the main party representing such views, now the third largest in parliament, it is safe to state that the problem can be felt far beyond that, as it certainly puts pressure on all other parties and exerts growing influence on civil servants, civil society, and the media. This situation, while making it more difficult to push for policies based on universal tenets of individual human rights, also makes this course of action ever more important.

### 2. Status and Main Regulations on Settlement

The general framework for migrants in Spain is

defined by the 1978 Spanish Constitution in force, specified by Organic Law 4/2000 on the “rights and liberties of foreigners in Spain and their social integration”.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that this law makes “all levels of government”, thus including the regional and municipal (local) level, co-responsible for the implementation of migration policy principles. At the forefront is applying (“coordinating”) the policies “defined by the European Union” on this matter, and this is certainly in contrast with the relatively smaller share of refugees admitted to Spain in comparison with other EU Member States, particularly during the Syrian crisis. The law also links migration to the labour market situation, addresses the issue of migratory overflows driven by human trafficking, and stresses some basic tenets of the Spanish constitutional system like gender equality.

The law goes on to say that particular attention will be given to “solidarity” with those territories particularly affected by a special incidence of migratory flows. This has certainly been the case in several places, most importantly in the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla, both neighbouring Morocco on the Northern African coast. 2021 has seen an extreme episode of this overflow, especially in Ceuta, since the Moroccan regime eased the illegal entry of thousands of migrants in May, including a large number of unaccompanied minors, as a way to exert pressure on Spain about other, non-migratory, bilateral issues.<sup>2</sup>

This main legal framework reiterates in several places the obligation affecting all regional and local authorities, plus the special autonomous city authorities of Ceuta and Melilla, to tackle the issue in a way that

<sup>1</sup> Boletín Oficial del Estado (2000). Ley Orgánica 4/2000, de 11 de enero, sobre derechos y libertades de los extranjeros en España y su integración social. Reference BOE-A-2000-544, <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2000-544>.

<sup>2</sup> For further information on the May 2021 Spain–Morocco migratory crisis, see, for instance: *El País* (2021). “Así le hemos contado la crisis migratoria en Ceuta y Melilla”. *El País* online, 24 May 2021, <https://elpais.com/espana/2021-05-24/ultima-hora-de-la-crisis-migratoria-entre-espana-y-marruecos-entradas-de-inmigrantes-en-ceuta-y-melilla-en-directo.html>.

respects constitutional and EU values. It is important to understand that, under Spain's semi-federal system, many of the policies related to migrants and refugees are further decided and/or implemented by the parliaments and cabinets of the seventeen "comunidades autónomas" (regions) and those of the two autonomous Northern African cities. As in other policy areas, a "comisión sectorial" (focus committee) on immigration is made up of top political representatives from all nineteen regions (including the cities of Ceuta and Melilla) and the central government. This committee deals with the Strategic Plan on Immigration. This is also, and especially, the forum where funding is discussed for migration-related policies to be granted to the regions.

Therefore, as in other areas of policy, the autonomy given to local administrations in dealing with the issue of migrants and refugees is rather limited in Spain, as most devolution occurs at the regional, not local, level of government. It is also necessary to remind the reader that both public education and public healthcare are fully devolved to the regions. However, cities (especially the larger ones) do have some room for manoeuvring when it comes to the practical provision of some social services connected to integration, as well as some grants and subsidies for basic subsistence.

### 3. Demographics

Spain had traditionally been an emigration, not immigration, country until the 1990s. Supporting the large communities of the Spanish diaspora has become less of an issue as new generations of children and grandchildren replace our last direct emigrants. While some significant new emigration of young, qualified people has occurred as a result of the 2007 economic crisis, mostly within the EU and EFTA area, the main migratory issue has consistently been inbound migration, ever since the country developed towards its current economic level. Immigration to Spain is partly different from that in other EU Member States due to two main geographic and cultural factors: the physical proximity to the Maghreb countries (both as countries of origin and transit of migrants) and the shared language with Latin American countries.

All in all, Spain's net increase in foreign population is about two hundred thousand per year (based on 2020 versus 2019), according to the national statistics bureau, while the same source states that the Spanish national population shrinks by about ninety thousand per year. These two figures combined are particularly used by the new radical right to create a narrative of "demographic substitution" of Spaniards by foreigners, which, in their view, is intentional and part of a larger-scale effort by the "globalist elites" to diminish and "mix" Europeans and/or Christian or Judeo-Christian majorities with other cultures.

The current statistics<sup>3</sup> show that Spain, which used to be comparatively less affected by migratory overflows than its EU partners, now has an immigration percentage far exceeding the average: almost 15.92 immigrants per thousand inhabitants, compared to Belgium (13.06), the Netherlands (12.44), Germany (10.67), or France (5.73). Within the EU, only Ireland and the much smaller countries of Malta, Luxembourg, and Cyprus present higher percentages. However, the Spanish figures may to some extent be distorted by the slow acquisition of citizenship.

Due to these particular factors (plus a third one: Spain's attraction as a retirement destination for wealthy Europeans), immigration in Spain is particularly Northern African and Latin American, then Sub-Saharan. As of August 2021, the main countries of origin of our foreign residents are:<sup>4</sup>

- Morocco : 775,936
- Romania : 658,773
- Great Britain: 313,948
- Colombia : 297,934

<sup>3</sup> See: Eurostat (2021). "Migration and migrant population statistics", [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics).

<sup>4</sup> Statista (2021). "Foreign population residing in Spain in 2021, by nationality", <https://www.statista.com/statistics/445784/foreign-population-in-spain-by-nationality/>.

- Italy : 280,152
- Venezuela : 209,223
- China : 197,704
- Germany : 139,811
- Ecuador : 127,344
- Honduras : 123,333
- France : 121,908
- Bulgaria : 120,954
- Peru : 112,297
- Ukraine : 107,369
- Argentina : 96,517
- Brazil : 86,074

If we exclude wealthier European residents, we may extract some clear facts. The first is the significance of Moroccan immigration (together with another sixty thousand from Algeria). This is a permanent issue in the bilateral relations between Madrid and Rabat. Many in Spain accuse Morocco of intentionally opening or closing the migration flow as a political lever.

The second main fact is the relevance of Latin American immigrants (except Mexicans, who massively choose the United States), obviously due to their particular choice of a country with the same language, which results in the perception of better chances to obtain a job (a perception which is in contrast with the heavy structural unemployment and youth unemployment in Spain). One particular sub-issue is that of Venezuelans. While that figure seems not so big and is even smaller than that of Colombian citizens, the fact is that tens of thousands (or more) Venezuelans are dual citizens who have settled in Spain with a Spanish passport originated from their Spanish parents or grandparents that emigrated to Venezuela several decades ago. While Spain has not taken in many Syrian refugees, it has been one of the top destinations for Venezuelan ones, although they are seldom granted formal asylum and are admitted as ordinary residents instead. All in all, Latin Americans

are the fastest growing foreign community,<sup>5</sup> with even two-digit annual increases for Colombia, Honduras, and Venezuela.

Another important fact is that two Eastern European Member States, Romania and Bulgaria, still present large numbers in Spain. Romania was for many years the largest country of origin, well in excess of a million residents in Spain. The latest recession, which heavily hit Spain and particularly the construction industry, made many of these immigrants return, while a large part settled for good in Spain.

Finally, the fourth fact is the steady increase in Chinese immigration, which is now noticeable all throughout Spain and is starting to pose some small integration challenges which were never before an issue when it came to this usually welcome and accepted community.

Further to these facts on legal immigration, we must bear in mind that the increase of illegal migration is also a challenge to Spain, with a 29% annual increase in 2020 versus 2019.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Education

According to Article 9 of Spain's "Código de Extranjería" (Alien Citizen's Code), foreign minors do not only share their Spanish peers' right to mandatory education but also the right to a post-mandatory education. The code stresses that their access to grants and other educational subsidies is "equal to that enjoyed by Spaniards". The student status is kept by those coming of age until their studies are finished. The Spanish legal framework provides immigrants whose children are in school with certain advantages to ease their settlement.

The figure of foreign students in any type of schooling below university

<sup>5</sup> For full data, see: Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INE). Press release of June 23rd, 2021, [www.ine.es/prensa/cp\\_e2021\\_p.pdf](http://www.ine.es/prensa/cp_e2021_p.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Statista (2021). "Número total de inmigrantes irregulares que llegaron a España entre 2015 y 2020", July 29th 2021, <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/1039916/inmigrantes-irregulares-llegados-a-espana/>.

level has remained steady over the 2009–2019 period,<sup>7</sup> always between 750,000 and 800,000. While this figure had slightly shrunk by the mid 2010s, even reaching around 716,000 in the 2015–2016 academic year, it has now climbed again to an all-time record high of over 795,000 students.

However, it is also necessary to bear in mind that quite a lot of minors, especially those who are unaccompanied, fail to attend school during their first years in the country.

One particularly important issue is that of religious education. Spain is a formally secular state, and the cultural evolution over the past forty years has seen a steady increase in the number of non-believers, which is somewhere between a quarter and a third of the total population, according to most surveys (combining atheists and agnostics). Spanish schools provide a choice of Catholicism as a religious subject or an “alternative” subject, which instils general, universal values like human rights, democratic pluralism, etc. Around 62% of all students choose this “alternative” subject, but that percentage goes down to under 51% if we consider public schools only.<sup>8</sup> While the trend towards even deeper secularization seems secure among Spaniards, the newly arrived Latin Americans, especially those from Central America and the Andes region, tend to strengthen the return to a more religious world view.

But the main issue concerning religious education is that of Islam. Normally, and according to our constitutional and legal framework, a significant percentage of students from a religion other than

Catholicism would mean that the particular public schools should grant an academic subject on that religion to those students, if the parents so request, in order to provide the same service as to Catholic parents. In practice, however, this has very seldom happened because the particular local figures have not required it and/or the parents have not claimed this service. In 2021, for the first time, a significant political row is taking place in the Balearic Islands, where three schools will start teaching Islam to a total of about 150 students during the 2021–2022 academic year. Because the region is governed by a left-wing coalition, the ordinary conservatives and particularly the far right have claimed this as the result of secretive manoeuvres to normalize Islam as a taught religion in the public education system.<sup>9</sup>

## 5. Refugees, Voluntary Return, and Resettlement

While Spain did grow used to the issue of immigration after a few decades, the faster and more dramatic flow of war refugees or others is not something as easily digested as in other EU Member States, which have been more open to taking them in both traditionally and during the latest crises, including the Syrian one. In the case of Spain, the Syrian crisis was met with a sense of solidarity and shouldering the burden with our fellow Europeans among liberals and the left, while the centre-right and especially the then-emerging far right spread all types of negative narratives about this issue. Some of these went to great lengths, accusing refugees of systematic rape, thus labelling them “rapefugees”, a term coined in English but used by this part of the political spectrum across many languages. The then mayor of Madrid, Manuela Carmena, was heavily criticized for placing a large “Refugees welcome” banner on the city hall building, but this was just a reaction to the then conservative national government’s refusal to take in more refugees. However, Spain instead received a very big amount of Venezuelan refugees over just a few years, even if in many cases they

<sup>7</sup> Rosa Fernández (2020). “Alumnado extranjero matriculado en España”. Statista, 7 June 2020, <https://es.statista.com/estadisticas/479163/alumnado-extranjero-matriculado-en-espana/#statisticContainer>.

<sup>8</sup> Data provided to the media by the Spanish Conference of Catholic Bishops, quoted by El Diario newspaper on 30 June, 2019.

<https://www.vidanuevadigital.com/2019/04/29/el-62-de-los-alumnos-espanoles-elige-la-asignatura-de-religion-el-porcentaje-mas-bajo-de-la-historia/>

<sup>9</sup> See, for instance: *El Mundo* (2021). “Balears impartirà en tres col·legis la assignatura de religió islàmica”. *El Mundo* online, 31 August 2021, <https://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2021/08/31/612e283ae4d4d8d3668b4658.html>.

arrived with Spanish passports due to their ancestry, and the Spanish government has mostly never accepted them as formal asylum-seekers but rather as specially regulated immigrants to whom residence and work permits were granted for humanitarian reasons. This was in part a way to avoid embarrassing the authoritarian regime in Caracas but also probably meant to avoid the term “refugees”, which had been distorted and abused in the above mentioned narratives.

Spain is party to all relevant treaties on refugees and political asylum, but the country seems to grant this status in relatively few cases, and the system is clogged and criticized for lack of transparency, efficiency, and legal security. As an example, the case of a Venezuelan refugee supported by the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty resulted in the rejection of political asylum status and the issuance of an ordinary residence and work permit instead, even though the victim had been a political prisoner and the country’s dictator himself accused and insulted her on public television. The Spanish government’s decision is now being challenged in the courts of justice, but it is obvious that thousands of similar cases simply go unnoticed, as the victims accept their non-asylum status, which still allows them to live and work in Spain.

As in so many other countries, a lot of immigrants in Spain pretend to be political asylum-seekers or refugees displaced by wars or other calamities in order to gain a better status and seek specific aid or subsidies. It is discouraging to see how the Spanish police, asylum offices, and civil servants mismanage this matter, resulting in the undue granting of this status to many and its undue denial to many more.

The Spanish government provides several options for assisted return, including programs for women who have been abused or mistreated while here and wish to go back to their countries of origin. There are also programs for starting productive enterprises back home and a return to one’s country after failing to attain economic self-sufficiency in Spain.

While the resettlement funds managed by the Spanish government exceed 750 million euros, the reality is that only less than 4,000 formal refugees were resettled in the 2015–2020 period, including just over

thirteen hundred from camps in Italy and Greece.<sup>10</sup> These data add to the general impression that Spain is not doing enough to share the refugee pressure with its fellow EU partners.

## 6. Social Acceptance and Cohesion

With more than 5.5 million foreign residents by mid 2020, Spain is home to roughly 11% non-Spaniards.<sup>11</sup> Evaluated as a whole under international standards and according to the 0–100 MIPEX scale, Spanish integration policies score 60: a rating that places them above the average for the European Union (50) and that of the OECD (56). The Spanish regulatory framework promotes a comprehensive approach to integration, placing special emphasis on access to rights. In joining the labour market or requesting healthcare, a foreign person substantially has the same legal treatment recognized for the rest of the population. However, the Spanish framework lacks specific integration measures to ensure continued personal development in the host society. This approach, which prioritizes access to rights over more specific and long-term policies, reflects a broader trend in the European and global context but seems to be particularly problematic in Spain.

Due to territorial complexity and cultural plurality, and in the context of Spain’s semi-federal system, it is necessary to address the issue of immigrants’ social acceptance and integration from a regional rather than national approach. Specialized papers reflect this particularity of

10 *Heraldo* (2021). “España ha reasentado o reubicado a más de 3.900 refugiados en cinco años”. *Heraldo* online, 23 January 2021, <https://www.heraldo.es/noticias/nacional/2021/01/23/espana-ha-reasentado-o-reubicado-a-mas-de-3-900-refugiados-en-cinco-anos-200-en-2020-segun-el-gobierno-1416423.html>.

11 Francesco Pasetti & Carlota Cumella de Montserrat (2020). “Las políticas de integración en España según el índice MIPEX”. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), December 2020. [https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie\\_de\\_publicacion/notes\\_internacionals\\_cidob/244/las\\_politicas\\_de\\_integracion\\_en\\_espana\\_segun\\_el\\_indice\\_mipex](https://www.cidob.org/publicaciones/serie_de_publicacion/notes_internacionals_cidob/244/las_politicas_de_integracion_en_espana_segun_el_indice_mipex).

Spain.<sup>12</sup> The seven integration indicators used by Godenau et al. in their thorough 2014 study, covering the mandatory and post-mandatory education of children through the obtention of Spanish citizenship, shows a generally satisfactory level of acceptance and integration and also exposes areas for improvement that are scattered across the regions and thematic areas without a noticeably specific pattern.

Compared to other European countries, immigration-related societal conflict has traditionally been moderate in Spain. This is probably the result of our foreign residents being quite scattered, thus avoiding the exclusion of particular ethnic quarters or towns. There are no Spanish equivalents to the known “ghettos” in other EU Member States. And yet xenophobic narratives are increasingly trying to make believe that we are on the verge of a social clash between native Spaniards and non-European foreign residents. These narratives normally distort the news from French *banlieue* towns or Northern European countries’ alleged “no-go zones” and portray an almost apocalyptic situation that may come to Spain if we do not take measures against immigration now. At the same time, these narratives often consider Spain to be under permanent invasion, particularly by sea, and depict NGOs working to rescue immigrants as an evil force partnering with human traffickers to destroy our society. While Spain has not yet seen any major clashes, the continued spread of these narratives may certainly reach a point of tension that poses serious risks to social cohesion.

In May 2021, the far-right electoral campaign for Madrid’s regional parliament showed a teenager of North African ethnicity and a very white old lady. The text read, “your grandma makes 400 euros a month, while this unaccompanied minor costs 4,000 a month”. It is worth noting that, at the time, there weren’t even a hundred such

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance: Dirk Godenau et al. (2014). “La integración de los inmigrantes en España: una propuesta de medición a escala regional”. Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración, Ministry of Employment and Social Security, [https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/observatoriopermanenteinmigracion/publicaciones/fichas/publicacion\\_30.html](https://extranjeros.inclusion.gob.es/es/observatoriopermanenteinmigracion/publicaciones/fichas/publicacion_30.html).

unaccompanied minor immigrants in the region, out of over five million inhabitants.<sup>13</sup> It is indeed a fact that the far right, in its attempt to find an internal social minority to blame for the country’s problems and thus gain social support, seems to have switched from its original villain, separatists, to a fresh one, immigrants, which is apparently more effective now. This internal villain, according to their view, is supposed to be a “fifth column” of Spain’s enemies within the country, the result of careful, evil planning by the “globalist elites” determined to destroy Spain. The increase in this narrative’s spread certainly poses a countrywide threat to cohesion and the social acceptance of immigrants. Also, because this same political group has also launched utterly protectionistic proposals, Chinese shops are starting to be perceived by some as contrary to Spain’s interests by importing goods that could be manufactured here. This is still a minority perception, and Chinese citizens still enjoy higher acceptance than other immigrants, but this narrative is starting to become harmful.

Other than the growing minority of Spaniards who have fallen prey to these narratives, Spain does seem to be less conflictive than other EU Member States, in terms of native–immigrant cohesion, partly due to the history of Spanish emigration and partly due to the fact that a large part of the immigrants are culturally close (Romanians) or even speak the same language (Latin Americans).

## 7. Economic Integration of Migrants and Refugees: Employment and Entrepreneurship

Spain is chronically affected by enormous, unsustainable structural unemployment and especially youth unemployment. This is of course the result of interventionistic policies of both the left and the right, having both attempted to control and shape the labour market over the decades.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance: *El Español* (2021). “Los menas y la abuela: la campaña de derecha dura de Vox para Madrid que ya investiga la Fiscalía”. *El Español* online, 20 April 2021, [https://www.elespanol.com/espana/madrid/20210420/abuela-campana-derecha-vox-madrid-denunciada-fiscal/575193442\\_0.html](https://www.elespanol.com/espana/madrid/20210420/abuela-campana-derecha-vox-madrid-denunciada-fiscal/575193442_0.html).

During the economic (and construction) boom prior to the 2007 crisis and subsequent recession, migratory pressure was not perceived as a problem. Immigrants were seen as people who took the jobs Spaniards didn't want. They were often considered as people who would be here for some time to work hard and save money, and then return to their countries of origin. They were welcome, as they would lessen the impending agony of the pay-as-you-go public pension systems. But a new social situation emerged from the recession, feeding on new factors like the Occupy movement in the early 2010s, followed by the boom of left-wing populism and then right-wing populism. As many Spaniards have drastically suffered a loss of purchasing power and seen their living standards lowered, a portion of them has resorted to blaming the immigrants. An increasing narrative says that they do not work and live on taxpayer subsidies, but reality disproves this. With equal qualifications or experience, immigrants do not perform worse than Spaniards in the labour market. The unemployed immigrant segment is made up of lesser qualified foreigners, like in other countries. An important piece of data to bear in mind is that, while foreigners are roughly 11.5% of the population, they make up roughly 10.9% of the workforce. If you discount minors, the figures add up. In other words, it is not true that foreigners try to avoid working and get state benefits instead.

The immigrant workforce is rather unbalanced, gender-wise, with only one third of workers being women.<sup>14</sup> While the Covid-19 pandemic has heavily affected employment, both among native Spaniards and immigrants, Social Security membership had increased steadily from 2013 until to 2019, and the current figure is 2.05 million. This also reflects a tendency to avoid the black market and work legally. Construction, which had been a very significant driver of immigration to Spain, now accounts for only 9% of the total foreign workforce, while a

<sup>14</sup> State Public Employment Service (2021). "Informe del mercado de trabajo de los extranjeros". <https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/que-es-el-sepe/comunicacion-institucional/publicaciones/publicaciones-oficiales/listado-publico-mercado-trabajo/informe-mercado-trabajo-estatal-extranjeros>. (data collected up to 2020).

massive 79% work in the services industry.

Freelance work is heavily discouraged in Spain for everyone, as a result of decades of social-democrat and union-driven measures that make self-employment and micro-enterprising extremely expensive and overregulated. It is therefore natural that only about one in seven foreign workers are self-employed. Among immigrants, most nationalities choose to work for others. Some self-employment is found among those providing services in construction. And the highest level of entrepreneurship among immigrants is found in the Chinese community, mostly in industries like restaurants, convenience stores, and foreign trade (imports). It is particularly noteworthy that immigrant-owned businesses tend to be more successful than those launched by natives, and this is not only true for Spain but is also an internationally consolidated fact, as shown by Harvard research.<sup>15</sup>

## 8. Local Governments and Integration

Spain's municipal governments are subject to their respective regions, and this sometimes results in a duplicity of services and the local and regional administration both intervening in a given area. As stated before, in the case of Spain, the leading administration in most day-to-day matters for immigrants and refugees is the regional one. Education, healthcare, and most other public services are also devolved to the regions.

However, local authorities do affect immigrants in the very delicate matter of social services, particularly important to those with lesser qualifications that render them unable to find a job or to those having any other social disadvantages. Because of radically different views on immigration as an issue, cities governed by leftist or rightist parties may tend to provide more services, grants, and subsidies or less. Because being registered in a certain local government is needed to receive

<sup>15</sup> See: *El Periódico* (2018). "Los negocios lanzados por inmigrantes tienen más éxito". *El Periódico* online, 18 December 2018, <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/activos/empresas/20181218/negocios-lanzados-inmigrantes-tienen-exito-7207383>.

further services from the regions or the central government (and even as proof of settlement towards obtaining legal residence), left-wing governed local governments tend to ease and flexibilize registration within the legal limits, while right-wing municipal authorities tend to be stricter in complying with the requirements.

## 9. Spain's Cooperation with EU Refugee Policies

Spain's reluctance to assume a proportionate share of the refugee flow toward the EU has been often justified as compensatory for the particular immigration tension resulting from the country's geographical situation. It has also been argued that Spain is coping with a high amount of Latin American refugees, mostly from Venezuela, who are seldom acknowledged formally as such. According to this view, these refugees would vastly overcompensate for not doing enough on the Syrian flow, or even on the Afghan flow. The current Spanish cabinet, a coalition of ordinary social-democrats and the far left, has been so far rather keen on taking in Afghan pro-West refugees, albeit mostly as a PR effort. Nevertheless, the overall record of Spain on the admission of refugees certainly presents a lot of room for improvement.

## 10. Forecast on Spain's Evolution

The German federal elections of 26 September 2021 were one of the few recent reasons for optimism about the general context Spain would face in the short- and mid-term. A cabinet with a heavy liberal influence by the FDP would certainly pave the way for a strong German defence of liberal democracy, and this should in turn weaken the current poles of illiberalism (e.g., the governments of Hungary and Poland). Another key factor will be the result of the French presidential election in 2022. Spain's illiberal far left and, more importantly, its currently booming far right, will undoubtedly be affected by these and other developments. Furthermore, delicate and very tense relations with Morocco will, as usual, impact inbound migration flows. In terms of economic recovery after the pandemic, Spain needs to grow rapidly and, in an upcoming macroeconomic scenario of inflation, immigration-sensitive industries may start doing better. If the current government remains in office until 2023 as scheduled, and if interventionistic economic policies are

substituted for a more growth-oriented approach, Spain may again start taking in more immigrants and assuming its role in the European refugee inflow. At the same time, the constraints on the job market and enterprises are likely to remain unchanged due to the ideological stubbornness of the left-wing parties in power, thus making life in Spain less easy for migrants than in other countries. This might strengthen Spain's already solid position as a temporary destination rather than the final one for many migrants.

## 11. Policy Recommendations

From the classical liberal and libertarian viewpoints shared by the Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty, the following recommendations are made to the Spanish government:

- A. Asylum and refuge policy recommendations
  - Undertake full reform of the refuge and asylum system; introduce more transparency, juridical security, and public information on international protection procedures.
  - Stop and redress the current bad practice of not acknowledging Venezuelan and other political refugees as such, granting them the so-called "humanitarian measure" instead.
  - Increase the share of non-Latin-American refugees admitted by Spain, in line with EU policies and proportionate to the country's capacity.
  - Avoid temporary camps and centres as much as possible by renting ordinary apartments on the market, thus contributing to the dynamization of the economy.
- B. General immigration policy
  - Set easier and clearer criteria for legal migration and encourage valuable professionals in any industry, irrespective of native competition.
  - Allow Spanish companies to hire anyone from any country for any job, irrespective of the industry; if necessary, introduce a deposit and insurance system for this.

- Work with Northern African countries in the implementation of alternative destinations through joint Special Economic Zones oriented to local developments and overflow diversion.
  - Reduce the overflow by making subsidies and other benefits accessible only to legal residents.
  - End human trafficking and sexual exploitation by fully decriminalizing prostitution and normalizing sex work.
- C. Voting, residence, and citizenship policy
- Extend full voting rights in all elections to all foreign legal residents after two years of continued residence. They are taxpayers and should have equal political rights.
  - Reform citizenship to make it much more accessible after only two years of legal residence (extending this from only Latin Americans to everyone).
  - Abolish dual citizenship laws and just admit that a person may have one or more concurrent citizenships, including the Spanish one, for various reasons.
- D. Social integration and human rights policies
- Promote cohesion by promoting returnable loans, rather than ordinary subsidies, when assisting those in need.
  - Avoid religious radicalization by promoting the more liberal, pluralistic versions of all religions; emphasize the European core values of liberal democracy, gender equality, separation of state & religion, and state secularism & neutrality.
  - Strengthen the fight against female genital mutilation, forced marriage, sending teenagers back to countries of origin against their will, etc.
- E. Specific territorial policies
- The Canary Islands and the Autonomous Cities of Ceuta and Melilla cannot and should not bear the burden of the inbound overflows alone. Any new overflow needs to be shared by continental Spain proportionally.
- Transfer full immigration policy powers to the two Autonomous Cities.
- F. Local government policies
- As a general policy, transfer further authority to the municipal level of administration (from the regional and central levels) on immigration policies.
- G. Labour market reform
- Stop and redress the current minimum wage increase, which renders many less qualified workers unemployable.
  - Establish a period of three years until a work permit may be obtained by unqualified (foreign or national) workers, during which they will not be subject to minimum wages, so that they may easily find a job, acquire experience, and integrate in the workforce.
  - Exempt foreign workers from a large part of their social security costs during the first three years as employees.
  - Flexibilize riders' platforms and other new economy / sharing economy options which are normally sought by lesser qualified immigrants and have been rendered almost impossible by recently introduced laws.
- H. Self-employment and entrepreneurship
- Exempt self-employed immigrants from their "cuota de autónomos" (the very expensive fee everyone has to pay just to operate as a freelancer), for at least their three first years in business.
  - Actively promote self-employment among immigrants as an alternative to ordinary work and retarget current additional education courses accordingly.
  - Lower the capital requirements for limited liability companies so that immigrant entrepreneurs can have easier access to registering a company.
  - Eliminate the current, expensive obligation for companies to pay for a "societary autonomous worker" (a fictitious worker fees mandatory for all new businesses even if they do not have direct

employees yet), so that immigrants may combine working as employees and starting their own companies.

I. Return policies

- Exempt foreign workers from the obligation to declare property in their countries of origin to the Spanish tax authority, in order to facilitate their saving, investment back home, and eventual return.
- Work with countries of origin to create ambitious return programs based on the implementation of special economic zones, including return programs based on the temporary experience and any further qualification (including language and professional skills) obtained in Spain.
- Return all direct taxes and part of the indirect taxes paid by immigrants over the last quarter of their stay in Spain so they may start a business in their country of origin, particularly in jointly managed Special Economic Zones.
- Likewise, return all amounts paid towards immigrants' future retirement in order to start such a business back home.

## Chapter 5

# Policy Recommendations

### Policy Recommendations for Management of the Integration of Migrants in Line with Liberal Principles Through Cross-Border Exchanges

One of the most serious humanitarian crises experienced on the European continent after the Second World War started from March 2011, as anti-government protests in Syria shortly evolved into civil war. Unfortunately, peace and order are not expected to be restored soon in Syria, where some hundred thousand people have died or been injured, almost the entire country has collapsed, including infrastructure, and problems have further arisen during the war that is still ongoing today. It creates political conflicts on the transnational, national, and local levels. The number of those having fled the country, which had a population of 22 million in early 2011, exceeds 6.7 million. Turkey, in which 58 thousand refugees were living in 2011, became the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the world by 2014. The crisis was perceived in Europe as “regional” or “Middle-Eastern” until 2014, but it started to become “European” from that year and turned into a serious crisis due to the refugees heading

to Europe. An overwhelming majority of the over 1 million Syrians who reached Europe, especially between 2014 and 2016, now live in Germany and Sweden. All developments indicate that a significant percentage of these Syrians can no longer return to their country. In this respect, the implementation of integration policies in line with liberal values in the countries hosting a significant Syrian population has become meaningful for both refugees and the countries that they live in. That almost all refugees co-exist with the local community, instead of in camps, at present gives the local cohesion processes a central role. The “European Cities Network on Migration” has a critical role in creating liberal policies for urban refugees.

Despite the need for immigrants in Europe, it is obvious that Syrian and other refugees pose a critical management issue for the EU. While all countries prefer to take regular immigrants that they may choose, it can be observed that they are rather reluctant when it comes to refugees. For example, EU countries received two million non-European refugees in 2020, yet the number of settled refugees has been less than twenty thousand. Refugees create more concern in terms of cohesion processes throughout the world. Political moves that place them into a security area mean that cohesion processes are put in a rather difficult position. However, it is also known that the refugee issue unsettles communities more than refugees themselves. It is also obvious that there is a risk for this unsettling feeling to rapidly turn into hate speech and racism as well as the implementation of illiberal policies.

The “European Cities Network on Migration” aims at strengthening migration management along liberal principles through a transnational network of local communities. Local community stakeholders cooperate to share experiences and practices regarding the integration of migrants; and they develop inclusive, sustainable, common policies based on European principles and carry these to the European level.

It is critically important that Europe creates rights- and individual-based cohesion policies in accordance with liberal values. Liberal cohesion policies are also important for both the protection of refugees and for the sake of development-based cohesion policies. It is essential to

ensuring the economic integration of refugees and their contribution to the community that they are a part of it as soon as possible, getting rid of their dependencies.

Rights- and individual-based cohesion policies being established towards refugees are indispensable for the development of Europe, as well as its peace and order. However, the differing developmental levels of countries, combined with their experience, capacity, and population density of refugees, directly impact process management, and there may also be differences in cohesion policies between countries and even provinces.

Representatives from local governments, entrepreneurs, academics, activists, and NGOs from Turkey, Greece, Spain, and Germany convene in a network to exchange knowledge and experiences and establish a mechanism to learn how to benefit from the opportunities of migration and support the liberal narrative for integration.

From the liberal viewpoints, the following recommendations are made to both governments and cities:

- Issuing the right to refuge to those in need of International Protection is a human rights issue. Misuse of this situation may require precautions. However, every application must be considered seriously, in a rights- and individual-based manner.
- Status issued to those incoming at a later phase is critically important for individual skills development. Considering the critically weak tendency of refugees to voluntarily return, it should be planned that citizenship will be issued to incomers based on reasonable time periods, also keeping their original citizenship, if possible.
- Facilitating processes should be established for the “skill mapping” of incomers so that their skills can be identified ideally.
- Intensive training programs must be developed for those incoming later to improve their education levels, when they fall below the average of their originating country, providing adults primarily with language and vocational courses.
- It is a core issue that the schooling of refugee children should be ensured throughout the compulsory education years, as well as at later phases. Education is a fundamental basis for people to develop further skills. Children’s education is critical to preventing “lost generations”, ensuring their personal development, and allowing their contribution to the receiving country. Education is also significant as an indispensable part of the cohesion process.
- Access to the labour market and its training opportunities needs to be facilitated. Obstacles must be removed for the employability of refugees, and effective rights to labour should be put into place. An attempt should be made to rapidly legalize those participating in the unregistered economy. For those working in informal sectors, labour exploitation must be prevented. Therefore, minimum pay provision must be followed up on carefully.
- Refugees must be supported with entrepreneurship, and there need to be opportunities available for them to operate economically (to open a bank account, to receive loans, or to freely travel, etc.). Self-employment and entrepreneurship should be promoted.
- Set easier and clearer criteria for legal migration and encourage valuable professionals in any industry.
- Local cohesion processes and the role of the municipalities throughout this process are critically important. Municipalities should be supported in terms of capacity development to take the required initiative. However, most urgently, municipalities should be provided with financial support through projects matched in parallel with the number of refugees.
- Initial checks and registries involving refugees should be followed by removing travel obstacles first within the country and later internationally.
- Return policies constitute a significant expectation within host communities. If there are people eager to voluntarily return, their return must be supported. However, this policy should not result from public pressure but has to fall in line with human rights and international law.
- Refugees’ tendency to feel a part of the receiving local community

must be strengthened by comforting them.

- Genuine international solidarity and load sharing must be practiced. Here, the UN “Global Compact on Refugees” is a significant document. However, the opportunities for its application need to be strengthened.
- Although the cultural affinity of refugees with their receiving community is significant at first, it falls short after a while. It should be borne in mind that the critical issue here is not cultural affinity, but numbers.
- It is critically essential that the activities conducted for refugees are carried out following a developmental approach.
- Immigrants, and especially refugees, are presented by some political movements or politicians and bureaucrats as a security object. In this process that is described as “securitization”, the resilience of society is a core issue. Nevertheless, rightful societal concerns may sometimes surface which must be taken seriously.
- It is not possible to find a standard model for social cohesion. It depends on the specific condition of each country and the size of the incoming population. The attempt to identify and resolve problems at the local level is also significant for strengthening democracy. As a general policy, it is essential to transfer further authority to the municipal level of administration (from the regional and central levels) on immigration policies.
- Liberal-based social cohesion policies will form the most significant basis of a dignified and peaceful co-existence.

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