**Action KA210-VET - Small-scale partnerships in vocational education and training**
**Project No.: 2023-2-EL01-KA210-VET-000174377**

# Synthesis Report

## within the project:
## Experience-exchange to Help VET Professionals Integrate Refugee Children into the Local Community
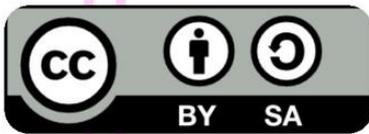
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# PROJECT RESULT TITLE: SYNTHESIS REPORT

within the project "Experience-exchange to Help VET Professionals Integrate Refugee Children into the Local Community"

**Language version: English**

# PROJECT CONSORTIUM

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# Synthesis Report from the National Research

**within the project:**

## Experience-exchange to Help VET Professionals Integrate Refugee Children into the Local Community

## Activity No. 2 - Analysis and report

Institutions:
Deinde sp. z o. o. (Poland)
Scientific Association DIGITAL IDEA (Greece)
Cekdev International Education & Development Academy (Turkey)

Date: 2024

# Introduction

The inclusion (integration) of migrants is one of the key policies of the European Union. According to Eurostat data for 2016 and 2017, in the area of social policy and labor market, almost 4 out of 10 foreigners in the EU were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. The unemployment rate among migrants born outside the EU was 6.4 percentage points higher than among the native population. The median equivalent income of EU citizens living in another EU Member State was 9.6% higher than that of citizens of that country, while the median income of non-EU citizens was 24.2% lower than that of citizens of that country. As many as one in five migrants born outside the EU were temporary workers, compared with one in eight native workers. In education, young people born outside the EU were twice as likely to leave education and training early as nationals. At the same time, the risk of poverty for children in the EU who had at least one foreign parent was 35.8%, almost twice as high as for children whose parents were both citizens (18.8%). In terms of housing conditions, only 3 in 10 foreigners owned a home, compared to 7 in 10 EU citizens. At the same time, 1 in 4 foreigners living in the EU are overburdened by housing costs, compared to 1 in 10 EU citizens. Moreover, across the EU, foreigners were more likely to live in overcrowded households than EU citizens (Eurostat, 2018). That is why actions (including vocational education and training institutions) for the full integration of migrants in every EU Member State, including the partner countries of the HELP-VET project, are so important.

Research conducted within the project allowed the staff of partner organizations to increase their awareness of the subject matter of the project, Research phase allowed the exchange of best practices and experiences of all institutions and their staff in the context of the project activities and results planned, especially connected with research methods and approaches, digital skills (online surveys) and different aspects of international cooperation between all entities.

The research findings helped to paint the broader picture of the migrant/refugee situation in Greece, Poland and Turkey. The findings are useful to diagnose the real-life current needs, expectations and problems VET professionals face in terms of refugee/migrant integration (and at the same time also to show the situation from the migrants'/refugees' perspective as well), and to address them by means of collecting some hints and pieces of advice coming from their practical experience which will be used later on to create contents for the e-book.

This report specifically aims to raise the Partner's staff and other users' awareness and knowledge about the migrant/refugee situation in the partner's regions and countries.

The report also identifies the actual needs, possibilities, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned.

What is more, thanks to the research, users will learn about the expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned.

The research also specifies the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

Finally, the aim of the research is to facilitate the availability of tools, materials and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children among the staff and institutions of the VET sector.

# Research background

## Poland

Desk research in Poland was conducted in May and June 2024 by Deinde's staff. We based our research on a several documents and data, including public reports, official strategies, university papers, reports and publications available in the internet, available external research, public statistical data, etc.

The interviews took place on September 30, 2024 in Lublin (Poland) with two representatives of Polish Red Cross who works on their daily basis with migrants and their children. During the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, 5 questions were asked to VET staff regarding several topics.

An anonymous online survey was conducted using Google forms from October 10 to October 22, 2024. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. A total of 13 people representing VET sector participated in the research.

## Turkiye

Desk research in Turkey was conducted in May and June 2024 by Cekdev's staff. We based our research on a several documents and data, including public reports, official strategies, university papers, reports and publications available in the internet, available external research, public statistical data, etc.

The interviews took place on October 18, 2024 in Antalya (Turkey) with two representatives of Kepez Ozel Egitim Meslek Lisesi who works on their daily basis with migrants and their children. During the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, 5 questions were asked to VET staff regarding several topics.

An anonymous online survey was conducted using Google forms from October 13 to October 25, 2024. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. A total of 12 people representing VET sector participated in the research.

## Greece

Digital Idea's staff conducted desk research in Greece in September and October 2024. We based our research on several documents and data, including public reports, official strategies, university papers, reports and publications available on the Internet, available external research, public statistical data, etc.

The interviews took place on October 18, 2024, in Larissa (Greece) with two representatives who work daily with migrants and their children. During the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, VET staff were asked five questions regarding several topics.

An anonymous online survey was conducted using Google Forms from October 10 to October 29, 2024. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. A total of 11 people representing the VET sector participated in the research.

# Methodology

Desk research were conducted to gather information from existing academic literature, policy documents, reports and other sources related to the migrant/refugee situation in Greece, Poland and Turkey This included a review of stats data, national policies and strategies, different kinds of research, best practices and findings from other programs and projects

Secondary data was collected from reputable sources, including government reports, academic journals, and international organizations' publications. This data provided insights into the actual needs, possibilities, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as well as the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children. The research also provided insight into the expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned.

Case studies of successful programs and initiatives targeting social, educational and vocational inclusion of migrants/refuges provided in-depth insights into the design, implementation, and outcomes of these programs.

A comparative analysis was conducted to compare the migrant/refuges as well as teachers and VET staff situation in Greece, Poland and Turkey. This involved reviewing relevant literature and reports from these countries to identify similarities and differences

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. All sources were properly cited, and the research was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines and standards.

# Chapter 1 – National Research in Poland

# Part I – Desk research

## The migrant/refugee situation in the Partner's region / country.

In 2023, Poland had 37,637,000 inhabitants, including 19,454,000 women. The median age was 42.8 years. 58.4% of the population was of working age (18 - 60/65), and 23.3% of the population was of post-working age (60/65 and over). The fertility rate was 1.158. In 2023, there were 17,809,000 Poles professionally active, including 8,179,000 women. The number of unemployed people amounted to 502 thousand people, and economically inactive to 12,550 thousand people, including 7,620 thousand women ( Central Statistical Office, 2024).

In 2022, the age dependency ratio in Poland was 52.9% (in the EU 56.5%). The economic activity rate (78.9%) was slightly lower than the EU average (79.4%). The employment rate (71.3%) was slightly higher than the EU average (69.8%). The unemployment rate in Poland (2.9%) was much lower than the EU average (6.2%). The at-risk-of-poverty rate (13.7%) was below the EU average (16.5%) (Central Statistical Office, 2023).

After 1989, Poland was not a country experiencing significant migration, so the country did not institutionally attach much importance to the issue of migrants' integration. At national level, there were no specific policies in the area of migrant inclusion because there was no need for it. A breakthrough moment in terms of migration was 2004, i.e. the moment of Poland's accession to the European Union and the opening of the EU labor market to Poles. During the decade, approximately 3 million Poles left (permanently or temporarily) to work in other EU countries. Labor migrations after 2004 led to the government formulating labor market strategies aimed at encouraging Poles to return from abroad and take up work in Poland. It is difficult to clearly assess the effectiveness of these policies, because according to estimates of the Ministry of Development, in 2019, approximately 2.6 million Poles worked in European Union countries (Kubas, 2021).

The Polish state also had to react to the phenomenon of immigration to our country. In the years 2008-2015, new legal solutions were adopted defining the administrative procedure for the phenomenon of migration. New procedures and standards for the return of foreigners illegally staying in Poland were established. The conditions of entry and stay of immigrants for the purpose of employment were also specified, and the procedures for obtaining residence, work and study permits were simplified. The rules for legalizing stay in Poland and obtaining Polish citizenship have also been simplified (Łodziński S.).

Due to the intensive development of the Polish economy and the relatively low unemployment rate compared to the EU, over the last few years Poland has changed its image from a country of emigrants to a country receiving migrants, including economic migrants. Research conducted over the last decade shows that since 2014, the structure of immigrants coming to Poland has been dominated by Ukrainian citizens, most often young, relatively well-educated people, looking for fixed-term or seasonal work, often working in positions that do not require high qualifications (Bartłomiejski R.) .

According to the study "Immigrants in Poland in the context of the simplified procedure for employing foreigners", the employment rate of immigrants in Poland systematically increased over the years 2015-2018. According to register data, in 2015 in Poland, on average, approximately 133,000 migrants per month worked under the simplified procedure. In 2017, the monthly average amounted to approximately 415,000, and in the first half of 2018 it reached over 423,000 people. Thus, the average number of migrants working in Poland has more than tripled in three years. Ukrainian citizens clearly dominated among immigrants employed in Poland, who in 2018 constituted over 91% of all economic

migrants. The second most important migrant population were Belarusians (4.2%), and the third most important were Moldovans (2.4%) (Górny A., 2018).

According to NBP estimates, in 2014-2018 immigrants were an increasingly important factor increasing the production potential of the Polish economy. The percentage of economic immigrants was between 4 and 5.5% of the labor force. At the same time, migrants contributed to the increase in Polish GDP by approximately 0.5 percentage points. annually. The number of migrants legally employed in Poland and paying social security contributions has increased over the years, from approx. 30 thousand in 2014 up to 500 thousand in 2019. The upward trend in 2020 was stopped by the Covid-19 pandemic and the introduced lockdowns (both restrictions on crossing state borders and the closure of various industries and economic sectors). The vast majority of immigrants worked in Polish enterprises as unskilled workers (70%). Skilled workers constituted 16% of employed immigrants, junior office staff - about 2%, and specialists with higher education - about 12% of employed immigrants (National Bank of Poland, Warsaw).

In 2019, foreigners submitted 207,343 applications for residence permits or protection in Poland. The largest number of applications concerned temporary residence permits (181,788 people, i.e. 87% of applications), approximately 8.7% for permanent residence (18,211 people), 2.8% of applications for international protection (4,171 people), and 1,5% of applications concerned a long-term EU resident permit (3,173 people). In addition to economic reasons, migrants come to Poland seeking political protection and applying for refugee status. In the years 2009-2019, their number ranged from 800 to 1,281 people per year. Citizens of Russia, Syria, Ukraine, Belarus and Iraq dominated (Kacperska E., 2019).

An important moment in the process of immigration to our country was February 2022 and the outbreak of the war in Ukraine. Since then, over 8 million Ukrainians have entered Poland. Currently, it is estimated (the data are fluid because migration of Ukrainians continues in both directions) that there are between 1.5 and 2.5 million Ukrainians living in Poland, who therefore constitute the largest national group of immigrants. Women and children dominate among migrants from Ukraine in Poland. The inflow of such a large number of immigrants in a short time has posed many challenges to Poland in terms of child care, the education system, health care, access to public services, the labor market and employment, housing and the social integration of migrants (Pawlak, 2018).

NBP research from 2023 shows that Ukrainian citizens residing in Poland are mostly women - about 68% of all respondents. The predominance of women is noticeable both among war refugees (78%) and pre-war migrants (55%). The share of men among refugees increased slightly from 19% to 22% compared to the previous study. In terms of age, half of the respondents, both pre-war migrants and war refugees, were young people, aged 27-44, i.e. at the age of starting families and being most professionally active. What differentiates both groups of Ukrainian citizens is a clearly higher share of older people among refugees (9% are people aged 60+), i.e. people who do not normally make migration decisions (NBP, 2023).

In terms of education, among Ukrainian migrants staying in Poland in 2023, people with higher education dominated (42% among pre-war migrants and 48% among refugees). However, 43% of refugees and 38% of pre-war migrants had secondary education. Every fifth person had primary or vocational education in both subgroups of respondents. People from Ukraine residing in Poland can therefore be considered well-educated. This is valuable information in the context of professional activation of refugees (NBP, 2023).

**Graphic: Education of pre-war migrants and war refugees from Ukraine in Poland.**

## Figure 6. Educational structure of pre-war migrants and refugees from Ukraine in Poland.
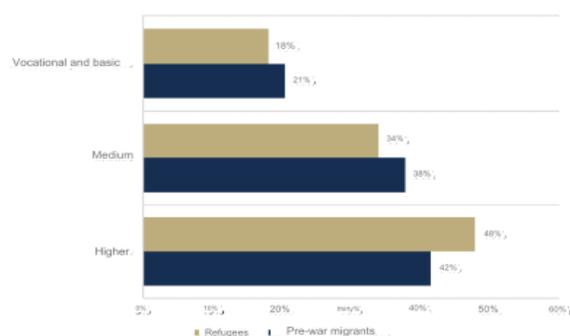


*Source: Living and economic situation of migrants in Ukraine in Poland in 2023: Survey report, NBP, Warsaw 2023, p. 10.*

In 2023, 6.9% of the total number of insured people in Poland had citizenship other than Polish. At the end of September 2023, there were 1,112 thousand registered foreigners in ZUS (Social Insurance Fund), which indicates an increase of 6.4% compared to the end of September 2022. Of this number, 59.4% were employees, 36.6% performed work on the basis of a mandate contract or an agency contract, and the rest were covered by other forms of employment. Citizens of Ukraine have been the largest group of foreigners in Poland for several years. In 2022, they constituted 753 thousand people, i.e. 67.7% of all foreigners registered with the Social Insurance Institution and 4.7% of all those insured due to working in Poland. Another group of foreigners whose number is growing are citizens of Belarus. At the end of September this year over 126,000 people from Belarus were registered in ZUS, i.e. 28.2% more than a year earlier (ZUS, 2023).

**Graphic: Number of foreigners registered in Polish Social Insurance Fund (in thousands)**
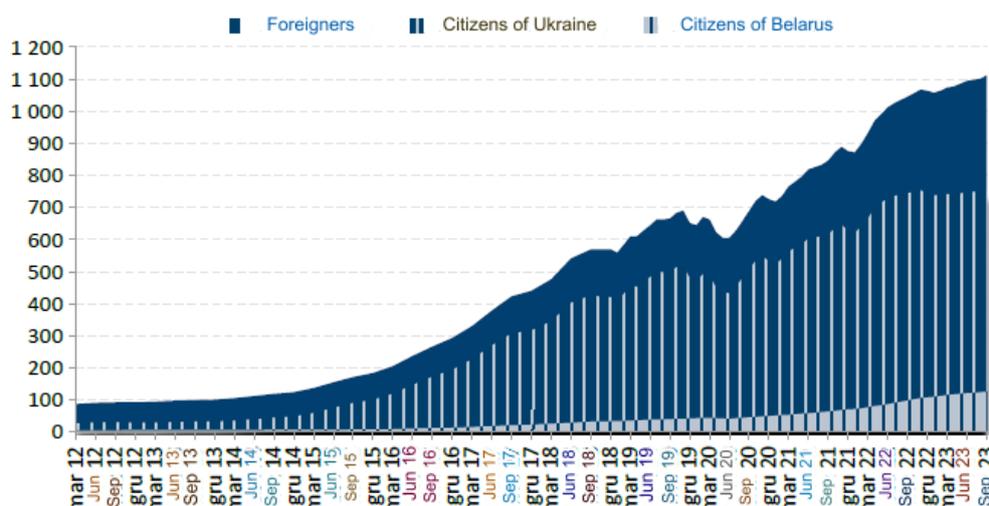


*Source: Summary of the financial situation of the Social Insurance Fund in the 3 quarters of 2023, ZUS, Warsaw 2023, p. 2.*

Work Force Central Europe research (2023) shows that Ukrainian migrants currently staying in Poland do not want to leave Poland, neither to the West nor to Ukraine. The report on the study "Temporary workers from Ukraine" shows that the majority of refugees from Ukraine staying in Poland

who wanted to go to the West have already done so. And those who stayed in Poland are waiting for the development of the situation in their homeland, trying to somehow organize their lives in our country. According to a survey by the OTTO group, which in November 2023 covered over 500 Ukrainians employed in Poland (more than half were women), the willingness to leave Poland for another country has clearly decreased among migrants from Ukraine. The majority, 54 percent. respondents - i.e. by 11 points more than a year earlier - admitted that in the coming months they would wait in Poland for the development of the situation in Ukraine. The share of Ukrainians who do not intend to leave Poland for any country other than Ukraine has also increased to 59 percent. This is a significant change compared to 2022, when the percentage of Ukrainians determined to wait out the war in Poland was 44%. At that time, there was also a larger group of people (over one-third) who were uncertain about their future plans. The percentage of people planning further emigration also decreased from 22 percent to 16 percent. The most preferred destinations were Germany (18 percent), Canada or the USA (15 percent), and the Netherlands (8 percent), where wages are higher than in Poland. The surveyed Ukrainians who stayed in Poland are slightly less satisfied with working in Poland in 2023 than last year. The share of satisfied people dropped to 75% and it is by 4 percentage points lower than a year earlier and also the lowest since 2020. Despite this, the majority of surveyed temporary workers (59%) are not interested in relocating to another Polish city, even if they receive a better job offer. Only one in five people would be ready to move. The rest do not want to start anew in a different place. Another limitation is the need to change the kindergarten or school their children attend (Europe C. , 2024).

Many migrants from Ukraine in Poland are in the so-called "suspension". While waiting for the development of the war situation in their country, they do not make any significant changes to their situation in Poland, either in terms of their place of residence or work. In 2023, up to 24 percent (from 32% in 2022) the percentage of Ukrainians determined to return to Ukraine after the end of the war decreased. Almost the same percentage of respondents do not intend to return there. On the other hand, the percentage of those uncertain about returning to their homeland increased to 35 percent, a rise of 9 percentage points. The growing readiness to stay in Poland for a longer period of time can be seen in the increase (up to 29%) in the share of employees who intend to find an independent apartment in Poland (Europe O. W., 9th edition of the report, 2024).

The war in Ukraine continues to drag on, which means that refugees from Ukraine are increasingly settling in Poland. Ukrainian children attend Polish schools and kindergartens, and their parents are trying to better adapt to the Polish labor market. An increasing percentage of Ukrainians speak communicative Polish (48% in 2023). This means that Ukrainian citizens used their time in Poland to learn Polish, which makes them feel even more comfortable in Poland (Błaszczak, 2024). The language barrier is one of the reasons why Ukrainians stay in Poland. According to the OTTO Work Force Central Europe study, only every fourth Ukrainian surveyed declares knowledge of English, and 30 percent does not know any foreign language. Geographical proximity is also important for refugees from Ukraine to in Poland, as it gives them the opportunity to visit family who have remained in Ukraine (Europe O. W., 9th edition of the report).

The longer the war in Ukraine lasts, the more Poles change their attitude towards Ukrainians, unfortunately for the worse. The study "Social perception of refugees from Ukraine, migrants and actions undertaken by the Polish and Ukrainian state" shows that while the positive attitude of Poles towards Ukrainians in terms of further military assistance has practically not changed since the beginning of the war, in the case of "attitude towards refugees from Ukraine", as many as 68 percent respondents who changed their opinion about migrants in the last 6 months declared that their attitude had worsened (University of Warsaw and the University of Economics and Humanities, 2024).

We obtain similar results from a study commissioned by Personnel Service. Immediately after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, Poles started to help refugees from the country attacked by Russia. Polish society welcomed millions of neighbors into their homes, and a lot of collections were organized for people who stayed in Ukraine. However, in 2023, the attitude of Poles towards Ukrainians has changed for the worse. The survey indicates that 26 percent of the Poles surveyed have developed a more negative attitude towards Ukrainian refugees. Most often, these were respondents aged 25 to 34 (33 percent of responses) and aged 18-24 and 35-44 (30 percent of responses each) (Personnel Service, 2024).

Respondents point out, first of all, the high requirements for Polish assistance (67 percent of responses). The demanding attitude of Ukrainians came second (55%). Next, there were answers (36 percent of responses) regarding the prolonged social assistance for Ukrainian citizens and the too large number of Ukrainians in Poland. 14 percent respondents were afraid that by helping Ukraine we would be exposed to an armed conflict with Russia. A positive note in the study is the fact that 56 percent of surveyed Poles did not change their attitude towards Ukrainians, and 7 percent it even has a better attitude compared to 2022 (Personnel Service, 2024).

It is also worth noting that Ukrainian citizens are still Poles' favorite collaborators when it comes to foreigners. As many as 52 percent of Poles want to work with colleagues from the East. Additionally, the older the respondent, the greater their willingness to work with Ukrainians. Half of the surveyed Poles aged 35-44 and 45-54 and 64 percent of respondents aged 55+ are willing to work with Ukrainians (money.pl, 2023).

Due to the outbreak of the armed conflict in Ukraine, from February 24 to June 30, 2022 4.4 million people entered Poland from Ukraine, of which 1.2 million were subject to the so-called temporary protection. Among the 1,119,760 citizens of Ukraine covered by such protection, every second registered person is a child. Due to such a massive influx of foreigners, public administration in Poland faced a major challenge related to organizing their stay on Polish territory, including in the field of education (NIK, 2023).

The Polish school system in 2022 faced a huge challenge - ensuring the quickest and best possible admission and inclusion of a significant number of children from Ukraine into the Polish education system. The Polish government has adopted a number of legal regulations aimed at facilitating the admission of children and youth from Ukraine to Polish schools. Children and adolescents from Ukraine aged 7 to 18 (during compulsory schooling or compulsory education) are admitted to Polish public schools on the same conditions as Polish children. According to the report prepared by the Center for Civic Education, which compares data from the Ministry of National Education and Science on "students from Ukraine in the Polish education system" with data from the Central Statistical Office and the number of applications for a PESEL number among people coming to Poland from Ukraine, in the past school year (2021/2022) at least 350,000 school-age children came to Poland. Almost 40% of them started studying in Polish schools, which meant that at the end of the school year, young Ukrainians with refugee experience constituted about 4% of all students in Poland, which translates into 139,000. people. Since September 2022, approximately 144,000 Ukrainian students have started (or continue) education (J. Łosiak-Pilch, 2023).

A significant increase in the number of foreigners in Poland in 2022-2023 translated into an increase in the number of foreign pupils attending Polish schools. In the 2020/2021 school year (as of September 30, 2020), a total of 73,201 foreigners attended public and private schools in Poland, in the 2021/2022 school year - 117,498 foreigners, and in the 2022/2023 school year - 287,190 foreign

students. These data indicate that within two school years, the number of foreign students studying in Polish schools increased almost fourfold (by 292.3%) ( NIK, 2023).

**Graphic: Number of foreign children attending Polish schools**



Source: own study by the Supreme Audit Office based on data from the Educational Information System obtained from Ministry of Education and Science.

*Source: Education of foreigners' children in Polish schools. Information on audit results, NIK, 2023, pp. 5-6.*

In the 2021/2022 school year, most foreign children attended secondary schools (60.5%). 38.8% and 0.7% of foreigners attended primary and artistic schools. In the 2022/2023 school year, these proportions were reversed. Most foreigners attended primary schools - 61.4%, and secondary schools and art schools - 37.8% and 0.8% (NIK, 2023).

The largest group among foreign students were citizens of Ukraine, even before the outbreak of the war in this country:
   in the 2020/2021 school year – 74.8%,
   in the 2021/2022 school year – 73.5%,
   in the 2022/2023 school year – 88.3%.
The next, but much smaller groups in particular years were students from: Belarus (from 5% to 8%), Russia (from 1% to 3%), Vietnam (from 0.4% to 2%) and Bulgaria (from 0.3% to 1%) ( NIK, 2024).

There is at least one refugee student in over 62,000 "ordinary" classes in Polish schools. This means that in every fourth class in Poland, students study with a person or people with refugee experience (Chrostowska, 2022).

In the school years 2020/2021 - 2021/2022, the share of foreigners studying in preparatory classes in Polish schools in relation to all foreigners attending Polish schools was relatively small (0.7% in the school year 2020/2021 and 1.1% in 2021/2022). A significant increase in foreigners in these departments occurred in the 2022/2023 school year (NIK, 2023).

As of June 24, 2022, the SIO16 database included 131,584 students from Ukraine who came to Poland after Russia's aggression against Ukraine (i.e. after February 24, 2022) and started studying in

Polish schools. As of September 30, 2022, the number of these students was 147,537 (an increase of 12.1% compared to June 24, 2022), and as of March 31, 2023, it was - 134,442 students (a decrease of 8. 9% compared to September 30, 2022) (NIK, 2023).

## The actual needs, possibilties, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned.

Integration does not take place at the interstate level, but in specific places such as the workplace, school, neighborhood, street, restaurant or public administration office. The integration process covers areas beyond individual assistance, such as education, labor market, clinic, tax office and community center. In 2015, most migrants staying in Poland needed the support of Poles to deal with official matters; schools were surprised by the appearance of students who did not speak Polish and had different cultural backgrounds. Research by the Center for Migration Research at the University of Warsaw from a few years ago indicated that only 3% of migrants used health care, even though 80% of them had insurance. A decade ago, Poland did not have a systemic model for integrating migrants (M. Siciarek, Pomeranian experiences of migrant integration, Pomorski thinkletter, 2022).

Integration policy in local communities can function at one of three levels. The first is recognition: we notice immigrants, we accept their presence as natural and beneficial, and we want them to stay in our city. The second level is equal opportunities: creating an institutional system and labor market that is inclusive and adapted to the needs of immigrants, taking into account their linguistic, educational or professional limitations; we focus on equalizing opportunities and counteracting discrimination. The third level is the result of the previous two: immigrants' participation, their political activity, representation, the ability to express their voice and influence on local affairs (M. Siciarek, Integration (not assimilation!) of immigrants in Pomerania - practice and challenges, Open Eyes Magazine , 2020).

As various reports indicate, including the one prepared for the Batory Foundation "The latest migration from Ukraine to Poland: an (un)permanent phenomenon?", before 2020, circular migration dominated in Poland. This meant that foreigners, mainly Ukrainians, came to Poland for a few months a year for work purposes. In such conditions, it was difficult to talk about the integration of migrants, because their lives took place in two parallel realities and were strictly regulated by legal procedures regarding employment and residence, on which migrants had little influence. Before 2020, Poland did not create conditions for stable and long-term settlement of immigrants in cities and local communities (Siciarek, Integration (not assimilation!) of immigrants in Pomerania - practice and challenges, Open Eyes Magazine, 2020).

An indicator that can be used to discuss the needs of forced migrants from Ukraine in Poland may be the responses of OBM/CESS UW survey participants to the question about the areas in which they need help.

**Graphic: Needs of forced migrants from Ukraine in Poland, 2022 and 2023**
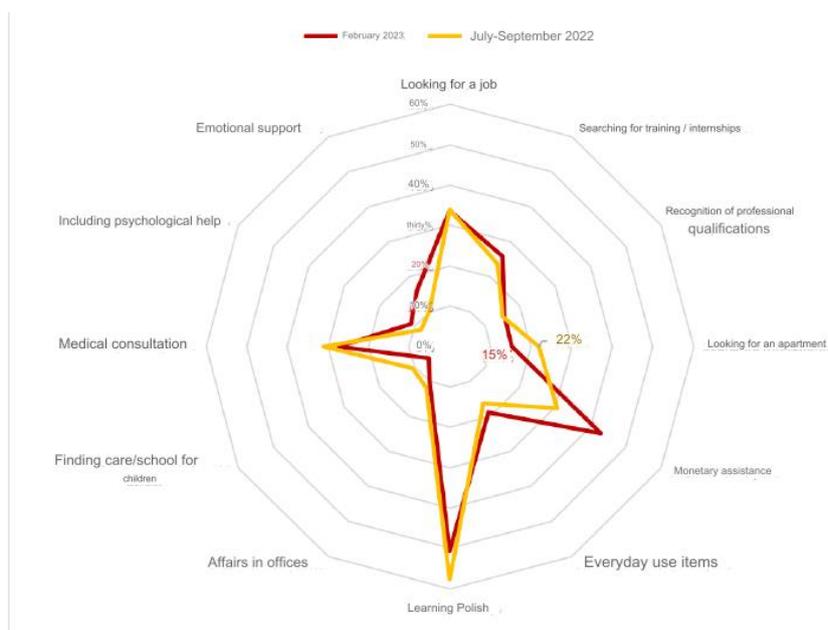


*Source: Agata Górny, The needs of people experiencing forced migration from Ukraine, CMR Spotlight, No. 12 (57), p. 5, 2023.*

The vast majority of respondents in 2022 indicated the need for help in learning Polish (58%), and this need has not lost much importance in 2023 (51%). This is undoubtedly due to the fact that while people from Ukraine relatively quickly acquire the skills to understand the Polish language, acquiring the ability to speak and write in Polish requires more time. The next area most frequently indicated by migrants was financial assistance, which was needed by as many as 43% of respondents in 2023. Compared to 2022, the percentage of such people increased by as much as 12 percentage points. We see a similar trend in the case of assistance with migrants' access to everyday items. In 2023, there was an increase to 19% from 16% recorded in 2022. These unfavorable changes in the field of basic needs result from the situation that after a period of very high involvement of private individuals and institutions in helping forced migrants with basic needs (which took place in the first half of 2022), the flow of this aid has weakened over time (Górny, The needs of people experiencing forced migration from Ukraine, CMR Spotlight, No. 12 (57), , 2023).

It is worth paying attention to the health-related needs reported by forced migrants from Ukraine. Almost one third of respondents, both in 2022 and at the beginning of 2023, needed help with a medical consultation. Symptomatically, within a year of the outbreak of the war, the share of people needing psychological help (8% → 11%) and emotional support (10% → 16%) increased. The study results confirm that, in addition to the needs of migrants related to everyday functioning, refugees still need help in the field of physical and mental health. Moreover, these needs do not seem to be decreasing given the uncertainty of the situation in Ukraine (Górny, The needs of people experiencing forced migration from Ukraine, CMR Spotlight, No. 12 (57), , 2023).

The key issue related to the needs of forced migrants from Ukraine is their situation on the Polish labor market. It is worth noting that in this aspect, the needs of Ukrainians have not changed significantly between 2022 and 2023 in the study. In both periods, approximately one third of respondents needed support in looking for a job, and one fourth of respondents needed support in looking for training and internships. About one in six people needed help with having their qualifications recognized. At the same time, according to the OBM/CESS UW survey, in 2023, about 70% of forced migrants from Ukraine were working. This positive picture becomes more complicated when we take into account that

more than a quarter of employees worked remotely in Ukraine, mainly in highly qualified positions, such as specialists and managers. This shows significant polarization in the group of Ukrainian migrants in Poland. Additionally, 17-27% of people working in Poland were very dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities for advancement and personal development and with the mismatch between the tasks performed and their qualifications (Górny, The needs of people experiencing forced migration from Ukraine, CMR Spotlight, No. 12 (57), , 2023).

Among forced migrants who declared the lack of certain qualifications in their current job, the most frequently mentioned were the lack of knowledge of Polish and other languages, computer skills, communication and presentation, teamwork and managerial skills. This set of desired competencies reveals the barriers that Ukrainian forced migrants face when trying to obtain higher positions and positions requiring higher qualifications in Poland (Górny, The needs of people experiencing forced migration from Ukraine, CMR Spotlight, No. 12 (57),, 2023).

From the point of view of the long-term stay of immigrants from Ukraine in Poland, the participation of their children in the Polish educational system is important. Research has shown that 58% of people staying in Poland with children under 18 years of age send them to Polish schools or kindergartens. Among respondents living with their own children, this percentage is approximately 85%. Knowledge of the Polish language, cultural proximity and short geographical distance are important factors related to the settlement of Ukrainians in Poland. The research results show that only a small percentage of Ukrainian citizens coming to Poland do not know the Polish language. Only 13% of refugees and only 2% of pre-war migrants declared they did not know Polish, and most of them knew Polish well or a little. For refugees, this is a significant change compared to the initial period of their stay in Poland (NBP, Living and economic situation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland in 2023: Report from a survey, , 2023).

**Graphic: Knowledge of the Polish language among immigrants from Ukraine in 2022-2023.**
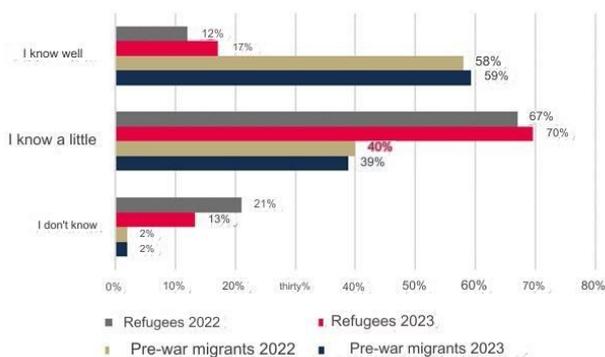


*Source: Living and economic situation of migrants in Ukraine in Poland in 2023: Survey report, NBP, Warsaw 2023, p. 12.*

In a study conducted in May 2022 by the National Bank of Poland, 46% of refugees declared they had no knowledge of the Polish language, and only 5% claimed they knew it well. It seems that the change is due to the fact that refugees have been staying in Poland for almost 1.5 years, learning the language in everyday life and at work. In addition to knowledge of the Polish language, participation in the Polish education system is also important. The results of the study indicate that respondents from Ukraine who came to Poland most often do not continue their education, which suggests that their main purpose for coming is work or forced labor in the case of refugees. People staying in Poland for a short time have a much poorer knowledge of the Polish language, which makes it difficult for them to enter the Polish labor market. Another conclusion from the research is that the Polish language learning rate

among refugees is relatively high - 27% - which may indicate their plans for a long-term stay in Poland. However, the relatively low percentage (6%) of pre-war migrants learning Polish is due to the fact that most of them already know Polish well or sufficiently. At the same time, nearly 10% of immigrants from Ukraine pursue higher education in Poland (NBP, Living and economic situation of migrants in Ukraine in Poland in 2023: Report from a survey, , 2023).

**Graphic: Education of Ukrainian citizens in Poland.**



Figure 12. Education of Ukrainian citizens in Poland.

*Source: Living and economic situation of migrants in Ukraine in Poland in 2023: Survey report, NBP, Warsaw 2023, p. 13.*

Knowledge of the Polish language among migrants is positively correlated with employment. On the one hand, people who know at least a little Polish cope much better with their own job search and are perceived as better prepared and more communicative at work. On the other hand, employment, to some extent, forces them to learn Polish at least at a basic level over time. While the difference in the employment rate in the case of economic immigrants staying in Poland before the war between people who did not know Polish (83%) and those declaring that they knew it very well (94%) was 11 percentage points. in the case of refugees, this difference was 32 percentage points. (employment rates 82% and 50% respectively). The study confirms that knowledge of the Polish language is an important factor determining the activity of refugees on the Polish labor market (NBP, Living and economic situation of Ukrainian migrants in Poland in 2023: Report from a survey, , 2023).

**Graphic: Professional activity of immigrants from Ukraine in 2023**

## Figure 13. Professional activity of immigrants from Ukraine in 2023



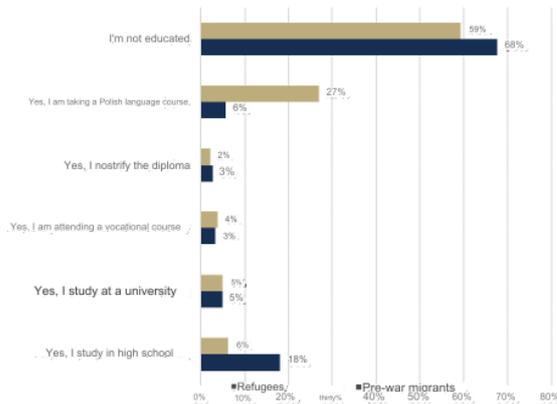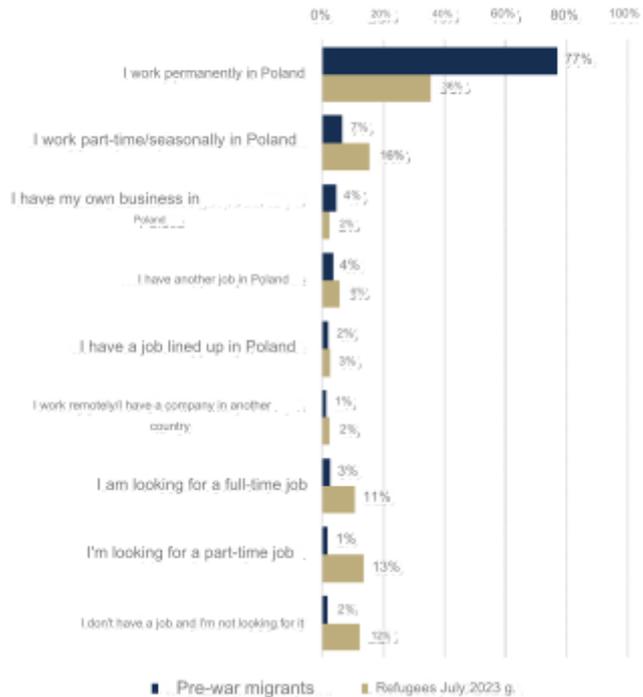*Source: Living and economic situation of migrants in Ukraine in Poland in 2023: Survey report, NBP, Warsaw 2023, p. 14.*

In 2023, 65 percent of war refugees from Ukraine staying in Poland worked. Research conducted by the Polish Economic Institute shows that Ukrainian refugees face various challenges on the Polish labor market and sometimes experience unequal treatment. In several surveyed industries that do not require specialized qualifications, employers are less likely to respond to CVs sent by Ukrainian women compared to those sent by Polish women. The difference is almost 30 percent and constitutes a signal of potential discrimination at the initial stage of recruitment. In the case of positions requiring higher qualifications, this difference was not statistically significant (Polish Economic Institute, 2024).

NBP research also shows that the number of children in a family of migrants from Ukraine is usually negatively correlated with professional activity in the case of women, and most often positively correlated in the case of men. Thus, in the case of migrant women, the presence of a second and subsequent children in Poland significantly reduces the percentage of permanently employed migrants. Moreover, it influences the more frequent work of migrants in a less stable form, higher unemployment and a higher rate of professional inactivity. In the case of men, the highest rate of permanent employment occurs in the case of refugees who have from one to two children in Poland. Fathers of families with three or more children residing in Poland are still highly active on the labor market, but they are clearly more likely to be unemployed and are more likely to be professionally inactive (NBP, 2023).

## The expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned.

VET staff working with migrants in Poland encounter a number of difficulties, ranging from language and cultural barriers, through organizational issues in VET institutions, to the lack of appropriate tools and educational materials.

Problems of an organizational nature in VET institutions result largely from history, i.e. from the fact that before 2022 Poland was not a destination country for migrants and the Polish education system never needed to adapt to working with children from migrant backgrounds, and the VET system to working with the target group of migrants.

The influx of war refugees from Ukraine after February 2022 has made the Polish education and vocational training system face a huge challenge of providing care and education to hundreds of thousands of adult migrants and their children.

When it comes to the integration of immigrants, both the management and professional staff of a given VET/educational institution think of "actions adapted to the special needs and expectations of migrants."

The first step of an inclusive approach in VET institutions should be to introduce migrants to the existing life of the institution. Opening access for migrants to the permanent services, programs and events of a given educational institution. Very often, this means a comprehensive transformation of the methods of operation of a given institution and its staff. It is necessary to develop new procedures and tools that will enable the inclusion of migrants, as the current offer of VET institutions, which already exists, is inaccessible to migrants due to language and cultural barriers or lack of information (Siciarek, Pomeranian experiences of migrant integration, Pomorski thinkletter, No. 2(9), 2022).

An important factor integrating migrants into the activities of educational / VET institutions may be meetings of migrants with Poles in various areas of life of the local community (commune, city), and only then special activities, which should ultimately be implemented by VET staff together with migrants and based on their needs and preferences." (M. Siciarek, Pomeranian experiences of migrant integration, Pomorski thinkletter, 2022)

It should be emphasized that non-governmental institutions or VET cannot replace the state and the system of public services in the process of including migrants. They can only perform a certain range of activities in the field of vocational training, education, cultural inclusion and language support. Independently from VET institutions, their tasks for the inclusion of migrants must be carried out by local governments, the government, non-governmental organizations, etc. For the systemic integration of migrants in Poland, cooperation between a number of institutions at various levels and in various areas is necessary, so that effective assistance to migrants is provided through a system of services available to all residents (M. Siciarek, Pomeranian experiences of migrant integration, Pomorski thinkletter, 2022).

Migrants should not have to search for "Ukrainian-friendly schools" on Internet forums. They should know that they can enroll their child in the nearest school and that everything will be fine with the child.

Similarly, migrants must know where to go to a career counselor in a given commune/city, where and how they can look for job offers or medical help. The more the support offered to migrants is based on institutions and includes permanent programs and services, the greater the certainty that migrants will be able to be provided with the services they need and actually integrate them in their new environment (M. Siciarek, Pomeranian experiences of migrant integration, Pomorski thinkletter, 2022).

The key problem for VET staff in working with migrants still seems to be the language barrier. Most of the Polish VET staff do not know Ukrainian or Russian (which is spoken by migrants from Ukraine). VET institutions, on the other hand, do not have guides, application documents, and, most importantly, training and educational materials in Ukrainian for use during courses and training with migrants in the classroom.

The language barrier similarly occurs on the side of migrants who want to enroll in the VET system in Poland. People who came to Poland after February 24, 2022, lack information prepared in Ukrainian or Russian. Migrants who are interested in education at vocational schools do not know how to take part in the recruitment process. Students' parents do not realize that their children could benefit from school lunches, summer camps or psychological help. They also have difficulty obtaining information about available places in nurseries and kindergartens. A problem for parents of children is even the lack of understanding of the content and information posted by teachers in electronic journals ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

Based on the "Polish school of helping" study, we can note that people working with migrants primarily point to the need for systemic solutions. People working with migrants in the education/VET system, especially refugees, need substantive and psychological support. This is especially important in their work with people who have fled the war in Ukraine. Respondents also indicated the need to support permanent staff through volunteer work. This, in turn, requires a coherent and coordinated system of work and training for volunteers in the structures of educational organizations, non-governmental organizations, business and public administration (Konsorcjum Migracyjne, 2023).

VET staff especially need support in the form of psychological help and help to prevent burnout, which should be offered to every person working directly with refugees (Konsorcjum Migracyjne, 2023).

Cultural differences are also an important barrier for VET staff and migrants themselves. Although in the case of Ukrainians and Poles they are not as problematic as in the case of migrants coming to Poland from other cultural circles ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The obstacles to wider employment of people from Ukraine include, among others: high costs and waiting time for the nostrification of diplomas certifying qualifications. Even though many migrants are very well-educated people (e.g. people working in Ukraine as teachers, academics, trainers), they cannot take up employment in their learned profession in our country due to the lack of confirmation of qualifications or professional qualifications ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

## The current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

Based on the study "Teachers' attitudes towards educating immigrant children in Polish schools. Problems related to their education", we can conclude that the teachers participating in the study presented positive attitudes which, referring to Bennet's classification, can be classified as attitudes of acceptance (32 people) and integration (7 people). Teachers indicated that the emotions they experience in relations with a student from a migrant background depend mainly on how a given child behaves, not on what country he comes from. Some teachers emphasized that their experience in cooperation with students from other cultural backgrounds was not extensive and therefore they were not fully aware of what such cooperation could look like in practice. At the same time, teachers anticipated the occurrence of problems that would require greater involvement on their part in cooperation with such children. However, none of the surveyed teachers indicated disapproval of working with a child from another nationality. Some teachers indicated the need for more support and assistance to the child in education from parents/guardians. Other teachers pointed out that the public education system, in order to cope

with the growing number of children from migrant backgrounds, requires systemic changes, including the employment of supporting teachers in schools and, above all, greater financial resources. At the same time, the surveyed teachers showed positive attitudes towards their active participation in the process of educating children of other nations (Bartkowiak, Teachers' attitudes towards educating immigrant children in Polish schools. Problems related to their education, Teacher in contemporary educational reality, , 2021).

Based on the publication "Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine", we can learn that Polish kindergartens and schools, especially in large cities, are struggling with serious staff shortages. Teachers often work in difficult conditions, which include: large classes, mutual misunderstanding, lack of classroom stability, and lack of learning materials. Most Polish teachers do not have experience in teaching multicultural classes, therefore they need training to acquire or improve competences, as well as constant support from specialists (psychologists, educators, cultural assistants, supporting teachers). At the same time, overcrowding of public schools in large cities leads to a decline in both the quality of teaching and relationships in school communities ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The Ombudsman points out that creating a larger number of educational institutions operating in the Ukrainian system would be a valuable alternative in the Polish education system to admitting students to preparatory or public classes. He proposes, among others: using real estate owned by the State Treasury, establishing cooperation with private entities and employing teachers from Ukraine. Schools implementing the Ukrainian core curriculum already operate in several places in Poland, but they cannot accept all willing children. Increasing the number of international branches in schools is also a desirable solution, but the biggest problem for the governing bodies is the high costs of running them. Since most Ukrainian families would like to return to their country in the future, it is important to provide Ukrainian children with the opportunity to continue their education on the current basis ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The Ombudsman also indicates that the Polish school system needs a new legal framework that will enable Polish schools to involve Ukrainian children and youth who do not attend a given school in joint activities. It is obvious that migrant children need contact with peers for proper development. Currently, however, Polish teachers do not feel entitled to invite children who are not officially students of a given school to participate in projects and celebrations organized in the classroom. Teachers are also afraid of the negative consequences of their actions, such as compensation or disciplinary liability ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

When talking about the problems and difficulties of staff working with children from migrant backgrounds, we cannot forget about the problems of the latter. According to the study entitled "Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine", stress and alienation are the most severe phenomena experienced by children and youth from migrant backgrounds in Poland. Another significant problem for students is the lack of psychological and pedagogical support, schools' failure to implement the recommendations of psychological and pedagogical counseling centers, the lack of appropriate textbooks, and an insufficient number of intercultural assistants or teacher's aids. There are cases where schools do not respond effectively to cases of discrimination and hostility experienced by students from other countries. Therefore, it is necessary to provide intercultural and anti-discrimination education in Polish schools ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The integration of refugee children in Polish schools is also hindered by too many refugee students in one class, preferential treatment of newly arrived students, lack of support for the integration process by teachers and educators, and lack of competences in resolving conflicts and counteracting discrimination ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

When it comes to the challenges of the Polish education system, a survey conducted among school governing bodies, school principals, teachers, cultural assistants, and parents of Polish and Ukrainian students shows that the most important challenge is the language barrier. Teachers also pointed to working with students with war trauma as a major challenge. Other common responses, especially among teachers, were too large classes and too few teachers and teaching aids. Both principals and teachers recognize the need to provide training to prepare for working with students from Ukraine on how to support students with war trauma. The staff protested against the need to obtain materials on their own and finance them from their own funds ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The system of assessment, promotion and examination in relation to the principle of equal treatment and equal access to education raises great controversy among the staff. It is particularly difficult for students from Ukraine to cope with the content of the Polish core curriculum (RPO, 2024).

According to the report of the Supreme Audit Office, based on a survey in which 1,000 teachers in seven voivodeships participated, all participating teachers of Polish language, mathematics, history, geography and biology (221 people in total) declared that they carried out a preliminary diagnosis of the level of knowledge and skills of foreign students starting their studies. Of these, more than half of teachers carry out a diagnosis for each student. 23% of teachers carry out the diagnosis "when they consider it necessary", and 20% of respondents carry out the diagnosis "only at the beginning of the school year or educational stage". The vast majority of surveyed teachers (84%) declared that after the diagnosis, they independently adapted the adopted teaching program to the needs of foreign students. 41% of teachers participating in the study adapted the program through methods, forms of working with students or organization of teaching, 33% through the way of assessing students, and 26% through the presented educational content (NIK, 2024).

**Table: Ways of teachers adapting the curriculum to the needs of foreign students.**

| | Adjusting the number of tasks to be performed | Varying the degree of difficulty | Applied to a specific method of work | Work with the help of a teacher/assistant/classmates | Reducing the volume of texts to read or material to learn | Preparing texts and program content in simple language | Testing knowledge in a specific form |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Number of responses** | 172 | 150 | 125 | 123 | 129 | 86 | 85 |
| **%** | 16 | 14 | 12 | 13 | 12 | 8 | 4 |

*Source: Children of foreigners in Polish schools, NIK, https://www.nik.gov.pl/aktualnosci/ksztalcenie-dzieci-cudzoziemcow.html, accessed 06/2024.*

The study also shows that no schools have introduced special rules for assessing foreigners' children, assuming that these rules are regulated in school statutes for all students, without exceptions. In half of the 18 inspected schools in which preparatory classes were established after February 24, 2022, a total of 349 students from Ukraine were admitted - 321 of them (92%) were not classified and received certificates of attendance at the preparatory department. However, 28 students from Ukraine (from five schools), based on the decision of the pedagogical council, were subjected to annual classification and were promoted to the next class. In all 28 schools, class teachers/educators or psychologists assessed foreign students' individual psychophysical abilities and environmental factors affecting their functioning at school, and, if necessary, such assistance was organized (NIK, 2024).

62% of the 510 teachers participating in the NIK study declared that all their students were provided with psychological and pedagogical assistance. The most common forms of assistance were advice and consultations (28%), didactic and remedial classes (17%), workshops (10%), developing

talents classes (9%), specialized classes (9%) and classes developing learning skills (8%). The inspection also shows that 18 out of 28 schools introduced internal procedures/programs for including foreign students in the school community. In the case of almost half of these facilities (approx. 42%), this happened after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine (NIK, 2024).

The observations of teachers and cultural assistants showed that some children felt fear because they did not know what the expectations were for them. Teachers also felt insecure because they lacked the experience and knowledge of methods of working with students who did not speak Polish. The situation also required teachers to have knowledge about working with people with trauma and how to resolve conflicts in a group (NIK, 2024).

From the study entitled "Elementary education for students with migration experience" we learn more about the difficulties and challenges faced by teachers working with foreign children. Most of the teachers participating in the study had no previous experience in working with foreign students and declared that they were surprised by the new situation. Despite this, teachers decided to take up professional challenges and prepared thoroughly for the new situation. Teachers drew attention to the need for a flexible approach in the classroom to the current curriculum. They emphasized the need to move away from the teaching standard they knew and used in their work with students so far. The key to success turned out to be teachers' readiness to understand children with migration experience, which was manifested in seeking information about the student's country of origin, its culture, traditions, and educational system. The source of information for teachers was mainly the Interne, but also books and films. Cooperation between teachers and parents turned out to be very important. Thanks to this, the surveyed teachers felt more competent in planning and conducting various educational activities, without being afraid that their actions might offend the student and their family (Nowosielski, 2021).

The surveyed teachers, trying to develop creative methods of working with foreign children, used teaching methods available and known to them. At the same time, they individualized their approach and selected work methods and tools that, in their opinion, were able to interest a given child in the Polish language and facilitate his/her learning. Teachers most often used image methods such as: visualizations, learning through pictures, graphics, photos, learning through experience, educational films, board games, group work and drama (Nowosielski, 2021).

One of the biggest problems reported by the teachers participating in the study was the lack of available methodological support regarding methods of communicating with foreign students or their parents, as well as teaching Polish as a second language and introducing children to new classmates. Teachers also drew attention to the lack of publicly available materials (teaching aids, textbooks, and even loose methodological guidelines) as well as training, courses and workshops on working with children with migration experience. It is worth emphasizing that the surveyed teachers did not remember the above elements being taught during their pedagogical studies. Therefore, the teachers independently searched for information regarding the education of foreign children. When they could not find professional studies on the methodology of dealing with children with migration experience, teachers used their general pedagogical knowledge, experience and intuition. At the same time, the respondents expressed their willingness to expand their knowledge by participating in methodological training and courses on working with foreign children, if they had such an opportunity (Nowosielski, 2021).

The authors of the above study also identified systemic difficulties. Additional classes in Polish as a second language are conducted in Polish educational institutions only for foreign children of school age. As a consequence, preschool children with migration experience are deprived of support in the form of teaching them Polish. Preschool children can count on the help of teachers and preschool educators,

who in turn emphasized the gaps in access to adequate teaching and methodological aids (Nowosielski, 2021).

## The availability of tools, materials and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children for the staff and institutions of the VET sector.

We know from the study "Problems of education of children and youth from Ukraine - recommendations of the Commissioner for Human Rights" that Polish kindergartens and schools, which accepted hundreds of thousands of children from Ukraine after February 2022, are struggling with a heavy financial burden. Currently, financial resources transferred to local governments (bodies running educational institutions) as part of educational subsidies do not fully cover the costs of education, care and upbringing of foreigners' children. Meanwhile, including the youngest children of foreigners in systemic educational activities is an important investment from the perspective of society. Multicultural education is needed already in kindergartens in order to build mutual understanding and prevent possible social conflicts in the future. In turn, education from the first years allows children to acquire key competences and helps them in later educational stages ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

The study also shows that children of foreigners admitted to mainstream classes in 2022 did not have access to educational materials, including Polish language textbooks. Teachers, in turn, had to cope on their own, e.g. by using files on websites. Conducting lessons was very difficult if teachers did not have the opportunity to print or copy lesson materials at school. A large group of refugee children are people with special educational needs, but psychological and pedagogical counseling centers lack specialists who speak Ukrainian and Russian, as well as translators. Without a proper diagnosis of the student, schools cannot adequately respond to the individual development and educational needs of foreign students ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

According to the study, the most important barrier in contacts between a foreign child and the institution (director(s) and teachers) was the lack of knowledge of the Polish language by the child and his family and poor knowledge of English/Russian/Ukrainian by the principal(s) and teachers. There was also a need to take organizational actions regarding the participation in school life of students brought up in a slightly different culture or educated in a different education system, including: special meals or religious lessons (Nowosielski, 2021).

Based on the publication "Teachers' attitudes towards educating immigrant children in Polish schools. Problems related to their education" we learn about the main problems of teachers in the process of educating students from other countries.

**Table 1. Problems resulting from the implementation of the teaching and educational process with immigrant children**

| School problems related to immigrant children | N* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Resulting from ignorance of the language; lack of linguistically prepared teachers, textbooks and teaching aids | 41 | 97.62 |
| Psychological problems resulting from the lack of a sense of security, e.g. aggression among peers and towards teachers, unacceptable behavior of immigrant children socially focusing attention on themselves | 37 | 73.81 |
| Problems related to the teaching process, lack of interest, lack of active participation in the lesson, lack of motivation to learn, disturbing the lessons | 24 | 57.14 |
| Truancy | 11 | 26.19 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lack of knowledge about the life situation of immigrant children, difficult contact with parents | 10 | 23.81 |
| Other | 6 | 14.28 |

*Source: G. Bartkowiak, Teachers' attitudes towards educating immigrant children in Polish schools. Problems related to their education, Teacher in the contemporary educational reality, 2021, p. 279.*

As we note in the table above, the surveyed teachers considered the lack of linguistically prepared teaching staff and the lack of textbooks and other teaching aids necessary in the teaching process in the migrants' languages to be the most important problem in educating immigrant children. Psychological problems resulting from the lack of a sense of security came second among teachers' responses. In third place, the surveyed teachers placed problems related to the teaching process, lack of students' interest, lack of active participation in the lesson and lack of students' motivation to learn (Bartkowiak, Teachers' attitudes towards educating immigrant children in Polish schools. Problems related to their education, Teacher in the contemporary educational reality, 2021).

For teachers without experience in working with foreign-language students, preparing appropriate teaching materials is a big challenge. Despite the fact that the selection of textbooks on the publishing market is increasing, the largest number of textbooks and exercises are addressed to Ukrainian-speaking students at various levels of language proficiency. Fewer teaching materials and aids were created for non-Slavic-speaking students. To learn Polish among younger children, the textbook "I like Polish" by A. Rabiej is most often used. When teaching foreigners in primary schools, the most popular series of textbooks and materials is "Polish step by step junior" by M. Grudzień, P. Kuc and I. Stempek. However, this textbook only covers 60 hours of study. Both of the above The textbooks are aimed at beginner students. The publishing market is still lacking materials for teaching non-Slavic-speaking children and teenagers from the A2 level. There are also no materials available to develop or improve individual skills, e.g. writing, which is a big challenge for students who do not use the Latin alphabet. Some of the teaching aids intended for adult learning can be adapted to the needs of younger students, but this may be difficult for Polish teachers without glottodidactic qualifications due to the use of different methods, teaching content and unfamiliarity with these teaching materials (A. Majewska, 2019).

The current Polish language teaching program in the Polish education system does little to facilitate the acquisition and development of communicative competences in Polish by a student with migration experience. The program is focused on literary and cultural education. It is based on texts that are culturally and linguistically difficult to understand for students with migration experience. Moreover, the texts used in the curriculum to a limited extent constitute a model of applicable grammatical and pragmatic linguistic conventions and a basis for supplementing the lexicon needed in everyday and school communication. The language module, on the other hand, mainly covers language study rather than language learning (Gębka-Wolak, 2019).

Every student of a Polish primary school, including a citizen of Ukraine, has the right to free access to textbooks, educational or exercise materials intended for compulsory educational classes in the field of general education. The Integrated Educational Platform (ZPE) run by the Minister of Education and Science includes the "School for You" page, including the "preparatory departments" tab (https://zpe.gov.pl/a/oddzialy-przygotowawcza/D1EzffxI8), where materials and links to free textbooks and educational materials intended for teaching Polish as a foreign language to children and young people are available, as well as information about free Polish and English classes for people from Ukraine. Resources are constantly supplemented and expanded. ZPE provides everyone with open and free access to numerous educational materials ( Commissioner for Human Right, 2024).

Below we will present examples of available educational materials and tools that educational / VET staff can use when working with students with migrant backgrounds.

1) The Learnetic company, in cooperation with the Ukrainian educational publishing house Ranok, has prepared and made available free digital versions of textbooks that can be used by Ukrainian students around the world. The materials provided in the native language allow students to maintain continuity of education regardless of where they are and the curriculum there. It is worth emphasizing that the materials have been prepared so that the student can work with them independently. Thanks to this, the language barrier between the student and the teacher is no longer a limitation - the guardian, teacher or parent can control the student's results thanks to automatically generated reports. To use digital versions of textbooks, all you need is a multimedia device and Internet access. The materials are available on the platform https://www.mcourser.com/ (after entering the website, change the language to Ukrainian) and https://www.dzwonek.pl/ . Direct link to resources created with Ranok publishing house: https://www.mcourser.com/ranok/ *1* /next/~structure

2) Learnetic has also prepared the Я тут program ! (I'm here!), a set of interactive exercises for learning the basics of Ukrainian and Polish. The program can be used during classes in preparatory departments and during lessons aimed at integrating a linguistically diverse group. The material is available free of charge and is addressed to both Ukrainian and Polish children and teachers. The program is available on the https://www.dzwonek.pl/ , https://www.mtalent.pl/ platform and directly on the mCourser platform: https://www.mcourser.com/Learnetic/_/next/~structure  (learnetic.pl, 2022).

# Part II – Interviews

In this part of the report we will present the most important findings from the Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with representatives of the VET sector which were conducted in Poland.

The general aim of the IDIs was to specify the broad picture of migrant/refugee issues in the partners regions / countries to fully realize and understand the situation. This will help to identify the difficulties migrants / refugees deal with on a daily basis. Therefore, it will make easier to identify effective measures which can be introduced to improve their situation, and to what extent the project's results may be helpful in fulfilling this task.

In more details, the aims of the interviews was:
- to identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned.
- to identify the difficulties migrants/refugees deal with on a daily basis.
- to learn about the expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned.
- to specify the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.
- to facilitate the availability of tools, materials and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children among the staff and institutions of the VET sector.
- to raise awareness of the migrant/refugee situation in region/country.

The interviews took place on September 30, 2024 in Lublin (Poland) with two representatives of Polski Czerwony Krzyż (Polish Red Cross) who works on their daily basis with migrants and their children. During the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, 5 questions were asked to VET staff regarding several topics.

1. The first question was: "*What are, in your opinion, the actual needs, possibilities, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned?*"

The responders pointed out that the main difficulties refers to the language barrier, legal issues, finding accommodation, finding a job, finding a school or kindergarten for children. The VET staff also indicated that migrants have general problem to get needed information ("*All information points are scattered in different places, and there is no single, designated location where a migrant/refugee can address all their problems*").

As we see from the answers, the integration process for migrants and refugees is hindered by a combination of language barriers, legal complexities, housing challenges, and inadequate access to information and services. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated approach to provide comprehensive support and resources that are easily accessible to those in need.

2. The second question sounded like: "*What are, in your opinion, the expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned?*"

The VET staff indicated that their main problem is "*to motivate and encourage migrants*" to enroll for VET services, as many of them are "*highly dependent on aid*" and "*they are receiving various forms of state financial assistance*". What's more, for VET staff, it's difficult to direct and support migrants as they have to deal with many different institutions to cope with various everyday matters.

Both answers highlight significant challenges faced by VET staff in assisting migrants and refugees during the integration process. They reveal a shared understanding of the difficulties that both groups

experience. First representative of the VET emphasized the need for a centralized database of information that can guide migrants and refugees to appropriate resources. It highlights the challenges that arise from the disorganization of available support. In contrast, Respondent#2 focuses on specific practical barriers that refugees face, such as obtaining documentation and language proficiency certifications, which directly impact their ability to integrate and become independent. As well both responders highlighted common challenges such as lack of resources, information and dependence on aid.

3. The third question during the interview was: "*What are, in your opinion, the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children?*"

Both responses emphasize a lack of enough opportunities for refugee children to engage in extracurricular activities. Respondent #1 specifically mentions the absence of such activities as harmful to creativity and development ("*refugee children lack extracurricular activities where they can develop and engage in creativity*"), and Respondent #2 states that the lack of cultural activities and meetings delays integration ("*there is a lack of cultural activities and meetings for children, which makes the situation difficult in terms of integration*").

As well answers highlight the necessity of support systems for refugee children. Respondent #1 discusses the need for psychological and informational support. The second answer touches on the sensitive topic of mobbing at school. At the same time, the respondent emphasizes that foreign assistants in schools (employed specifically to support refugee children) do not have the necessary proficiency in Polish to prevent bullying regarding those children.

4. The forth question sounded like: "*What is your experience regarding the availability for the staff and institutions of the VET sector of different tools, materials and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children?*"

From VET staff answers we can find out that both respondents emphasize the need for training to better assist refugee children ("*I lack knowledge in the field of psychological support [...] I would like to learn more about how to support children on the path to integration, how to maintain distance with them, and how to support them without violating their personal boundaries, thus helping rather than harming them*").

Both respondents recognize challenges in accessing appropriate resources. Respondent #1 highlights a lack of knowledge and training opportunities, while respondent #2 points out the absence of special courses offered by their institution, making it difficult to pursue necessary education ("*you can always find additional training or learn more about helping refugee children on the internet, on various websites or platforms, but our institution did not offer us any special courses*").

5. The final question was presented as an open-ended. It concerned any suggestions from the respondents.

From these answers, we see that both respondents emphasize the ongoing challenges faced by refugees, particularly in the context of the war in Ukraine, and express a desire for more support and resources to aid their integration into Polish society ("*we need to continue supporting refugees, unfortunately financial aid is currently being cut. The war is not over, and these people also want a chance to integrate*").

Both answers reflect concern over the reduction of financial support for refugees. In addition to this, Respondent #2 highlights the particular difficulties experienced by elderly refugees, calling for focused support for this vulnerable group of population ("*now their financial situation is very difficult, they are trying to find work, but they are not employed because of their age*"). Meeting these indicated needs could improve the overall refugee integration experience in Poland.

To summary, both responders – representative of VET sector in Poland pointed out several problems, needs and expectations regarding both migrants and VET staff. Regarding the VET staff the main problems are language barrier, not enough trainings in psychology and many separate institutions to which the migrants have to be directed by them individually. On the other hand, the migrants and their children have basic problems regarding finance situation, housing, job, education, qualification recognition, psychological support or cultural and social integration.

# Part III - Online survey

In this part of the report we will present the findings from survey research conducted in Poland among VET staff. An online survey was conducted (using Google forms) from October 10 to October 22, 2024.

The aim of the survey was to specify the broad picture of migrant/refugee issues in the project's countries to fully realize and understand the situation.
In more details, the aims were:

  − to identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children in the integration process.
  − to specify the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.
  − to raise awareness of the migrant/refugee situation in region/country.

The survey was anonymous. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. A total of 13 people representing VET sector in Poland participated in the research.

1.  Question No. 1 referred to the country of residence of the responders.

1. From which country are you completing the survey/from which institution did you receive the invitation to complete the survey?

13 answers

- Greece / DIGITAL IDEA
- Poland / Deinde sp. z o. o.
- Türkiye / CEKDEV INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

100%
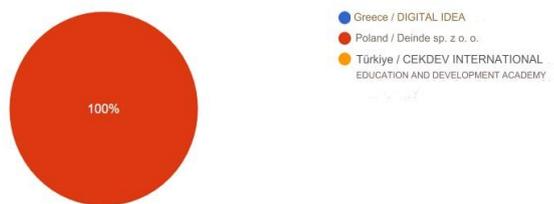
According to the pie chart, all respondents (100%) reported receiving the survey invitation from Deinde sp. z o. o., Poland.

2.  Question No. 2 was referring to the position in VET sector of the responders.

2. Please specify your professional position in the vocational education and training (VET)/education sector:

13 answers

- Teacher
- Coach
- Career advisor
- Coach
- Facylitator
- Tutor
- Evaluator
- Project Coordinator
- Field worker

15.4%
7.7%
30.8%
23.1%
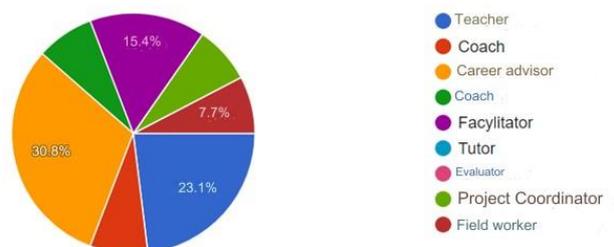
The biggest number of the responders were career counsellors (30.8%). A total of 23.1% of the respondents identified themselves as teachers and 15,4% as facilitators. Besides them, the survey was completed by VET workers, coaches, trainers and project coordinators (7,7 % each),

3. Question No. 3 sounded like "*How long have you been working in the VET sector/education system?*"

3. How long have you been working in the VET sector/education system?

13 answers



- Up to 2 years
- From 2 to 5 years
- Over 5 years
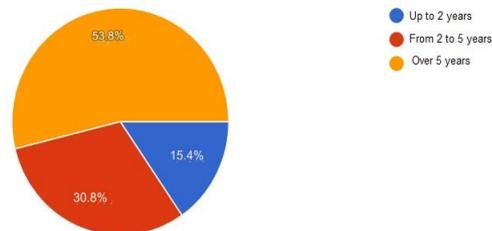
The majority of the responders (53.8%) indicated that they have been working in the VET sector or education system for more than five years. 30.8% of respondents had from two to five years' experience in VET. Additionally, 15.4% of respondents reported that they have been working in the VET sector for up to two years.

4. Question No. 4 in the survey was: "*What do you think are the most important needs of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country?*"

4. What do you think are the most important needs of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers



In response to the given question, 12 respondents indicated that the most important need of adult migrant or refugee is learning Polish. 10 respondents indicated stable employment. 6 respondents indicated recognition of professional qualifications, psychological support and integration with the local community. 5 responders indicated safe housing conditions and legal support. Other responds were chosen by from 3 to 1 respondents.

5. The next question was: "*In your opinion, what are the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country?*"

5. What do you think are the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

Copy chart

13 answers



In response to the given question, the biggest number of respondents (12 people) indicated that the most important need of migrant or refugee children is learning Polish. Additionally, 10 respondents indicated integration with peers. 7 respondents indicated access to institutional childcare/public kindergartens and schools. 5 respondents indicated psychological support, cultural understanding and acceptance as well as support in learning and help in adaptation in new environment.

6. Question No. six in the survey was: "*What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by adult migrants/refugees in the integration process? in our country?*"

6. What do you think are the key difficulties and problems of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers



In response to this question, the respondents, the most often, identified the following difficulties and problems:
  – language barrier – 12 responders,
  – difficulties in finding a job - 10 answers,
  – housing difficulties – 8 responders,
  – financial problems and problems with the recognition of professional qualifications – 7 answers.
  – discrimination and stereotypes – 6 respondent,
  – administrative barrier – 4 answers.

7. In next step, the responders answered the question No. 7 "*What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by migrant/refugee children in the integration process? in our country?*"

7. What do you think are the key difficulties and problems of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.
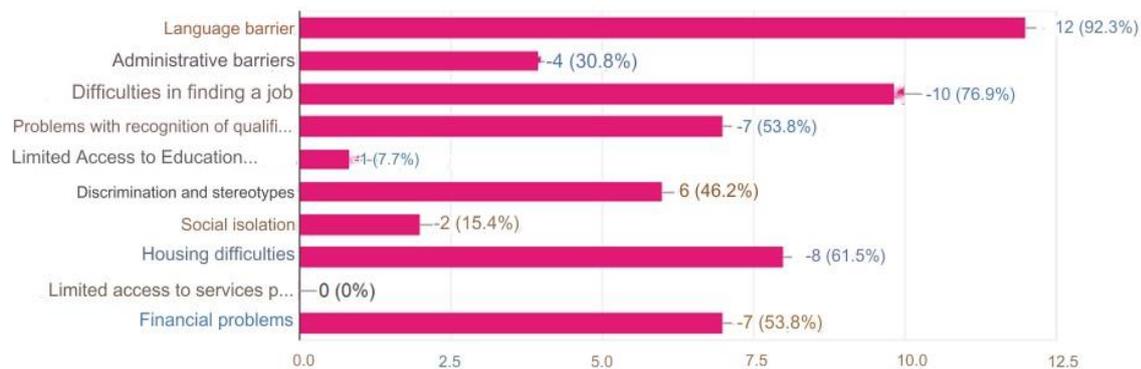
13 answers



In response to the question regarding the key difficulties and problems faced by migrant or refugee children in the integration process the VET staff indicated: language barrier, difficulties in adapting to the new education system and stress and difficulties related to past traumas (10 answers each). Additionally, 8 responders indicated interrupted education, and 5 responders indicated discrimination and lack of acceptance as well as lowered expectations regarding their achievements. There were also from 1 to two responds indicated other problems and difficulties for migrants.

8. The question No. 8 sounded like: "*What do you think are the key opportunities for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process? in our country?*"

8. What do you think are the key opportunities for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers



In response to the given question, 10 respondents indicated that the key opportunity for adult migrant or refugee in the integration process is participation in courses and trainings. 8 respondents indicated obtaining stable employment. 6 answers was referring to bringing cultural diversity to society as well as using integration programs. 5 responders indicated getting involved in local social initiatives. 4 VET staff pointed out developing an own business and support from non-governmental organizations.

9. In the next step, the responders answered the question: "*What do you think are the key opportunities for migrant/refugee children in the integration process? in our country?*"

9. What do you think are the key opportunities for children of migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers



The following responses were provided regarding the key opportunities for migrant and refugee children in the integration process in our country:

– 9 respondents selected the ability to adapt to new conditions and the opportunity to make new friends,
– 8 people answered quickly learning the local language and access to education,
– 6 respondents selected integration in a diverse environment and development of multicultural identity,
– 4 respondents pointed out the answer peer support and taking advantage of extracurricular activities.

10. Question No. 10 in survey was: "*In your opinion, what are, the everyday problems, difficulties and challenges for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?*"

10. What are, in your opinion, the everyday problems, difficulties and challenges for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers

The biggest number of responds indicated the difficulties in linguistic communicating with students and different educational levels in one class as the everyday problems, difficulties, and challenges for the VET staff working with migrant children in the process of their integration in our country. (9 people). Seven VET staff pointed out the need for continuous adaptation of teaching methods, limited time resources for individual work and difficulties in cooperation with parents of migrant/refugee children. Five people answered "dealing with student trauma". Four people indicated lack of appropriate educational materials, students' discipline problems, problems with children adaptation to a new environment and difficulties in integrating students with their peers.

11. The following question sounded like: "*In your opinion, what are the needs and expectations of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?*"

11. What are, in your opinion, the needs and expectations of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.

13 answers



The majority of the responders indicated that the most important needs and expectations of training staff working with migrant/refugee children is the access to educational materials tailored to the needs of migrants (9 answers). Seven people selected the answers: "support for migrant/refugee children in learning Polish" and "possibility of consulting with integration experts". Six VET staff pointed out the training in teaching children from different cultures as well as the increased psychological support for children. Five responders chose the answer referring to the support in a variety of teaching methods. Four people indicated the helping students cope with trauma, greater involvement from school administration and support in building relationships with parents.

12. The next question in the survey was: "*How do you assess the effectiveness of existing integration strategies used in educational institutions in the integration of refugee/migrant children in our country?*"

12. How do you assess the effectiveness of existing integration strategies used in educational institutions in the integration of refugee/migrant children in our country? Please select 1 answer.

13 answers



- Very effective - strategies are well adapted and bring positive results...
- Effective, but require some corrections and adjustments to real...
- Partially effective - some aspects are well implemented, but there are ex...
- Properly implemented, their impact on children's integration is limited by...
- Ineffective - current strategies do not address key challenges from...
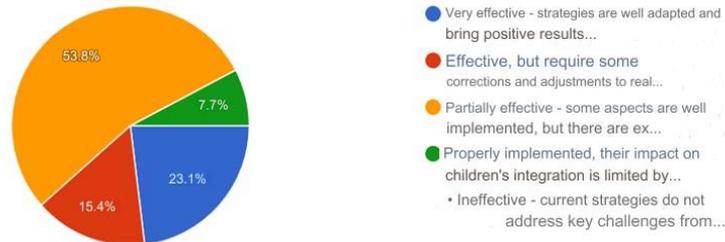
This pie chart illustrates the respondents' answers. 53,8 % of respondents selected the answer: "partially effective – some aspects are well implemented, but there are significant gaps". 23,1 % respondents pointed out "very effective – strategies are well adapted and produce positive results". In opinion of 15,4% responders the strategies are "effective, but require some corrections and adjustments to the actual needs of children". According to 7,7 % of VET staff, present strategies are properly implemented, but their impact on children's integration is limited by lack of support and resources.

13. The question No. 13 sounded like: "*Is the support offered by the state system (e.g. Ministry of Education, Education Authority) for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country is sufficient and appropriate for your needs in everyday work?*"

13. Is the support offered by the state system (e.g. Ministry of Education, Education Authority) for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country sufficient and appropriate for your needs and situation in everyday work? Please select 1 answer.

13 answers



- Yes, the support is sufficient and well adapted to our needs...
- Yes, but there are some areas where support could be more tailored...
- In part, the support is useful, but there is a lack of detailed resources and training...
- No, support is available but is too generic and needs better customization...
- No, support is insufficient and does not meet our basic needs.

The biggest number of the VET staff (61,5 %) pointed out that some support from educational authorities and bodies is useful, but there is a lack of detailed resources and training in key areas. In the opinion of 30,8 % of respondents current support for VET staff "could be more tailored to everyday challenges" According to 7 % of responders the support is insufficient and does not meet VET staff' basic needs in the process of integrating migrant children in Poland.

14. The following question in the survey was "*Does the educational institution where you work offer its own support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their integration in our country?*"

14. Does the educational institution where you work offer its own support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their integration in our country? Please select 1 answer.

13 answers



- Yes, it offers comprehensive support, including training and educational materials.
- Yes, but support is limited to basic training and resources.
- Yes, but support is only available on an ad hoc basis, no permanent programs.
- Partially, support is available, but needs to be improved and expanded.
- No, it does not currently offer adequate staff support.
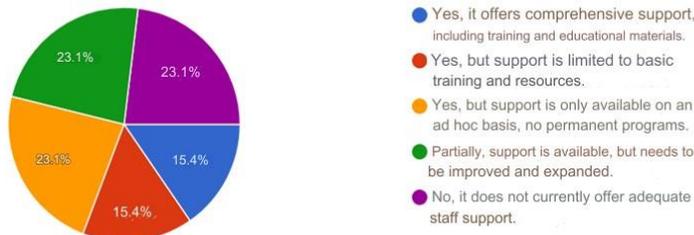
Almost every fourth respondent pointed out that present support for VET staff in their institution is only available on an ad hoc basis, no permanent programs. The same number of VET staff declared that present support for them is available, but it needs to be improved and expanded. According to 23,1% of responders their educational institution does not currently offer adequate support for staff. In opinion of 15,4 % of respondents the present support is comprehensive and includes training and educational materials. According to the same number of VET staff, the support is limited to basic training and resources.

15. In the next question the responders were asked: "*What support would be most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?*".

15. What support would be most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country? Please select up to 5 most important.
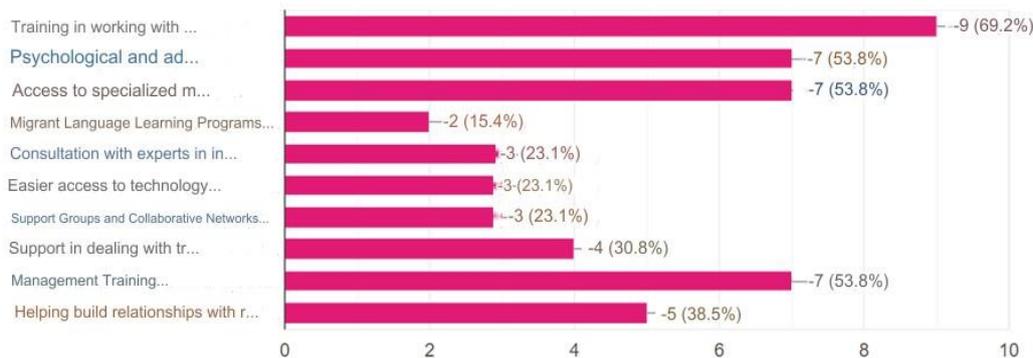
13 answers



The majority of the VET responders (9 people) pointed out that the most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff would be a training in working with children from different cultures. Free answers were indicated by seven people: psychological support and counselling for teachers, access to specialized educational materials and training in managing diversity in the classroom.
For 5 VET staff the most useful would be the help in building relationships with migrant families.
Four responders indicated the support in dealing with students' trauma. Other options had from two to three response.

16. The following question in the survey was: "*How would you rate the availability of effective and adequate educational tools and materials for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children?*"

16. How would you rate the access of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children to effective and adequate educational tools and materials?
Please select up to 3 most important.

13 answers



| | |
|---|---|
| Very limited availability | 0 (0%) |
| Low quality of available tools... | 2 (15.4%) |
| Varied availability in... | 6 (46.2%) |
| Average availability, with gaps... | 4 (30.8%) |
| Customized materials are available... | 4 (30.8%) |
| Good resources but hard to find... | 1 (7.7%) |
| Good resources but expensive l... | 1 (7.7%) |
| High quality of available tools... | 0 (0%) |
| High quality resources and easy... | 1 (7.7%) |
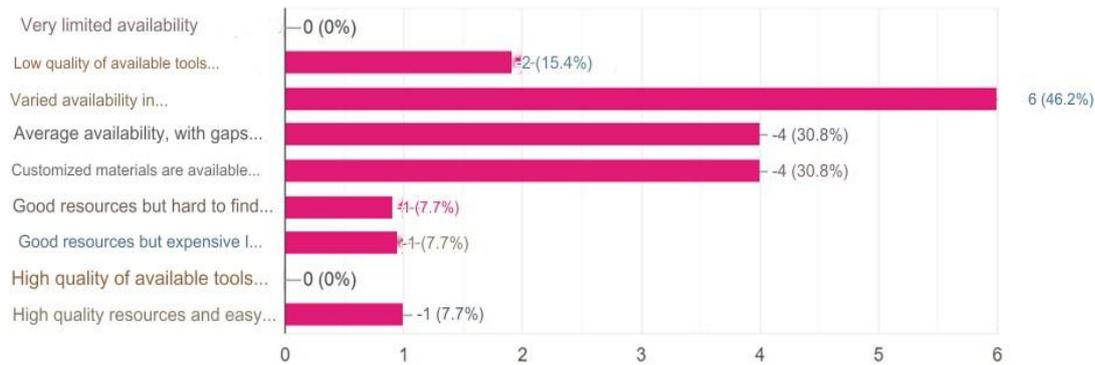
The biggest number of VET staff (six people) assessed that the availability of effective and adequate educational tools and materials for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children varies by region. According to four people the availability is average with gaps in specific areas. The same number of responders indicated that the customized materials are only available to a limited extent. Two people stated that available tools and materials have low quality.

17. The last question was open-ended. The VET staff could share with us any additional information/observations they had.

Respondents provided the following answers:
– "without a good command of the Polish language by students, vocational education is either impossible or of low quality, especially in terms of passing vocational exams",
– "the most difficult situation was in 2022, as there were no procedures, tools, or materials. Currently, in the third school year, the situation has improved, but there are still many difficulties and challenges".

# Conclusions

The research highlighted significant challenges and needs for both refugees and VET staff in Poland. Refugees face barriers related to language, legal processes, and finding employment, housing, and education for their children. Many refugees remain reliant on aid and lack comprehensive support

systems. Integration is hampered by a dispersed system of services that does not centralize information for refugees, leading to confusion and delays in accessing necessary resources.

For refugee children, integration into the Polish educational system presents a range of difficulties, including adapting to a new curriculum, overcoming language barriers, and dealing with the trauma of displacement. The lack of cultural activities and insufficient extracurricular opportunities for children was identified as a key factor slowing their integration.

From the perspective of VET professionals, their main challenges include managing the language barriers, motivating refugees to participate in vocational training, and addressing the psychological and emotional needs of both children and adults. Teachers and VET staff also expressed the need for additional training, particularly in providing psychological support, working with multicultural groups, and handling trauma-sensitive situations.

Moreover, the unavailability of tools, materials, and teaching aids tailored to migrant needs remains a significant gap. VET institutions and schools face difficulties in offering language resources and culturally appropriate educational content. The disparity between refugee expectations and the support provided by VET staff suggests that more coordinated efforts are needed to create effective integration strategies.

# Chapter 2 - National Research in Turkey

# Part I – Desk research

## The migrant/refugee situation in the Partner's region / country.

Millions of Syrians were forced to leave their homes after the events that started in Syria in 2011. While some of them were displaced within the country, a significant number of them mi-grated outside the country and became migrants/refugees. Turkey is one of the leading countries to which Syrians have migrated. It is estimated that there are approximately three million refu-gees in Turkey. A significant part of the refugees in Turkey are staying in container and tent cit-ies in cities close to the Syrian border. The other part of the refugees live in various cities in Turkey.

Turkey has implemented an "open door policy" towards Syrians since the beginning of the con-flict in March 2011. As a requirement of the open door policy, Turkey did not send the refugees back, but instead built camps for them to continue their lives and meet their needs. However, due to the large number of refugees arriving, Turkey could not find the opportunity to settle all of them in camps.

According to the data of the Directorate General of Migration Management established under the Ministry of Interior, the total number of Syrian refugees in and outside the camps, called Tempo-rary Accommodation Centers, is 3,115.

In addition to the shelter services provided by the Republic of Turkey for Syrian refugees seek-ing asylum in Turkey, services are also provided in the fields of nutrition and food supply, clothing, health, education and employment. These services are provided both inside and outside the camps. Within the camps, there are facilities for refugees such as schools, mosques, trade, police and health centers, press briefing units, children's playgrounds, television viewing units, markets, cutting and sewing courses, water tanks, treatment centers, transformers and generators.



NUMBER OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS CAPTURED BY YEARS

"The number of irregular immigrants caught in 2024, excluding duplicates, is 84,659."
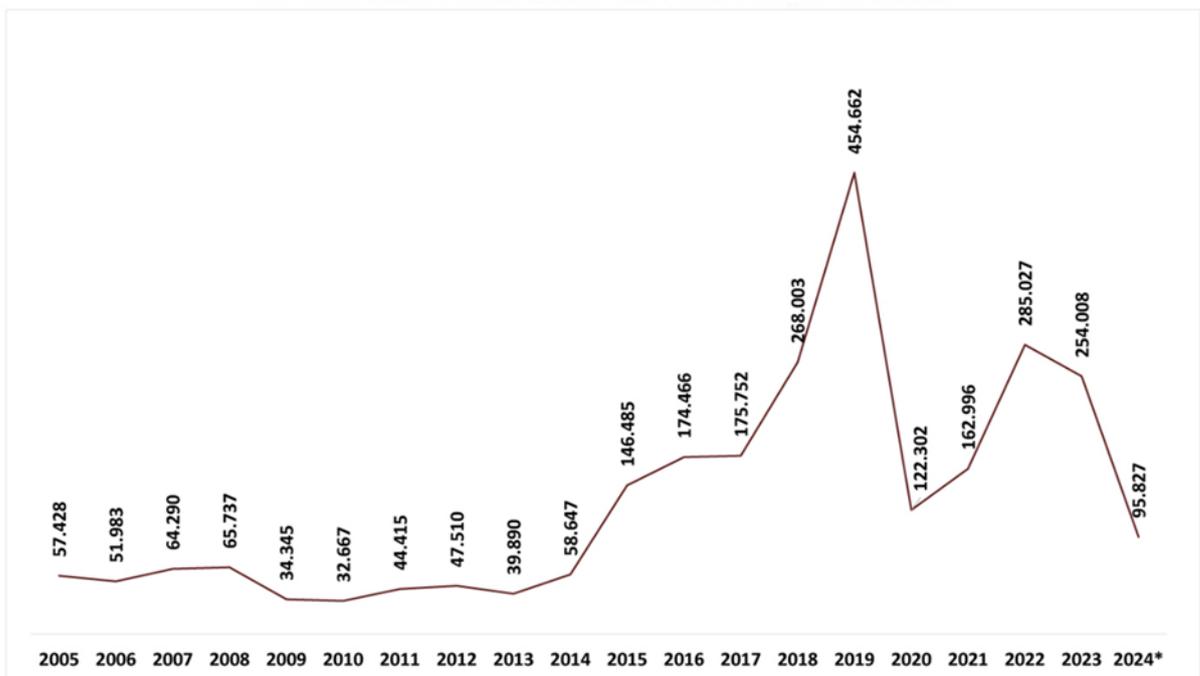
*As of 06.06.2024

## NATIONALITY DISTRIBUTION OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS CAPTURED BY YEARS

| | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 06.06.2024 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| AFGHANISTAN | 12.248 | 35.921 | 31.360 | 45.259 | 100.841 | 201.437 | 50.161 | 70.237 | 115.775 | 68.687 | 30.247 |
| SYRIA | 24.984 | 73.422 | 69.755 | 50.217 | 34.053 | 55.236 | 17.562 | 23.468 | 45.909 | 58.621 | 19.080 |
| PALESTINE | 508 | 615 | 365 | 832 | 10.545 | 12.210 | 2.059 | 3.497 | 14.270 | 18.113 | 5.119 |
| TURKMENISTAN | 817 | 1.241 | 1.034 | 1.302 | 2.580 | 4.484 | 1.882 | 4.343 | 13.083 | 14.328 | 6.490 |
| FAS | 204 | 525 | 905 | 821 | 2.496 | 10.836 | 4.073 | 2.453 | 7.523 | 13.040 | 3.204 |
| UZBEKISTAN | 503 | 1.393 | 1.648 | 3.321 | 5.203 | 7.478 | 3.030 | 4.819 | 7.553 | 9.649 | 4.278 |
| IRAQ | 1.728 | 7.247 | 30.947 | 18.488 | 17.629 | 12.097 | 3.836 | 4.404 | 6.628 | 8.803 | 3.253 |
| İRAN | 626 | 1.978 | 1.817 | 2.707 | 4.066 | 8.753 | 3.562 | 3.505 | 5.849 | 7.295 | 3.255 |
| YEMEN | 32 | 35 | 41 | 111 | 344 | 677 | 133 | 913 | 7.352 | 6.383 | 1.105 |
| OTHER | 16.997 | 24.108 | 36.594 | 52.964 | 90.246 | 141.454 | 36.004 | 45.357 | 61.085 | 49.089 | 19.796 |

*As of 06.06.2024

## THE FIRST 3 NATIONALITIES TO APPLY FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

| AFGHANISTAN | IRAQ | İRAN | OTHER |
|---|---|---|---|
| 13.068 | 2.776 | 1.416 | 1.757 |

*End of Year 2023

44
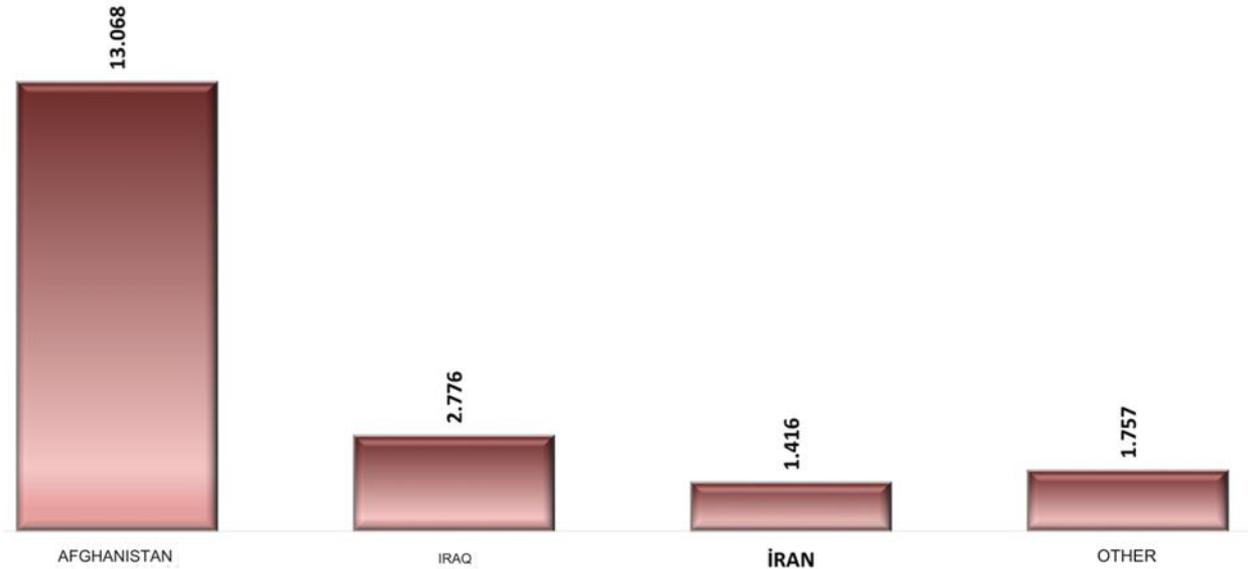
# SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION

## DISTRIBUTION BY AGE AND GENDER

| AGE | MALE | WOMAN | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|
| TOTAL | 1.620.387 | 1.493.091 | 3.113.478 |
| 0-4 | 219.465 | 205.567 | 425.032 |
| 5-9 | 275.514 | 259.762 | 535.276 |
| 10-14 | 185.273 | 176.048 | 361.321 |
| 15-18 | 124.501 | 115.286 | 239.787 |
| 19-24 | 178.463 | 160.096 | 338.559 |
| 25-29 | 169.052 | 143.373 | 312.425 |
| 30-34 | 126.171 | 104.985 | 231.156 |
| 35-39 | 106.907 | 88.702 | 195.609 |
| 40-44 | 75.435 | 67.853 | 143.288 |
| 45-49 | 49.593 | 50.893 | 100.486 |
| 50-54 | 37.267 | 40.055 | 77.322 |
| 55-59 | 29.529 | 31.209 | 60.738 |
| 60-64 | 19.391 | 21.075 | 40.466 |
| 65-69 | 12.143 | 13.496 | 25.639 |
| 70-74 | 6.612 | 7.614 | 14.226 |
| 75-79 | 3.011 | 3.807 | 6.818 |
| 80-84 | 1.262 | 1.924 | 3.186 |
| 85-89 | 518 | 852 | 1.370 |
| 90 and above | 280 | 494 | 774 |

*As of 06.06.2024

## SYRIANS UNDER TEMPORARY PROTECTION BY YEARS



| Year | Value |
|---|---|
| 2011 | 0 |
| 2012 | 14.237 |
| 2013 | 224.655 |
| 2014 | 1.519.286 |
| 2015 | 2.503.549 |
| 2016 | 2.834.441 |
| 2017 | 3.426.786 |
| 2018 | 3.623.192 |
| 2019 | 3.576.370 |
| 2020 | 3.641.370 |
| 2021 | 3.737.369 |
| 2022 | 3.535.898 |
| 2023 | 3.214.780 |
| 06.06.2024 | 3.115.536 |
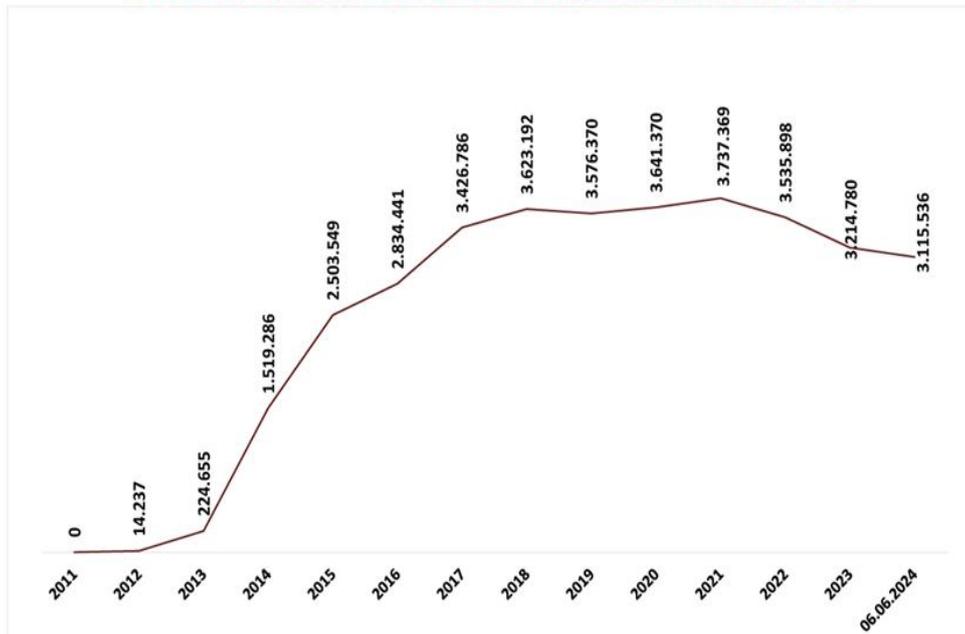
*As of 06.06.2024

INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION APPLICATION BY YEAR

*End of Year 2023
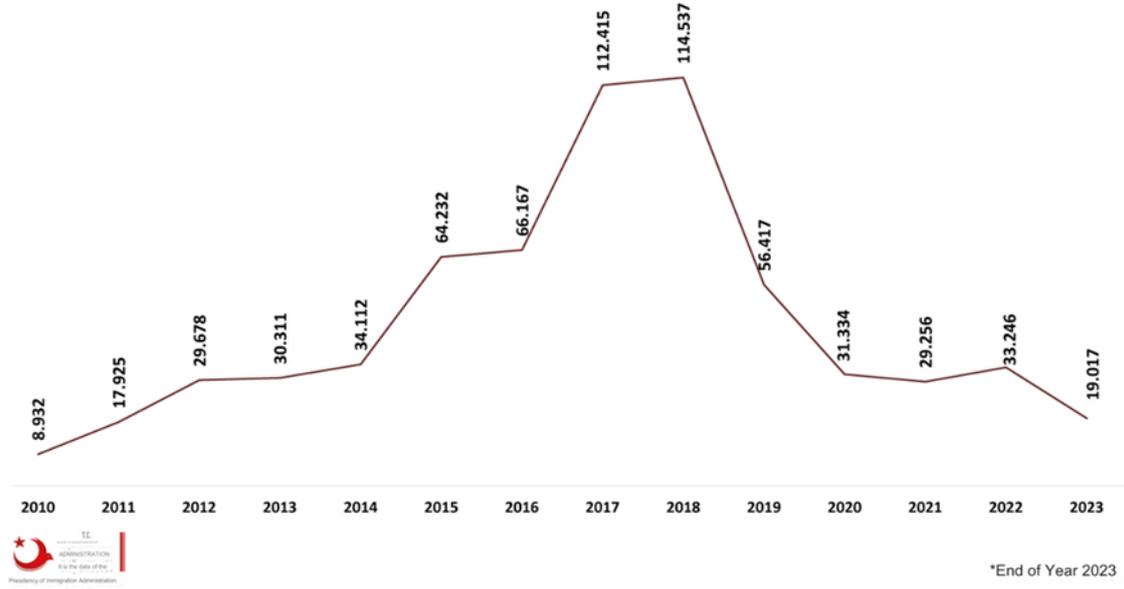
"(2-7) Turkish immigration administration directorate"(2024)  https://www.goc.gov.tr/

## The actual needs, possibilities, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned.

According to the research, the rate of those who provide their food and nutrition needs by working outside the camps is 38%. 42% of the refugees, almost half of the refugees, provide food with the help of the neighbors. Only 3.7% of the refugees provide food through donations.

In terms of health services, 15.9% of refugees state that they cannot access any health services. The rate of those who say "We go to the hospital but we cannot get medicine" is as high as 39.3%. 5.1% of the refugees state that they go to the doctor but they have language problems. In other words, refugees have significant problems in the field of health services. The problems refugees face in the field of education is another important area. With the idea that the problem in Syria would be solved in a short period of time, a program was followed within the camps and within the context of education in Arabic instead of Turkish; however, as the hope of re-turn was lost due to the increasing intensity of the war, the issue of education started to be ad-dressed in a systematic manner only towards the end of 2014.

According to UN data, 999,700 children between the ages of 5-17 are among the refugees. As of August 2015, there are over 663,000 registered school-age Syrian refugee children in Turkey, 433,000 of whom do not attend school. In other words, only 220,000 students receive education in schools.

Education services for refugees in Turkey are provided through three main channels: in-camp education, out-of-camp education and education provided in schools opened by Syrians. Out-of-camp education is provided in Temporary Education Centers and public schools. Temporary Education Centers are centers for school-age Syrian children and youth that provide primary and secondary education in Arabic in line with the Syrian curriculum. While there are education centers for children in all camps, this opportunity for those living in non-camp areas is available in 19 provinces where the Syrian refugee population is high. This shows that the education of children living outside camps is a serious problem.

More than half of the interviewees (53%) stated that they did not have any income. 24% of the participants stated that they had an income between 0-4000TL, 20% between 5000-9000TL and 3% between 10000-15000TL. The last two rates belong to those who have a regular job. The fact that 77% of the participants have an income of 5000 TL or less can be read as a sign that they face difficulties in terms of work and employment. When it is taken into account that al-most all of the participants live in rented accommodation and their expenses such as electricity, water and telephone bills are taken into account, it becomes more understandable to what extent they face difficulties and how difficult it is for them to sustain their lives without aid organizations.

The majority of the participants (87%) stated that they migrated due to the civil war and conflicts in Syria. 11% of the participants stated that they migrated due to security concerns, while 2% stated that they migrated voluntarily. Since security concerns are also related to the civil war and conflicts, we can easily that 98% of the participants migrated due to this reason.

A significant number of respondents (44%) stated that they receive basic needs such as food and clothing from charitable organizations. The rate of those who stated that they received basic necessities from neighbors is 29%. When these two rates are taken together (73% in total), it can be concluded that a very significant number of the participants try to sustain their lives with help. A significant number of the respondents (22%) stated that they met their basic needs by working on their own

46% of the participants stated that they did not have children of school age who did not attend school. 21% of the participants stated that they had one child, 14% had two children, 11% had three children, and 8% had four or more than four children not attending school. In total, more than half of the participants (54%) had some of their school-age children not attending school. It was also found that some problems such as language, adaptation and feeling of unfamiliarity were experienced by the children who attended school. A significant number of the participants (57%) stated that their children

who attended school did not face any problems, while 33% stat-ed that their children had language problems and 5% stated that their children faced adaptation problems (Reşat AÇIKGÖZ, 2017).

Some of the questions in the interview form are as follows;

1) Was there a time when you did not feel like you belonged to the school environment, and if so, when did you feel this the most?

2) In which way do you prefer to solve the problems you have with your teachers and friends?

3) Who do you get support from when you have problems, who do you want to be with you?

4) If everything was in your hands, what would you change about your school and education?

The interviews show that most of the children briefly evaluate the positive aspects of being in Turkey as education, security and freedom, and the negative aspects as uncertainty about the future, change in financial opportunities, not being able to make friends, and being far away from family members.

"Actually, I want to go to the USA, I aim to become a pilot. I have the possibility of realizing my goals here, and the education here is quite good" (c1)

"If I were in Afghanistan, I would get married, here I am free, I can go to school and be out whenever I want, nothing happens to anyone, but there is uncertainty here too, I don't know what will happen in the future, no one guides us, no one cares" (c2)

"Here I can play on the street with my friends and go to school, something I could not do in Iran." (c4).

As seen in c1 and c2 and c4, asylum-seeking and migrant students have general expectations, dreams and occupational expectations for the future just like all other students. Although they evaluate Turkey more positively in terms of security and freedoms compared to their countries of origin, the fact that they are not guided academically and the ignoring and disregarding attitudes of educators towards asylum-seeking immigrant students lead them into a void.

"My father and brother are in Germany, there is a long distance between us and them. We can-not go and they cannot come" (c5).

"When we were in Iran, we had a lot of money, my parents were not working. We had a villa and a car. Here, both my mother and father have to work, which makes me very sad."(c16).

Another noteworthy element is that being away from family members, the fact that reuniting with family members depends on procedures that are difficult to overcome and that the old living conditions and the new living conditions do not overlap causes great anxiety and sadness and longing for the past, as can be seen in the discourses of c5 and c16.

The reasons that cause adaptation problems are generally seen as not knowing Turkish, alphabet differences, and differences in intercultural experiences. When it comes to relations with friends and teachers, there is again a lack of communication due to the problem of not knowing the language and problems arising from the peers' view of foreign students, feeling of being ignored and discrimination. Four of the 16 asylum-seeker/immigrant students were found to be friends only with their compatriots or with foreign students. The statements related to the interviews are as follows;

"When I first arrived, I had difficulty because I did not know both the language and the alphabet" (c1).

"When I was new, they would tell me to say something and ask me to repeat it. They would make me say swear words and laugh. It was a very difficult time."(c10).

"When I didn't speak Turkish, I had difficulty making friends, but later when I started to speak, my friends increased."(c11).

"Being away from my family and not knowing the language was a big problem, but after I learned Turkish, I had fewer problems." (c15).

As it is understood, c1, c10, c11 and c15 state that language problem is an important criterion for adaptation. Along with language learning, the ability to make friends, socialize and solve and express problems improves and facilitates adaptation.

"They constantly ask why did you come here, how did you come here, and I am fed up with this situation."(c4)

"My friends at school say I have no right to be here." (c7).

"At first no one talked to me. They would not touch the things I touched, calling them dirty."(c13).

"My friends hit me from time to time. When it doesn't hurt, I don't complain to the teacher, it doesn't hurt much anyway."(c16)

Participants are excluded by their friends in the school environment and exposed to abusive attitude and behaviors. The fact that a large part of the society is prejudiced against foreign nationals and their lack of knowledge is a triggering factor in this regard.

"When I don't understand the lesson, I ask my teacher again, but she doesn't explain it, and when I get a high grade, they say, 'Even this one got a high grade.'"(c12)

"I feel excluded at school. They talk more about the lessons with my Turkish friends. They tell us that we are already passing."(c2).

Stress factors increase in children who experience migration due to not feeling belonging to the country they live in, not knowing the language used, having to live a life different from their previous living conditions, and limitations in many areas (social, economic) make adaptation difficult. The results of the research show that students are ignored by the school system and other support systems and are ostracized by their friends and teachers.

In this section, miracle questions were asked to asylum-seeker and migrant students in order to identify problems through their imagined school environment and imagined lives. In line with these aims, the discourses of the children are as follows:

c1: "I wish there was a school that helped foreign students like me."(c1). c3: "I wish there was someone who introduced the school and the rules. I wish there were more areas in the school where we could draw."(c3)

The results of the research show that students are ignored by the school system and other support systems and are therefore ignored by their friends and teachers.

In the interviews with four refugee and migrant children between the ages of 7-11, it was observed that they were more satisfied with the school environment, their friends and the behavior of their teachers, and that they did not have any problems in adaptation compared to older children. This situation shows that adaptation becomes easier as the age of children attending school decreases, while adaptation becomes more difficult as the age increases.

The fact that students are not guided in line with their future goals and abilities during or after their inclusion in the education system in Turkey creates satisfaction among students. It is possible to say that negative factors inside the school and economic and social isolation out-side the school create

a negative perception of the future and the present in asylum-seeking and migrant students, shake the perception of social justice and cause them to move away from their educational life.

"I would like to be educated in my own language and I would like other students to like me. My future here is uncertain and this makes me anxious."(c4).

"I would like to erase from everyone's minds the times when they made fun of me at school and I would like to change my life with my uncle because the living conditions are very good there."(c2).

"I want the bad ones to be good and I want the canteen to be cheaper so I can eat more chocolate."(c10).

"I even get 65 in physical education class. The teachers treat us differently because we are foreigners. I want them not to discriminate."(c13).

Language barrier is one of the main challenges Syrian students face in the education system. language barrier causes children to be isolated, to have difficulty expressing themselves, and to become withdrawn or show aggressive behaviors due to this situation. School adaptation problems bring along various problems such as failure in classes due to language barrier, not being enrolled in the class appropriate to their age and level, difficulty in communicating with other students in the class, and peer bullying. Lack of teaching materials and inadequate physical infrastructure constitute one of the biggest deficiencies in Syrian children's access to education. This situation also undermines the quality of education. For students who cannot afford educational materials, the education process turns into an inequality of opportunity. Apart from those who can access education, the fact that more than 400,000 Syrian children (UNICEF, 2019) are deprived of education poses great threats, such as children being employed as laborers. Another challenge in the education process of Syrians is the disciplinary problems in educational institutions. This situation is stated as Turkish students being negatively affected by Syrian students, conflicts between students, and Syrian students exhibiting violent behavior. The war in Syria and the adventure of starting a new life afterwards have brought Syrian families and children face the problem of poverty. Inadequate economic factors also cause children to stay away from education, while those who continue to attend school face economic difficulties (Ali Fuat ERSOY, 2019).

## The expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned./ The current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

In the 2016-2017 academic year, arrangements were made for the registration of refugee students under temporary protection to VET schools and vocational training centers.

According to the regulation, refugees who speak Turkish will be directly enrolled in the 9th grade of the VET schools with vacant quotas, provided that they have taken the "Turkish Level A1" program in public education centers or have passed the literacy 1st level placement test.

In this study, which aims to investigate the problems experienced by teachers involved in the education of migrant children and their suggestions for solutions to these problems, the following questions were sought to be answered:

1. What are the linguistic problems you experience while teaching immigrant children? What do you do to solve the problem?

2. Did you receive any training before teaching migrant children? What are the problems experienced in this regard (receiving training)?

3. What difficulties do migrant children experience in receiving education?

4. Do you think education equality should be achieved for migrant children? If you think education equality should be achieved, what can be done in this regard?

The first sub-problem of the study, "What are the linguistic problems you experience while teaching immigrant children? What do you do to solve the problem?" is presented in two separate tables below.

The linguistic problems experienced by teachers while teaching immigrant children are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Linguistic Problems Experienced by Teachers While Teaching Immigrant Children
runes

| No. | Codes | f |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Absence or absence of a common language | 9 |
| 2 | Inability to speak Turkish properly | 6 |
| 3 | pronunciation problems | 5 |
| 4 | Turkish and Arabic show two very different language characteristics. | 5 |
| 5 | Too many linguistic rules | 5 |
| 6 | comprehension difficulties | 4 |
| 7 | Poor vocabulary | 3 |
| 8 | I have no problems | 2 |
| 9 | Misunderstanding of idioms and proverbs | 1 |

Note: There are participants who expressed more than one opinion.

Some teachers' opinions on this question within the scope of the research are given below: "The biggest problem is that Turkish is very different from their own language (Arabic), it comes from a different language family and has many rules." (t26)

"We were having problems communicating with the children because of language differences ..." (t20)

"Children try to express themselves only with certain words while making sentences. They have trouble understanding and expressing themselves." (t18)

"Generally, they have difficulty in the pronunciation of letters that are not in the Arabic alpha-bet. Students have problems in the use of suffixes." (T14)

"Vocabulary is the biggest problem I have. To give a very simple example, when I say "Use your pencil sharpeners at recess", I have to explain what a pencil sharpener is." (S11)

Teachers' suggestions for solving the linguistic problems they experience while teaching migrant children are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Suggestions Offered by Teachers to Solve the Linguistic Problems They Experience While Teaching Immigrant Children

| No. | Codes | f |
|-----|-------|---|
| 1 | Use of images | 6 |
| 2 | Communicating with someone who speaks Arabic and Turkish in the classroom or learning environment | 5 |
| 3 | Repetition and practice | 4 |
| 4 | Trying to communicate through signs/sign language | 3 |
| 5 | Demonstration/use of various methods/techniques/formulas | 2 |
| 6 | Direction to Turkish courses | 1 |
| 7 | trying to improve oneself | 1 |
| 8 | Use of gestures and facial expressions | 1 |
| 9 | No special effort required | 1 |

Some of the teachers' views on this question within the scope of the research are given below:

"I try to communicate through signs or I communicate with someone who speaks Arabic and Turkish" (t3)

"It is necessary and even obligatory to direct children to supplementary Turkish courses outside of school." (t5)

"I do repetitions on sounds. I try to practice." (t7)

"I contact the interpreter student to solve the problem." (t9)

"I try to solve this problem with sign language and picture word cards (visuals)." (t24)

Table 4. Whether Teachers Received Any Training Before Teaching Immigrant Children

| No. | Codes | f |
|-----|-------|---|
| 1 | I received education. | 10 |
| 2 | I did not receive any training. | 18 |

Table 4 shows whether the teachers received any training before teaching migrant students.

The difficulties that teachers experience in receiving training before teaching migrant children are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Difficulties Experienced by Teachers in Receiving Education Before Teaching Immigrant Children

| No. | Codes | f |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The training provided is based on theoretical knowledge | 12 |
| 2 | Lack/absence of experts | 10 |
| 3 | Resource/material shortage | 9 |
| 4 | System problem/deficiency | 8 |
| 5 | Not seeing any problems | 2 |

Note: There are participants who expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the teachers' opinions on this question within the scope of the research are given below: "I took a 2-week seminar before teaching. The process could be more systematic and planned. It is necessary to work with people who develop themselves in this field and especially with people who love this job. More and more concrete materials are needed." (t26)

"Yes, I received training. The people who provide training lack practice because they are not in the field." (t21)

"I took various seminars. The biggest problem in this regard is the lack of resources." (t24)

The question "What difficulties do migrant children experience in receiving education?" is presented in the table below.

Table 6. Difficulties Encountered by Immigrant Children in Obtaining Education

| No. | Codes | f |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | linguistic problems | 14 |
| 2 | lack of motivation | 8 |
| 3 | Rapport | 7 |
| 4 | Lack of suitable learning environment | 7 |
| 5 | Lack of guidance and counseling training | 5 |
| 6 | cultural troubles | 3 |
| 7 | Being excluded by their peers | 3 |
| 8 | Resource/material shortage | 3 |
| 9 | Non-experts attending classes | 3 |
| 10 | Economic problems | 2 |
| 11 | Lack of family support | 1 |

Note: There are participants who expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the teachers' views on this question within the scope of the research are given below:

"Because of the language, they have difficulty understanding their peers, teachers and expressing themselves." (t28)

"There is a shortage of equipment and a shortage of suitable environments for them to receive education. Especially in young individuals, there is a problem in wanting to learn a language or seeing it as a need. There are problems in language exposure." (t26)

"I do not think that teachers are effective enough in Arabic because they have different branches in this subject. Because many teachers are not graduated from their field. Students also have difficulties while receiving Turkish education due to language problems." (t20)

"Difficulties in social acceptance, linguistic and cultural difficulties." (t20)

"I think the fact that they are isolated in the classroom, they cannot understand the lesson, they cannot participate in the lesson, sometimes they cannot laugh because they do not even under-stand the jokes creates a spiritual deficiency, an exclusion." (t11)

Table 7. Whether or not teachers think that educational equality should be ensured for immigrant children

| No. | Codes | f |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Yeah I think. | 24 |
| 2 | No I do not think. | 4 |

The question "Do you think that educational equality should be ensured for migrant children? If you think that educational equality should be ensured, what can be done in this regard?" is presented in two separate tables below. Table 7 shows whether teachers think that educational equality should be ensured for migrant students.

Sample opinions of teachers who do not think that educational equality should be provided for immigrant students are given below:

"I do not see injustices in terms of educational equality, they can receive education in their own language and specialize in this field in the future." (T20)

"As an individual who thinks that the education of the children of his/her own country is not enough, I have not yet developed an idea of equality for immigrant students." (T17)

The suggestions of teachers who think that educational equality should be ensured for migrant children are given in Table 8.

Table 8. Suggestions of Teachers Who Think Educational Equality Should Be Ensured for Immigrant Children

| No. | Codes | f |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Organizing language courses | 16 |
| 2 | Establishment of various commissions | 8 |
| 3 | Creation of preparatory classes | 8 |
| 4 | Giving orientation training | 6 |
| 5 | Providing education to parents | 6 |
| 6 | Preparation of a joint plan and program | 5 |
| 7 | Preparation of the legal basis | 3 |
| 8 | Appointment of teachers who speak Arabic | 3 |
| 9 | Having translators in classrooms | 2 |
| 10 | Increasing lesson hours | 1 |
| 11 | Studying in the same environment with normal students (non-immigrants) | 1 |

Note: There are participants who expressed more than one opinion.

Some of the teachers' views on this question within the scope of the research are given below: "There should be equality in education and the necessary ground and time should be provided." (t2) "Language courses can be organized for them quickly." (t4)

"First of all, Turkish courses should be compulsory for children starting from preschool period. The earlier the language education, the better. Even parents should be included in this process. Turkish courses should be made more widespread and should be of high quality." (t26)

"I think that having an interpreter for each class would help overcome these problems." (t7)

"I think it is wrong for these children to start school directly with their peers. I think they should study in a class similar to a preparatory class to learn Turkish and speak Turkish, and then move on to normal class levels." (t11)

"Education is the right of every child. I am in favour of teaching the language through preparatory classes before providing education." (t24)

"Everyone should be accepted as an individual and education should be provided on equal terms with a common plan and program for everyone." (t28)

(Aydeniz, 2021)

# The availability of tools, materials and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children for the staff and institutions of the VET sector.

Ten of the interviewed teachers stated that they used different materials during the teaching process. EBA (Education Information Network) and smart boards are the most frequently used visual tools. Worksheets and textbooks were the most frequently used re-sources by traditional teachers (n=11). It was understood that teachers used textbooks but did not find them appropriate in terms of inclusiveness. Three of the teachers (n=3) reported that students came to classes without equipment and that they were negatively affected by this. Five teachers claimed that in many respects the textbooks were not appropriate for any child's.

The statements pointing to the comments are as follows:

We try to use our smart board as much as possible. We try to use EBA. There are other resources we can use other than EBA. They are more active on the smart board. For example, even if they make a mistake, they get up, they are physically active.

In order to explain the subway and tram to the child, you say that they go underground, for example the train, but it is so difficult for the child to understand that it goes under-ground. I explain this by turning on the CCTV cameras.

There are no examples etc. in the books that are suitable for their own culture. I don't find the books very appropriate, so the students must feel a sense of foreignness.

Now, when we teach with foreign students, we cannot find a proper resource prepared for them. We are struggling along with them.

Textbooks are not suitable. Our biggest helper is EBA. There are so many materials on EBA. With materials at different levels, we support some of our students from books and some from the screen with EBA.

Measurement and Evaluation

Almost all of the teachers involved in this study (n=18) were found to use summative, outcome-focused assessments that focus on accountability purposes and testable academic skills. These participants explained that they did not make any differentiation in assessment and that they assessed refugee children just like their peers. They emphasized that there was no effort on their part in this regard, as there was no suggestion from school administrators. They stated that their practices towards refugee children were un-fair for both them and other children, but they did not know how to measure and evaluate them.

The lack of clear and guiding texts on inclusive assessment in Turkey may be a reason for teachers' lack of knowledge. Three of the teachers (n=3) stated that they assessed students according to level and using different tools. Foreign national students can be assessed with 4 different approaches: outcome, process, informal and formal. Five of the teachers (n=5) stated that they raise the grades of foreign students even if they are low, but this situation disturbs them conscientiously because it is unfair to others.

The sub-theme of measurement and evaluation can be summarized as follows:

In measurement and evaluation, we don't apply different exams to these children, we don't know if we should apply different exams. We don't know if our practice is in accordance with the rules. Honestly, we haven't been told anything about this. Prepare separate questions for your Syrian students

or prepare questions like this, so we don't know exactly how to do it. Honestly, we don't know exactly what to do about it.

Unfortunately, we have a standardized written assessment. There are easy questions that everyone can do. The same questions are asked in exams. The assessment and evaluation is the same, only they are allowed to pass. The techniques are the same. There is no failing a class.

A mathematics teacher with 13 years of seniority stated that they had to prefer multiple choice tests among the measurement tools because they thought that students could get higher grades by chance success.

"Actually, this is a very deep issue. For example, when I measure the mathematics skills of Syrian students, I do not evaluate them in the same way as when I measure the mathematics skills of Turkish students in my class. I definitely evaluate them on a student basis. I do this separately for foreign students."

A classroom teacher who stated that their workload became too much when they planned to assess students according to their levels said, "We apply different exams to students with different levels. Therefore, sometimes the teacher cannot leave the classroom, so one hour feels like 3-5 hours to us." (Başaran, 2021)

# Part II – Interviews

**Introduction**

In this part of the report, we present crucial findings from the Individual In-Depth Interviews conducted with representatives of the VET sector, carried out in Turkey, at Kepez Ozel Egitim Meslek Lisesi. The main goal of these interviews was to capture a comprehensive picture of the migrant/refugee issues within the partner regions/countries, to understand and identify daily challenges faced by migrants and refugees. This understanding aims to facilitate the identification of effective measures to ameliorate their conditions and evaluate how project results might be useful in achieving these improvements.

**Interview Objectives**

The interviews aimed to:

- Identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children regarding integration.

- Understand the daily difficulties faced by migrants/refugees.

- Learn about the real-life problems and expectations of VET staff concerning the integration process of migrants/refugees.

- Determine the current needs, expectations, and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

- Enhance the availability of tools, materials, and knowledge exchange to assist refugee children effectively.

- Raise awareness about the migrant/refugee situation in the region/country.

**Methodology**

The interviews were conducted on September 18, 2024, with two representatives who work closely with migrants and their children in Turkey. Each session covered a set of five targeted questions.

**Key Findings**

**1. Integration Challenges for Migrants and Refugees:**

- Respondents identified language barriers, access to jobs, education, and social integration as significant hurdles. Additionally, the allocation of insufficient resources exacerbated by internal issues in Turkey leads to strained public services and societal tensions.

**2. Challenges Faced by VET Staff:**

- VET personnel face difficulties adapting educational programs for refugees due to a lack of vocational education staff trained to manage cultural and language differences. There is also a significant deficiency in educational materials tailored for refugees.

**3. Needs and Difficulties of VET Teachers Working with Refugee Children:**

- Teachers require more resources and programs that bridge language and cultural divides, emphasizing the need for psychological support and educational approaches that consider the trauma experienced by refugee children.

**4. Availability of Educational Tools and Materials:**

- There is a need for materials that address language barriers and programs that foster understanding of cultural differences. Successful initiatives include integrated culinary training programs in vocational schools that enhance both skills and cultural integration.

**5. Additional Comments and Suggestions:**

- Respondents emphasized the ongoing need for support in the face of financial cutbacks and highlighted the challenges faced by specific groups such as the elderly among the refugee population. The call for better coordination between governmental and local institutions was noted as essential for improving integration processes.

**Conclusion**

The interviews highlight a complex array of integration challenges faced by migrants and refugees in Turkey, spanning educational, social, and resource-related issues. Both VET representatives stressed the urgent need for improved educational resources, better language support, and comprehensive integration programs. Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders to enhance the support structures for migrants and refugees in Turkey.

# Part III - Online survey

In this part of the report we will present the findings from survey research conducted in Turkey among VET staff. An online survey was conducted (using Google forms) from October 13 to October 25, 2024.
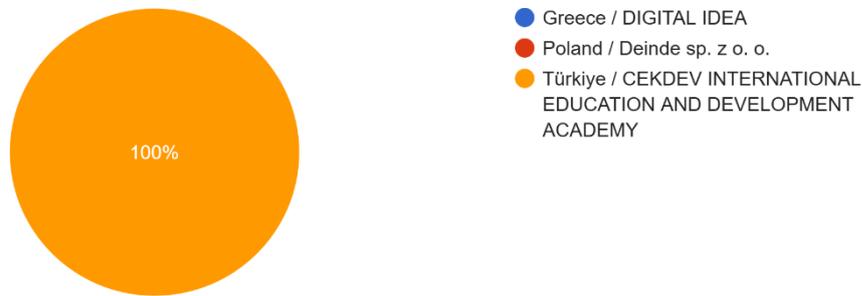
The aim of the survey was to specify the broad picture of migrant/refugee issues in the project's countries to fully realize and understand the situation.

In more details, the aims were:

- to identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children in the integration process.

- to specify the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

- to raise awareness of the migrant/refugee situation in region/country.

- The survey was anonymous. The questionnaire comprised 17 questions. A total of 12 people representing VET sector in Turkey participated in the research.

1. From which country are you completing the survey / from which institution did you receive the invitation to complete the survey? 1. Anketi hangi ...i doldurmanız için daveti hangi kurumdan aldınız?
12 responses



- Greece / DIGITAL IDEA
- Poland / Deinde sp. z o. o.
- Türkiye / CEKDEV INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY

100%

All 12 respondents indicated that they completed the survey in Turkey, having received the invitation from CEKDEV International Education and Development Academy.

2. Please specify your most relevant professional position in the vocational education and training (VET) / education system: 2. Lütfen mesleki eğitim v...içindeki en ilgili mesleki pozisyonunuzu belirtiniz:
12 responses



- Teacher/Öğretmen
- Coach/Koç
- Carrier counselor/Kariyer Danışman
- Trainer/Eğitmen
- Facilitator/Kolaylaştırıcı
- Tutor/Öğretici
- Evaluator/Değerlendirici
- Okul müdürü

91.7%

8.3%
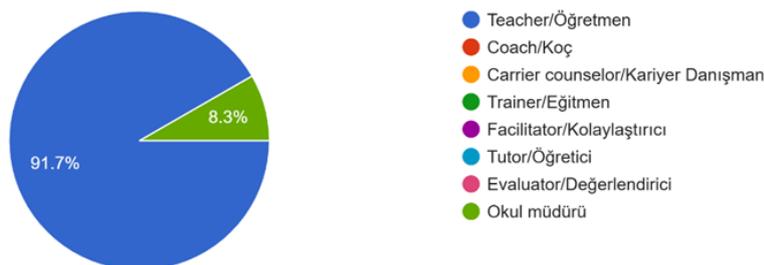
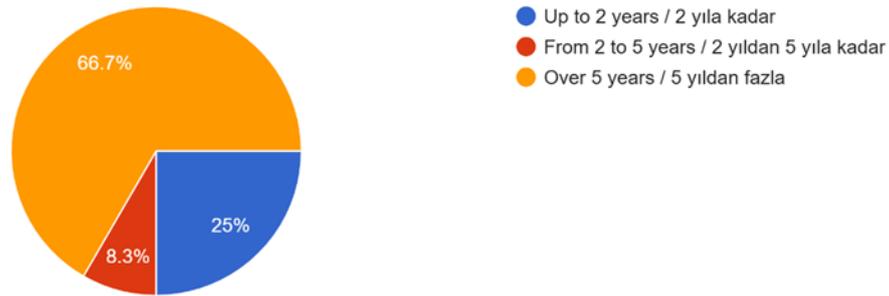In a survey regarding professional positions within the vocational education and training (VET) system, 91.7% of the 12 respondents identified themselves as teachers, while the re-maining 8.3% reported holding other roles.

3. How long have you been working in the VET sector/education system? 3. Mesleki eğitim ve öğretim (VET) sektöründe/eğitim sisteminde ne kadar süredir çalışıyorsunuz?
12 responses



- Up to 2 years / 2 yıla kadar
- From 2 to 5 years / 2 yıldan 5 yıla kadar
- Over 5 years / 5 yıldan fazla

In response to the question about experience in the VET sector, 66.7% of the 12 respondents reported over five years of experience, 25% had up to two years, and 8.3% had between two and five years. This indicates that most participants are highly experienced in the field.

4. What do you think are the most important needs of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 mos...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.
12 responses
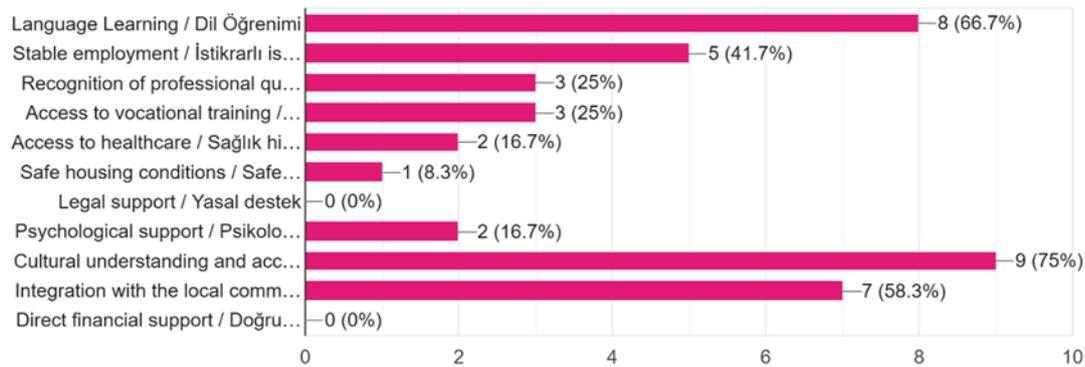


When asked about the most important needs for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process, 66.7% of respondents highlighted language learning, 75% identified cultural under-standing and acceptance, and 58.3% emphasized integration with the local community. Other notable needs included stable employment (41.7%) and access to vocational training (25%). These responses indicate a strong focus on social and cultural integration as key factors for successful refugee support.

5. In your opinion, what are the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 mos...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses



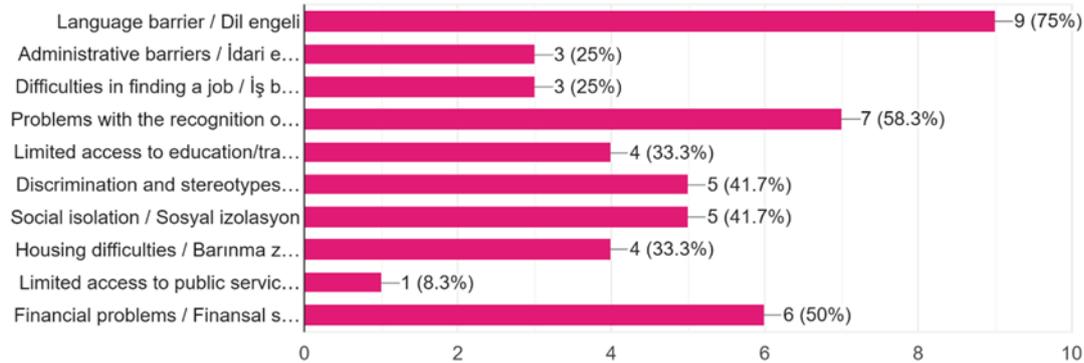| Need | Count (%) |
|---|---|
| Language learning / Dil öğrenimi | 6 (50%) |
| Access to institutional childcare... | 2 (16.7%) |
| Integration with peers / Akranla... | 7 (58.3%) |
| Psychological support / Psikolo... | 6 (50%) |
| Cultural understanding and acc... | 6 (50%) |
| Support in learning / Öğrenme... | 5 (41.7%) |
| Opportunity to participate in ext... | 1 (8.3%) |
| Help in adapting to a new envir... | 8 (66.7%) |
| Access to healthcare / Sağlık hi... | 0 (0%) |
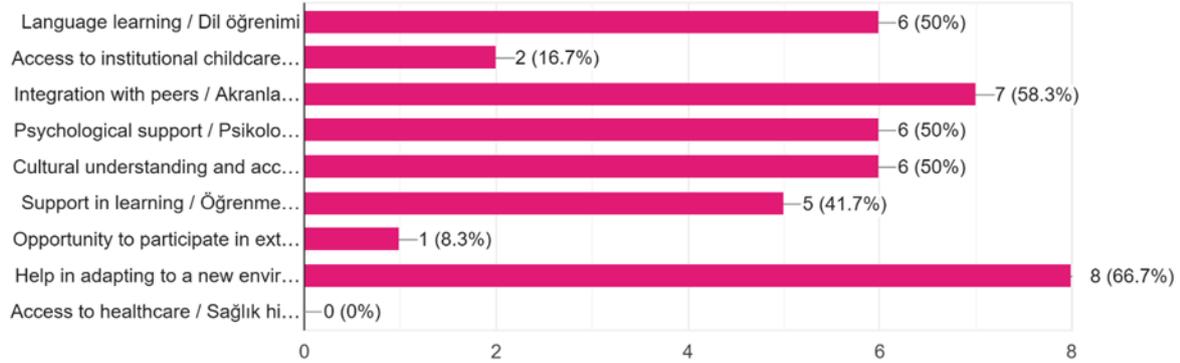
For the integration needs of migrant/refugee children, 66.7% of respondents identified help in adapting to a new environment as the most important need. Other significant needs include integration with peers (58.3%), along with language learning, psychological support, and cultural understanding, each noted by 50% of respondents. These findings underscore the importance of social and emotional support in aiding children's successful integration.

6. What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select ...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses



| Difficulty | Count (%) |
|---|---|
| Language barrier / Dil engeli | 9 (75%) |
| Administrative barriers / İdari e... | 3 (25%) |
| Difficulties in finding a job / İş b... | 3 (25%) |
| Problems with the recognition o... | 7 (58.3%) |
| Limited access to education/tra... | 4 (33.3%) |
| Discrimination and stereotypes... | 5 (41.7%) |
| Social isolation / Sosyal izolasyon | 5 (41.7%) |
| Housing difficulties / Barınma z... | 4 (33.3%) |
| Limited access to public servic... | 1 (8.3%) |
| Financial problems / Finansal s... | 6 (50%) |

According to respondents, the primary difficulty for adult migrants/refugees is the language barrier, cited by 75% of participants. Other significant challenges include issues with recognition of qualifications (58.3%), financial problems (50%), and social isolation and discrimination (41.7% each). These findings highlight both linguistic and socio-economic barriers as major obstacles to integration.

7. What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country? Please select ...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses
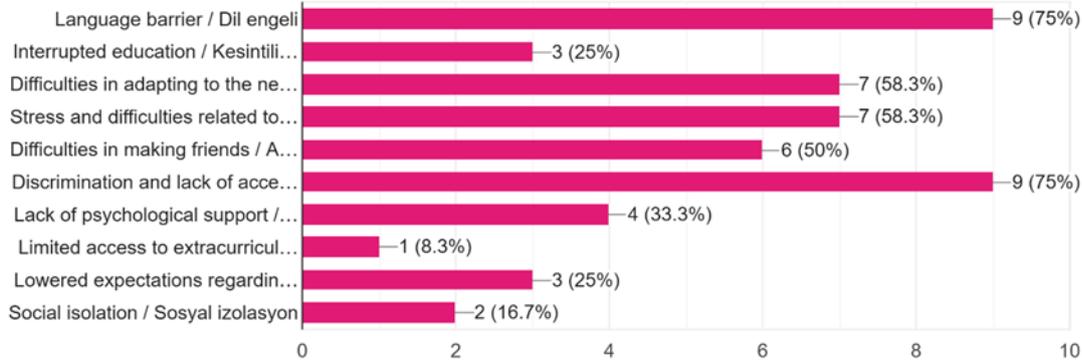


Respondents identified language barriers and discrimination as the top challenges for migrant/refugee children, each cited by 75% of participants. Difficulties in adapting to the new environment and stress related to trauma were also significant, each mentioned by 58.3%. These findings emphasize both social and emotional hurdles that affect the integration of mi-grant/refugee children.

8. What do you think are the key opportunities for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country? Please select up to 5 mos...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses
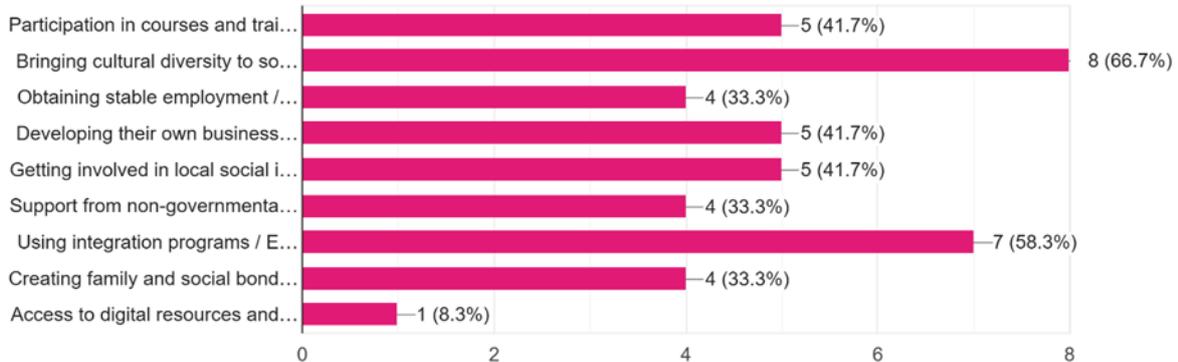


For adult migrants/refugees, 66.7% of respondents identified bringing cultural diversity to society as a key opportunity, followed by 58.3% who mentioned the use of integration pro-grams. Participation in training, stable employment, and involvement in local social initiatives were each noted by 41.7%, highlighting both cultural and social integration opportunities.

9. What do you think are the key opportunities for migrant/refugee children in the integration process? in our country? Please select up to 5 mo...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses
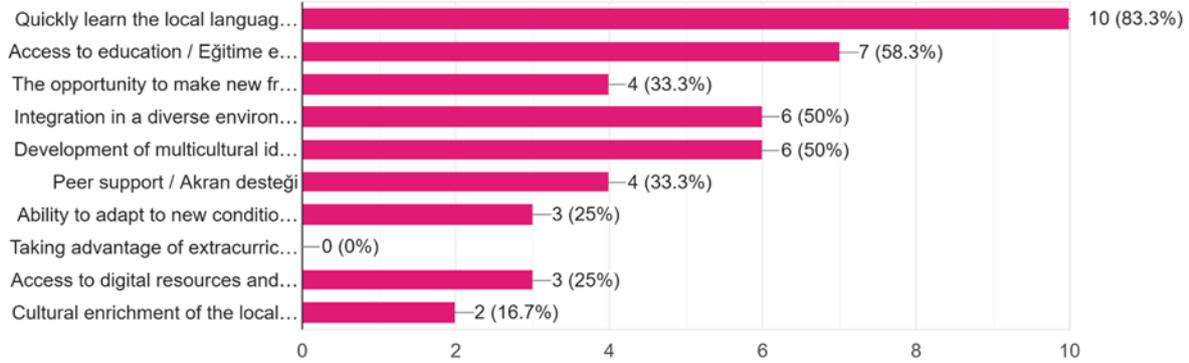


For migrant/refugee children, 83.3% of respondents highlighted learning the local language as the top opportunity, followed by 58.3% who emphasized access to education. Half of the respondents identified integration in a diverse environment and the development of a multi-cultural identity as important opportunities, pointing to a focus on both linguistic and cultural integration.

10. In your opinion, what are, the everyday problems, difficulties and challenges for educational/training staff working with migrant/re...nemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses



For educational staff working with migrant/refugee children, 58.3% of respondents cited difficulties in communication and limited time for individual support as major challenges. Other significant issues include dealing with student trauma, integrating students into the local community, and adaptation issues, each noted by 50% of respondents. These responses emphasize both communication barriers and resource limitations in supporting refugee children effectively.

11. In your opinion, what are the needs and expectations of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their i…önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses
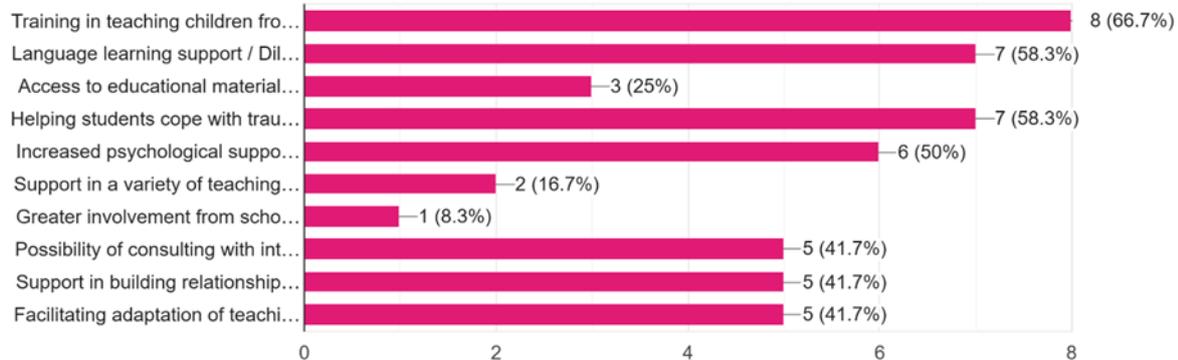


The main needs of educational staff working with migrant/refugee children include training in teaching children from different backgrounds (66.7%) and language learning support (58.3%). Additionally, 58.3% of respondents highlighted the need for support in helping students cope with trauma. These responses indicate a strong demand for both specialized training and psychological support resources.

12. How do you assess the effectiveness of existing integration strategies used in educational institutions in the integration of refugee/migrant ch…diriyorsunuz? Lütfen en alakalı olan cevabı seçiniz.

12 responses



- Very effective – strategies are well adapted and produce positive results /…
- Effective - but requires some corrections and adjustments to the actual needs o…
- Partially effective – some aspects are well implemented, but there are signifi…
- Properly implemented - but their impact on children's integration is limited by l…
- Ineffective – current strategies fail to address key integration challenges. /…

In assessing the effectiveness of existing integration strategies, 25% of respondents rated them as partially effective, effective with adjustments needed, or properly implemented but limited in impact. However, 25% of respondents considered the intervention ineffective. Meanwhile, 16.7% considered the strategies adequately implemented but with limited impact, and only 8.3% rated them as very effective. This feedback suggests mixed satisfaction with current integration efforts, with many seeing room for improvement.

13. Is the support offered by the state system (e.g. Ministry of Education, Education Board) for educational/training staff working with migrant/ref...ygun mudur? Lütfen en alakalı olan cevabı seçiniz.

12 responses
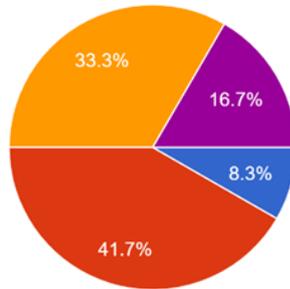


- Yes, the support is sufficient and well-adapted to my needs. / Evet, destek y…
- Yes, but there are some areas where support could be more tailored to ever…
- Some support is useful, but there is a lack of detailed resources and training…
- No, support is available but is too general and needs to be better tailore…
- No, support is insufficient and does not meet my basic needs. / Hayır, destek…

Regarding state support for educational staff working with migrant/refugee children, 41.7% indicated that support is available but needs to be more tailored, and 33.3% felt that while some support is useful, detailed resources and training are lacking. Only 8.3% found the sup-port sufficient, while 16.7% deemed it insufficient. These responses suggest that current sup-port is seen as present but inadequate in meeting specific needs.

14. Does the educational institution where you work offer its own support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their int...i sunuyor mu? Lütfen en alakalı olan cevabı seçiniz.

12 responses
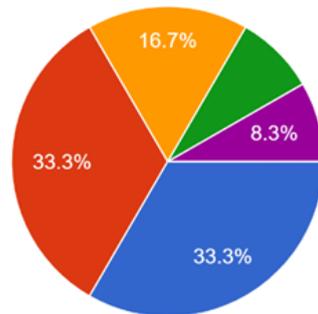


- Yes, it offers comprehensive support, including training and educational mat…
- Yes, but support is limited to basic training and resources. / Evet, ancak…
- Yes, but support is only available on an ad hoc basis, no permanent programs…
- Partially, support is available, but it needs to be improved and expanded.…
- No, it does not currently offer adequate staff support. / Hayır, şu anda yeterli p…

In terms of institutional support for staff working with refugee/migrant children, 33.3% indicated that support is comprehensive and offers training and educational material. However, another 33.3% of respondents noted that support is limited to basic resources only. Then 16.7% considered current support to be available but only on an ad hoc basis. Another 8.3% considered it insufficient. These responses suggest that institutional support is often insufficient or lacks coherence.

15. What support would be most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their i...önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz beş tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses

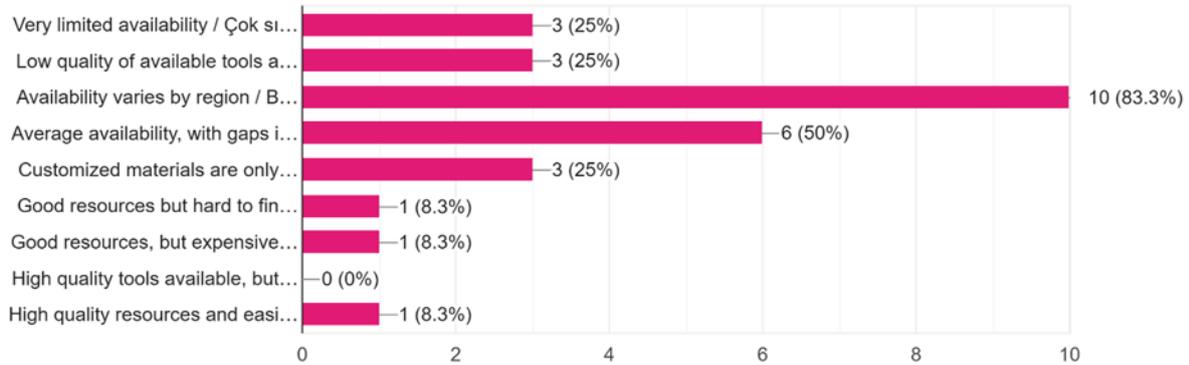| Option | Count |
| --- | --- |
| Training in working with childre… | 7 (58.3%) |
| Psychological support and cou… | 2 (16.7%) |
| Access to specialized educatio… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Foreign language learning prog… | 6 (50%) |
| Consultations with integration e… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Easier access to educational te… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Support groups and networks f… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Support in dealing with student… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Training in managing diversity i… | 4 (33.3%) |
| Helping build relationships with… | 6 (50%) |
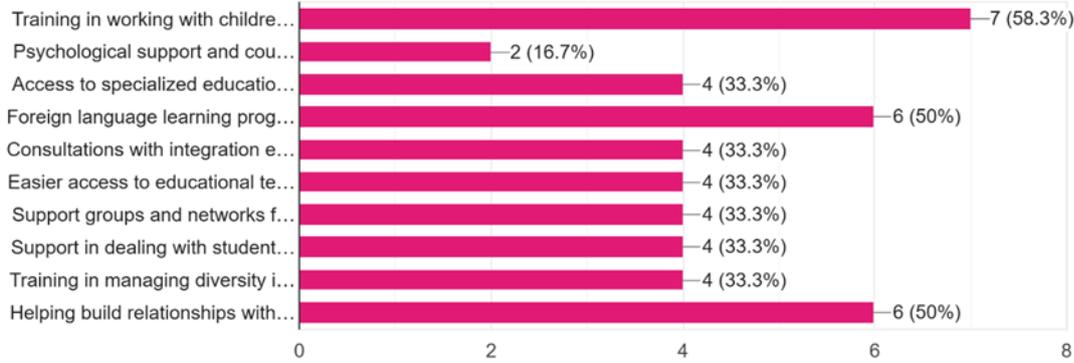
For supporting educational staff working with migrant/refugee children, 58.3% of respondents prioritized training in working with children from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, 50% identified foreign language learning programs and support for building relationships with families as important. These responses highlight the need for specialized training and resources to aid effective integration.

16. How would you rate the availability of effective and adequate educational tools and materials for educational/training staff working with migrant/re...önemli olduğunu düşündüğünüz üç tanesini seçiniz.

12 responses

| Option | Count |
| --- | --- |
| Very limited availability / Çok sı… | 3 (25%) |
| Low quality of available tools a… | 3 (25%) |
| Availability varies by region / B… | 10 (83.3%) |
| Average availability, with gaps i… | 6 (50%) |
| Customized materials are only… | 3 (25%) |
| Good resources but hard to fin… | 1 (8.3%) |
| Good resources, but expensive… | 1 (8.3%) |
| High quality tools available, but… | 0 (0%) |
| High quality resources and easi… | 1 (8.3%) |

Regarding the availability of educational tools for staff working with migrant/refugee children, 83.3% of respondents indicated 83.3% of respondents noted that availability varies across regions. In addition, 50% of respondents indicated "average availability with gaps in quality and access." This suggests that while resources are present, they are not accessible to all, often lacking consistency and tailored content.

# Conclusions

The research findings from our national report underscore several critical challenges and gaps in the integration of migrant and refugee children within Turkey's educational and vocational systems. Key issues include significant language barriers, limited availability of specialized resources, and inconsistent institutional support, all of which complicate the integration process. These obstacles impact both the students, who face challenges in adapting and thriving academically, and the VET staff, who require more resources and training to effectively address the unique needs of these children.

The responses reveal a pressing need for cohesive and culturally responsive educational strategies that prioritize both the linguistic and emotional well-being of migrant and refugee children. Many VET professionals expressed the need for improved access to training, practical tools, and institutional support mechanisms that enable them to better support the integration of these students. Moreover, the findings indicate that current integration efforts are perceived as insufficient, highlighting the necessity for enhancements in both quality and accessibility of support.

To foster a more inclusive educational environment, it is essential to adopt a collaborative approach involving educators, institutions, and policymakers. This partnership can help create a more supportive framework that not only facilitates refugee children's adaptation but also empowers VET staff to contribute effectively to this process.

# Chapter 3 - National Research in Greece

# Part I – Desk Research

Refugees play an essential role in Greece's migration picture. Greece is a country of first reception for many refugees from countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq seeking safety in Europe. EU policies on migration from non-EU countries are increasingly concerned with attracting a specific profile of migrants, often to mitigate shortages of specific skills.

The integration of migrants and refugees into Greek society is a challenge. Language, culture, access to education and employment are barriers to smooth integration. Greece, Poland and Turkey face similar problems in integrating refugee children into their education systems. Important issues include significant language barriers, limited availability of specialised resources and inconsistent institutional support, which complicate the integration process.

In Turkey, refugees face difficulties in terms of language learning, access to jobs, education and social integration. In Poland, refugee children often experience stress and alienation. In addition, the lack of appropriate textbooks and insufficient teaching assistants makes their education difficult. Schools sometimes do not respond effectively to incidents of discrimination and hostility experienced by pupils from other countries.

Addressing these challenges requires implementing comprehensive policies that focus on providing housing, health care, education, and employment opportunities for migrants and refugees. Raising societal awareness and combating discrimination are also essential prerequisites for successful integration.

Creating a more integrated educational environment requires a collaborative approach involving educators, institutions and policymakers. This collaboration can help create a framework that facilitates the adaptation of refugee children and empowers Vocational Education and Training (VET) staff to contribute effectively to this process.

According to data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), the estimated population of Greece on 1 January 2023 decreased by 0.17% compared to 2022. This decrease is due to a negative immigration balance. Nevertheless, migration flows to Greece partially compensate for the natural decline in population. At the beginning of 2023, the population of Greece was estimated at 10,413,982 persons, a reduction of 0.5% compared to 2022. This decrease is due to the natural decline in population (more deaths than births). However, net migration (difference between immigrants and migrants) was positive, reaching 16,355 persons. This means that more people emigrated to Greece than left in 2022. In 2021, net migration was negative (-22,476 people). It is important to note that the migration figures include people seeking international or temporary protection (HELLENIC STATISTICAL AUTHORITY, 2024).

The Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) announced data on Greece's estimated resident population on 1 January 2023 and estimates of migration flows for 2022. The population is estimated based on vital statistics annual data for 2022 and estimations of migration flows during 2022 (immigration and emigration).

- Net migration is estimated at 16,355 persons, corresponding to the difference between 96,662 immigrants and 80,307 emigrants. In 2021, net migration was estimated at -22,476 persons (57,120 immigrants and 79,596 emigrants). It should be noted that immigration data also includes people living in the Country on 1.1.2023 requesting international or temporary protection.

- Migration flows were estimated (except persons related to international or temporary protection requests) using appropriate regression models.
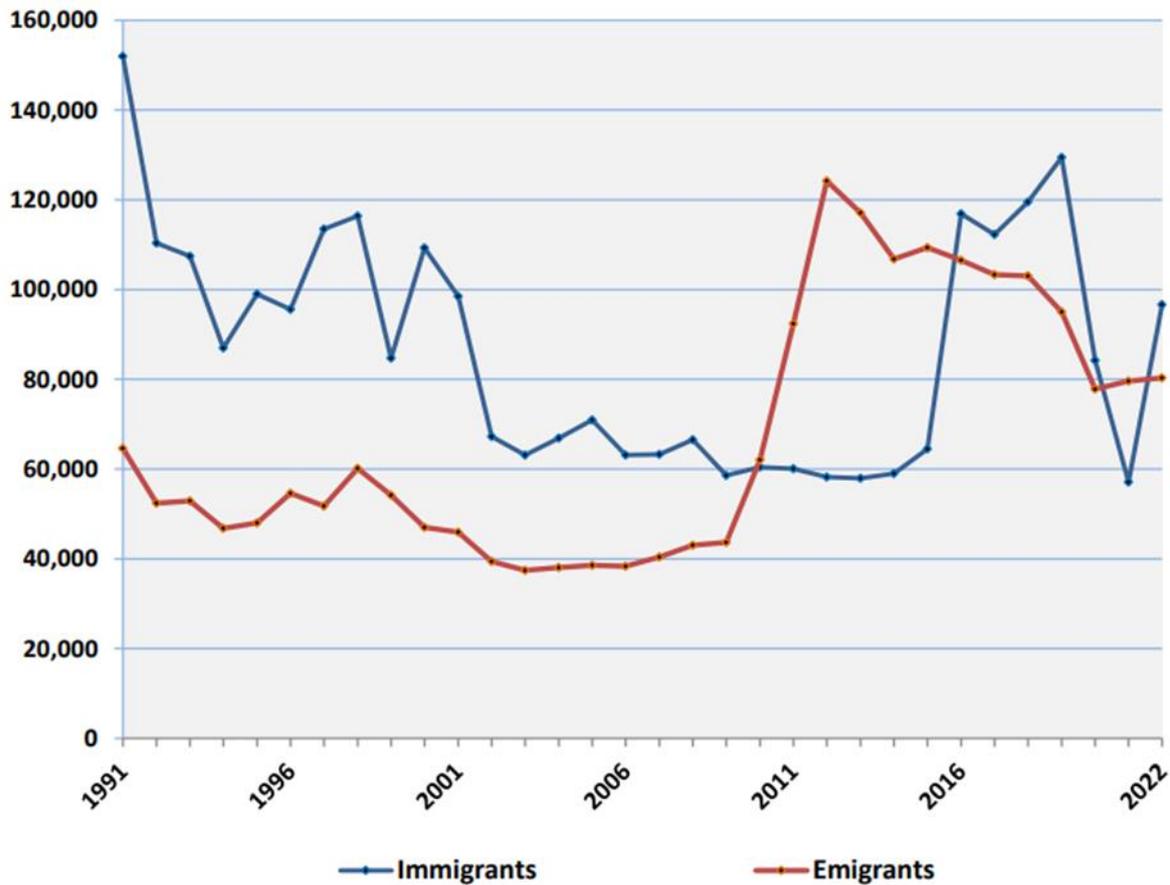


*Figure 1 Immigrants – Emigrants, 1991 – 2022 (HELLENIC STATISTICAL AUTHORITY, 2024)*

EU migration policies are influenced by a combination of factors, including:

- Economic needs: EU policies on migration from non-EU countries are increasingly concerned with attracting a particular profile of migrants, often attempting to mitigate shortages of specific skills.

- Demographic trends: The ageing population in many EU Member States is creating a need for labour from third countries.

- Political instability and conflict: Wars and persecution in various parts of the world have led to large refugee flows to the EU.

- Social concerns: Migration often raises concerns among sections of society about issues such as security, integration, and cultural identity.

- Solidarity and responsibility sharing: The distribution of responsibilities for managing migration flows between EU Member States is a friction point.

- Human rights: The EU has commitments to protect human rights, including the right to asylum.

These factors are interlinked and influence the formulation of migration policies in the EU, making the issue complex and requiring a balance between different objectives and priorities (Greek Council for Refugees, 2024).
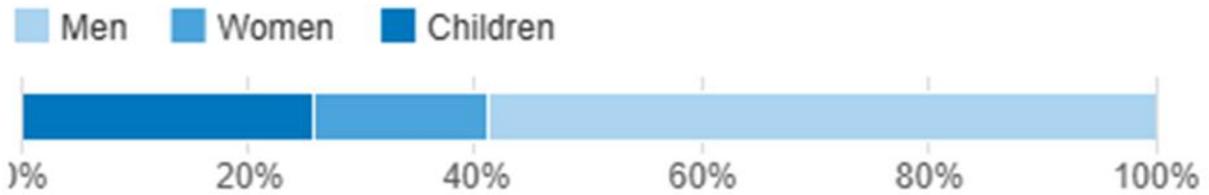


*Figure 2 Demographics (based on data from January 2024)* (Operation Data Portal, 2024)
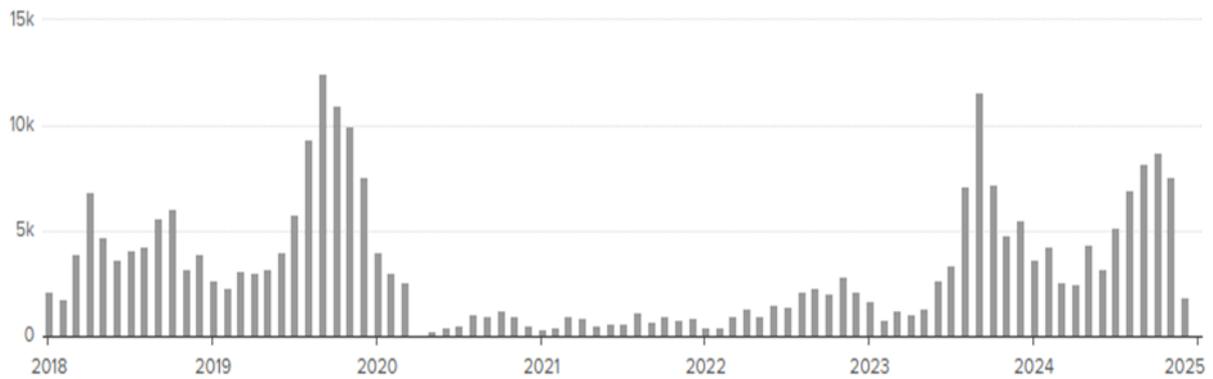


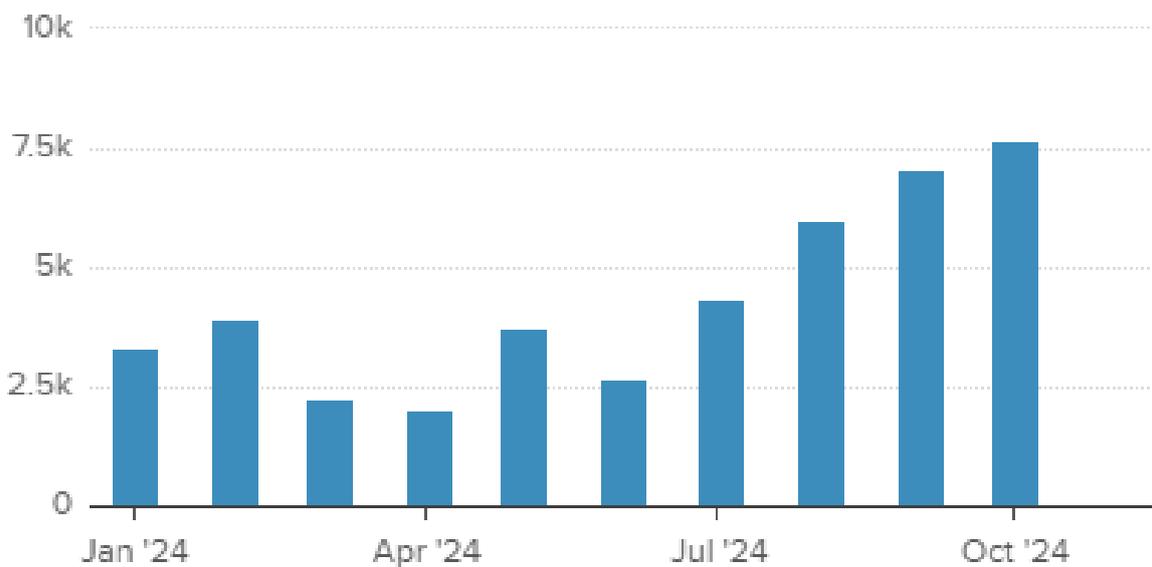*Figure 3 Sea and land arrivals monthly* (Operation Data Portal, 2024)



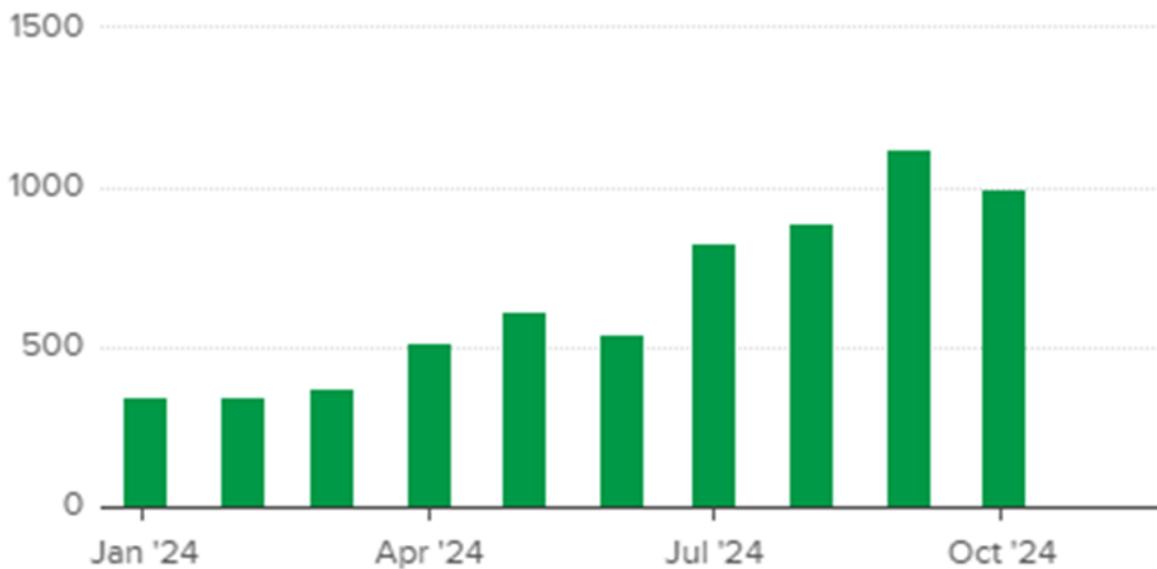*Figure 4 Sea arrivals by month – 2024* (Operation Data Portal, 2024)

*Figure 5 Land arrivals by month – 2024* (Operation Data Portal, 2024)

## The migrant/refugee situation in the Partner's region/country.

Over the past decade and a half, Greece has been at the forefront of Europe's migration and refugee landscape, serving both as an entry point and, in some cases, a host country for thousands of individuals fleeing conflict, persecution, and economic hardship. This situation has significantly influenced local communities, educational institutions, and vocational education and training (VET) systems. The successful integration of refugee and migrant children into local communities, and, by extension, their integration into formal education and VET pathways, is crucial for building inclusive, resilient societies and unlocking these young individuals' potential.

This analysis report, produced within the framework of the Erasmus+ "HELP VET" initiative, aims to examine the key dimensions of migrant and refugee integration in Greece, focusing on how VET staff and institutions can be better equipped to support refugee children. The following chapters delve into the evolving migration context in Greece, the pressing needs of migrants and refugees, the daily realities and struggles of VET professionals, and the availability of tools and resources for enhanced educational and social inclusion strategies.

Greece, a country with a long migration history, has faced significant challenges in managing migration and refugee flows in recent decades. As a gateway to the European Union, its geographical location makes it a point of entry for many people seeking safety and better living conditions.

The migration and refugee situation in Greece over the last 10–15 years cannot be understood in isolation; geopolitical crises shape it, European Union (EU) policies, and Greece's unique geographic and historical position as a migration gateway. This chapter provides a thorough overview of the evolving patterns of migration, the profiles of newcomers, and the policy frameworks and institutional arrangements that have attempted to address the multiple challenges these inflows pose. Together, these factors form the backdrop against which efforts to integrate refugee children into local communities and educational pathways, especially in VET settings, take place.

*Historical Context and Migration Routes*

Greece's role in Europe's migration narrative intensified significantly in the early 2010s. Before this, Greece had experienced various migration waves during the 1990s and early 2000s, mainly from the Balkans, Eastern Europe, and some Middle Eastern and African countries. However, the onset of the Syrian Civil War in 2011 and ensuing instability in the Middle East, coupled with continuing conflicts and deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and beyond, transformed the Eastern Mediterranean route into one of the principal corridors for refugees heading to Europe.

From around 2014 onward, the Aegean Sea islands of Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Kos, and Leros emerged as frontline entry points. The year 2015 marked a watershed moment, as over 850,000 refugees and migrants crossed into Greece, predominantly via the short maritime passage from Turkey to the Greek islands. This period became known as the height of the "European refugee crisis," with harrowing images of overcrowded boats and families seeking safety sparking intense public debates, humanitarian mobilisation, and policy shifts.

Subsequent years saw an ebb and flow in arrivals, influenced by several key developments:

- **The EU-Turkey Statement (March 2016):** This agreement aimed to stem the flow of irregular migration across the Aegean and included provisions for returning those not needing international protection to Turkey. As a result, numbers dropped sharply in 2016–2017, though arrivals never ceased entirely.

- **Shifting Routes and Border Controls:** As Balkan countries closed their borders and intensified controls, Greece found itself increasingly functioning as either a bottleneck or a "holding" country where asylum seekers and refugees remained for more extended periods.

Beyond maritime arrivals, Greece's land border with Turkey along the Evros River region also saw fluctuating numbers as people attempted to enter Greek territory through this more perilous route. Changing political climates, strengthened border patrols, often under the auspices of the EU border agency Frontex, and the COVID-19 pandemic further influenced migration flows from 2020 onward.

## Demographic Profiles of Refugees and Migrants

The demographic composition of refugees and migrants entering and residing in Greece has continuously evolved over the last 10–15 years, shaped by global political crises, regional conflicts, and shifting migration policies. Understanding these demographic trends is critical for designing appropriate educational, integration, and vocational training interventions, especially for children and adolescents with a growing population segment.

### Shifting Nationalities and Ethnicities:

In the early phases of the recent migration waves (circa 2010–2012), most migrants arriving in Greece tended to be from neighbouring or nearby regions, including the Balkans, parts of the Middle East, and, to a lesser extent, South Asia and North Africa. However, the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, followed by intensifying instability in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other parts of the Middle East and Asia, dramatically altered the composition of arrivals.

By 2015–2016, Syrians constituted a large portion of those seeking asylum in Greece, joined by Afghans, Iraqis, Pakistanis, and Iranians. The profile diversified further in subsequent years, reflecting ongoing conflicts and humanitarian crises in different global regions. Somalis, Congolese, and refugees from other Sub-Saharan African countries started to appear in more significant numbers. This continuous diversification of origins has produced a highly heterogeneous population with varied languages, religions, cultural practices, and educational backgrounds.

**Age and Gender Distribution:**

The presence of women, families, and particularly children grew more pronounced during the peak years of the so-called "refugee crisis." While earlier migration flows were often male-dominated (driven by single young men searching for work or onward travel), the later cohorts included a higher proportion of family units. Women, often arriving with children, became more visible, and in many cases, entire families made the journey together.

Children and adolescents now represent a substantial segment of the asylum-seeking population in Greece. Among them, a significant subset is unaccompanied or separated minors (UAMs) who travel without parents or legal guardians. According to estimates by international organisations, unaccompanied minors in Greece have come from countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and various African nations. They often require special protection measures, accommodation in child-specific facilities, and tailored educational pathways.

**Educational and Socioeconomic Backgrounds:**

The educational backgrounds of refugees and migrants in Greece vary dramatically. Some newcomers hold advanced degrees, professional qualifications, and significant work experience, making it potentially more straightforward for them to integrate into vocational training or upskilling programs. Others have never attended formal schooling, or their education has been severely disrupted by war, displacement, and prolonged journeys. Refugee children might arrive having missed several years of education, posing challenges for enrolling them at age-appropriate levels or ensuring they have the foundational literacy and numeracy skills to succeed in school or VET programs.

Socioeconomic status also differs widely. Certain groups may have had stable middle-class lives before conflict uprooted them, bringing with them cultural capital and familiarity with formal education. Others come from rural, agricultural, or nomadic backgrounds, where formal schooling might have been limited or inaccessible. Understanding these differences is crucial for VET providers to design flexible, learner-centred programs that meet diverse needs.

**Linguistic Diversity:**

Language barriers represent a significant challenge. Refugees and migrants often speak various languages, from Arabic, Dari, and Pashto to Kurdish, Somali, and various African and South Asian languages. Some might have functional knowledge of English, French, or other European languages acquired during transit. Most, however, arrive in Greece without any command of the Greek language. This linguistic plurality means that classrooms can be multilingual spaces, requiring specialised language support, bilingual teaching assistants, and instructional materials translated into multiple languages.

**Cultural and Religious Heterogeneity:**

Religious diversity further characterises the refugee and migrant population in Greece. Predominantly Muslim communities from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq coexist with Christian, Yazidi, or other minority groups from different regions. This cultural and religious heterogeneity can enrich local communities but also requires culturally sensitive approaches in schooling and training, including accommodations for spiritual practices, dietary preferences, and culturally resonant pedagogy.

**Health and Well-Being Factors:**

Finally, health status, both physical and psychological, plays a role in defining the profile of refugees and migrants in Greece. Many have experienced traumatic events: war- related violence, displacement, perilous journeys, and periods spent in overcrowded reception facilities. High levels of stress, anxiety, or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder can affect their capacity to engage

effectively in educational or vocational activities. Recognising and responding to these health dimensions is vital in developing supportive, trauma-informed VET programs.

In summary, the demographic profiles of refugees and migrants in Greece form a complex mosaic of origins, ages, genders, cultural backgrounds, and educational experiences. This diversity necessitates nuanced, multi-layered approaches to integration, particularly to children's unique needs. By understanding these demographic realities, VET stakeholders can better craft inclusive, responsive, and effective educational strategies that facilitate long-term social and economic integration.

## *Policy Frameworks and Institutional Arrangements*

Over the past decade, Greece has undergone significant policy transformations to address the influx of refugees and migrants. These changes have been shaped by national agendas and European Union (EU) requirements, culminating in a complex institutional landscape of actors, agencies, and legal frameworks. Understanding this landscape is crucial for appreciating the challenges and opportunities related to integrating refugee children, particularly within Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathways.

## *National Legal and Policy Instruments*

### Greek Asylum and Migration Law Reforms

In 2011, Greece adopted Law 3907/2011, aligning national asylum procedures with EU directives and laying the groundwork for establishing the Hellenic Asylum Service, Reception and Identification Service, and Appeals Authority.

Subsequent legislative reforms (e.g., Law 4375/2016) introduced further provisions for streamlining asylum processes, reception conditions, and integration measures. These laws reflected urgent attempts to harmonise Greek procedures with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) standards while responding to unprecedented arrivals.

### Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Greece's migration portfolio was initially managed by the Ministry of Public Order and Citizen Protection and later by the Ministry of Migration Policy. In 2020, the government re-established a dedicated Ministry of Migration and Asylum, signifying an effort to consolidate policy authority, coordinate with European partners, and improve oversight of the asylum process and reception system.

### Greek Migration and Social Integration Code

Greece's overarching legal framework for migrant integration is found in the Migration and Social Integration Code (Law 4251/2014), which regulates third-country nationals' entry, residence, and rights. While primarily targeting economic migrants, this code also intersects with refugee protection provisions on work permits, residence status, and certain social rights.

### National Integration Strategies and Action Plans

The Greek government has recently produced strategic documents and action plans emphasising refugee and migrant inclusion in education, healthcare, and the labour

market. However, the practical impact of these strategies can be limited by administrative fragmentation, funding constraints, and shifts in political priorities.

## European Union Frameworks and Influence

### EU Directives and CEAS

As an EU Member State, Greece is bound by directives that form the Common European Asylum System, including the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU), the Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU), and the Asylum Procedures Directive (2013/32/EU). These instruments set minimum standards for asylum procedures, reception conditions, and the rights of those granted international protection.

Despite these obligations, capacity and resource challenges have sometimes hindered Greece's ability to fully implement the directives, resulting in periodic legal and humanitarian concerns.

### EU-Turkey Statement (2016)

A landmark policy initiative that dramatically reshaped the dynamics of arrivals to Greece, the EU-Turkey Statement aimed to curb irregular migration by enabling returns of particular asylum seekers to Turkey. In exchange, the EU pledged resettlement commitments, financial support, and visa liberalisation prospects for Turkish citizens (under certain conditions).

Operationalising the Statement presented significant logistical and legal complexities, leading to protracted asylum procedures on the islands, overcrowding in reception hotspots, and ongoing human rights debates.

### EU Funding Mechanisms

Multiple EU funding lines (e.g., Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), Internal Security Fund (ISF), and the European Social Fund (ESF)) support Greece's management of migration, asylum processing, and integration initiatives.

Projects under the Erasmus+ program, including the "HELP VET" initiative, also form part of the EU's broader strategy to foster social inclusion, intercultural exchange, and capacity-building for educators.

## Institutional Actors and Governance Structures

### Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

The Ministry of Education is responsible for designing and implementing educational policies for both Greek and non-Greek students. It oversees specialised programs like the Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP), which provides initial Greek language instruction and preparatory classes in or near refugee accommodation centres.

Intercultural Schools are also under the Ministry's purview. They cater to diverse student populations through adapted curricula, intercultural pedagogies, and specialised teacher training programs.

### Hellenic Asylum Service and Reception and Identification Service

The Hellenic Asylum Service, founded in 2013, manages the registration and processing of asylum claims. It operates alongside the Reception and Identification Service, which conducts initial identification, medical checks, and vulnerability assessments in Reception and Identification Centres (RICs), commonly called "hotspots" on the Aegean islands.

Both services often operate under strained capacities due to fluctuating arrival numbers, limited staffing, and high administrative burdens, creating bottlenecks that can delay or complicate children's access to education.

### Regional and Local Authorities

Municipalities and regional governments in Greece have varying levels of engagement in refugee reception and integration, depending on local political will, population size, and resources. Cities like Athens, Thessaloniki, and certain Aegean islands have, by necessity, developed more extensive structures to accommodate large migrant populations, often partnering with NGOs and international organisations.

### International and Non-Governmental Organizations

Organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), METAdrasi, and numerous Greek NGOs complement governmental efforts. They manage shelter programs, provide legal and psychosocial support, and often bridge gaps in public services.

NGOs and international organisations frequently fund or deliver informal education, language classes, and integration-oriented workshops, which can supplement or fill gaps in the official school system for refugee children and adolescents.

## Challenges in Coordination and Implementation

### Administrative Fragmentation

Despite efforts to centralise migration and asylum tasks under dedicated ministries, fragmentation persists across government agencies. Overlapping responsibilities, inconsistent data systems, and frequent legal amendments complicate coordination.

This fragmentation can directly affect refugee children, who may struggle with obtaining consistent documentation or transferring between different educational facilities when they relocate.

### Resource Constraints

Budgetary limitations and dependence on external (often short-term) funding streams hinder the sustainability of many initiatives. Programs that show promise in pilot stages may not be scaled up due to a lack of long-term financial commitment or institutional support.

### Policy Volatility

Shifts in national politics, economic austerity, and broader EU-level migration policy debates have led to frequent changes in Greek migration and integration policies. This volatility undermines continuity in educational and vocational programs, making establishing stable pathways for refugee children difficult.

### Insufficient Specialized Training for Staff

Although intercultural and language-support programs exist, many frontline staff, whether in asylum services, reception centres, or educational institutions, lack robust training to handle the complexities of the refugee context. Specialised knowledge of trauma-informed approaches, cross-cultural communication, and psychosocial support is still limited.

## Implications for Refugee Children in VET

The interplay between these policies, institutions, and funding mechanisms directly impacts the extent to which refugee children can access high-quality, stable education pathways, including VET programs. Prolonged asylum procedures, frequent relocations, and a lack of clarity on residence status can disrupt children's schooling. Meanwhile, institutions striving to be inclusive may struggle to navigate legal uncertainties, compile necessary resources, or provide teachers with the training and tools to support refugee learners effectively.

Despite these challenges, many developments (such as the expansion of Reception Facilities for Refugee Education and Intercultural Schools) demonstrate progress. Ongoing efforts from NGOs, international organisations, and local authorities to fill gaps and experiment with innovative solutions offer models for more cohesive approaches. Critically, future policy improvements must include more muscular cross-sectoral coordination, sustained funding, and targeted training for the VET sector so that refugee children have equitable opportunities to develop their skills, integrate into Greek society, and eventually contribute to the local economy.

This expanded discussion of policy frameworks and institutional arrangements underscores the complexity of Greece's migration context and highlights the need for coherent, collaborative approaches. The following chapters (on refugees' needs and challenges, real-life problems for VET staff, and the availability of training resources) build on this foundation, illustrating how policy and practice intersect at the grassroots level.

### *Conditions of Reception, Accommodation, and Societal Response*

Efforts to manage and host large numbers of refugees and migrants in Greece cannot be viewed solely as an administrative or legal challenge. The experiences of newcomers, particularly regarding where and how they are accommodated and how local communities respond, fundamentally influence their ability to adapt, access education, and plan. For refugee children, in particular, stability of housing and a supportive environment are critical prerequisites for consistent school or VET attendance. This section explores how reception conditions, accommodation arrangements, and societal attitudes in Greece have evolved over the past decade, shaping (and sometimes constraining) the integration process.

### Reception Centres and "Hotspot" Facilities

#### Origins of the Hotspot Approach

In response to the dramatic increase in arrivals from 2015 onwards, the European Union (EU) introduced a "hotspot" model in frontline countries such as Greece and Italy. On the Greek islands of

Lesvos, Chios, Samos, Leros, and Kos, Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) were established to register, fingerprint, and identify incoming refugees and migrants.

### Overcrowding and Living Conditions

Over time, these facilities became notorious for severe overcrowding, with many operating well above their intended capacity. In addition, conditions within the camps often deteriorated due to inadequate sanitation, limited healthcare services, and insufficient winterisation measures factors repeatedly highlighted by international human rights organisations. Under such conditions, refugee children's access to safe play areas, psychosocial support, or stable schooling is severely constrained, and the mental health risks increase significantly.

### Transition to the Mainland

Although the EU-Turkey Statement (2016) contributed to reducing the volume of new arrivals, it also restricted the movement of many asylum seekers to the islands until their applications were processed, creating significant bottlenecks. Subsequently, with support from the EU, UNHCR, and NGOs, the Greek authorities sought to transfer vulnerable individuals and recognised refugees to mainland sites. Yet, this process has often been slow or uneven, leading to periods of uncertainty for children and adolescents whose education is disrupted every time they relocate.

## Urban Accommodation Schemes

### From Camp Settings to Urban Housing

In tandem with the operation of island hotspots, various programs have aimed to provide more dignified living conditions on the mainland. One of the most prominent examples is the ESTIA program (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation), implemented by UNHCR in coordination with the Greek government and local municipalities. Under ESTIA, asylum seekers and recognised refugees can access rented apartments in urban areas instead of living in camps.

### Benefits of Integration and Education

Placing families in urban environments has shown multiple benefits:
- **Proximity to Services:** Living in or near cities offers better access to schools, health facilities, language courses, and social support networks.
- **Greater Autonomy:** Families can engage with local communities and develop routines resembling the host societies.
- **Educational Continuity:** Stable housing in a city can facilitate continuous schooling and participation in extracurricular or remedial language classes for refugee children.

Despite these advantages, the availability of suitable, long-term urban accommodation can be limited, and many refugee families still grapple with the risk of eviction once program funding ends or upon receiving an asylum decision. Consequently, their sense of security and ability to plan remains fragile.

## Societal Attitudes and Community Engagement

### Grassroots Solidarity and Volunteerism

One of the notable aspects of the refugee situation in Greece has been the outpouring of grassroots support from local volunteers, solidarity groups, and civil society organisations, particularly during the peak years of 2015–2016. Many Greek citizens offered food, clothing, and informal assistance, with some islands even receiving international recognition for local hospitality efforts. These volunteer networks have, in many cases, provided vital first-response aid and psychological support to refugee families.

### Public Debates and Media Narratives

Over time, however, prolonged economic hardship and political tensions have contributed to mixed societal attitudes towards newcomers. Media coverage can sometimes highlight security concerns, strain on local infrastructure, or portray immigrants in a negative light, fuelling fears and suspicion in specific communities. On the other hand, more balanced or sympathetic outlets emphasise humanitarian responsibilities, success stories of integration, and the potential contributions of refugees to Greece's workforce and culture.

### Incidents of Xenophobia and Far-Right Backlash

While many Greeks have demonstrated compassion, far-right groups and segments of the population have occasionally expressed hostility towards refugee settlements, organising protests or, in rare instances, resorting to violence. This backlash can manifest in harassment, vandalism, or intimidation, underlining the need for consistent community engagement and awareness campaigns to foster social cohesion. Negative experiences in local neighbourhoods or fear of discrimination may deter refugee parents from enrolling children in schools or extracurricular activities.

## Impact on Children and Access to Education

### Frequent Relocations and Disrupted Schooling

Policy restrictions, capacity issues, and local resistance can lead to frequent relocations from islands to mainland camps, camps to apartments, or even between cities. For children, each move interrupts their schooling and peer relationships. Some find themselves on waiting lists for local schools, while others struggle to keep up academically if language and literacy support are not adequately provided promptly.

### Psychological Stress and Uncertainty

Housing insecurity and tense community environments compound the psychological strain on refugee children, many of whom have already experienced trauma from conflict or perilous journeys. Stress and anxiety can affect their concentration, motivation, and overall well-being, highlighting the importance of integrated psychosocial support and trauma-informed teaching approaches in any educational or VET setting.

### Community-Led Integration Initiatives

Despite these challenges, there are also numerous examples of community-driven integration efforts that have proven transformative. Local authorities and civic organisations collaborate with schools and VET institutions in some municipalities to create inclusive, welcoming spaces. Language classes, sports activities, and cultural exchange events can help break down barriers. By strengthening cooperation between educators, social workers, parents, and NGOs, such initiatives demonstrate that positive engagement, rather than isolation, yields better outcomes for children and families.

## Looking Ahead: Building Inclusive Communities

Greece's ongoing experience with refugee reception and societal response underscores the complexity of integration. While emergency measures and short-term housing solutions address immediate humanitarian needs, long-term success requires fostering environments where refugees, including children, can thrive.

1. **Stable Accommodation:** It is crucial for children's uninterrupted education that families do not cycle through various short-term facilities.

2. **Municipal Engagement:** Local governments that take proactive steps, such as designating cultural mediators, collaborating with NGOs, and investing in educational support programs, tend to see more positive outcomes.

3. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Grassroots solidarity can be nurtured through awareness-raising activities, intercultural events, and local media storytelling highlighting shared community benefits.

4. **Holistic Support:** Housing, education, healthcare, and social inclusion must be integrated. For example, establishing on-site childcare or counselling services can help families stabilise and enable older youth and adults to pursue VET or employment.

Although many structural hurdles remain, there is ample evidence that well-coordinated, community-based reception and accommodation approaches can lay the foundation for successful integration, particularly for refugee children, whose sense of belonging and educational continuity are pivotal to their development and long-term prospects.

This expanded discussion of Section 2.4 illuminates the broader environment in which refugees and migrants in Greece live, from the reception centres on the islands to urban housing programs and the societal attitudes that influence their day-to-day lives. These dimensions critically shape the feasibility of integrating refugee children into schools and VET programs, a theme that the subsequent chapters will explore in greater detail.

*From Emergency Response to Long-Term Integration Efforts*

Over the last decade, Greece's migration landscape has transitioned through distinct phases, reflecting the intensity and urgency of arrivals, changing political dynamics, and shifting institutional capacities. While emergency humanitarian assistance characterised the early response, recent years have witnessed growing recognition of the need for sustainable, long-term approaches that enable refugees (including children and youth) to integrate into Greek society. This shift, although still a work in progress, has significant implications for national policy, local communities, and, most critically, for educational and VET systems.

**The Initial Focus on Humanitarian Relief**

**Surge of Arrivals and Crisis Management**

When hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants arrived in Greece in 2015–2016, the government and local communities were forced to react quickly to a situation widely termed a "humanitarian crisis." The immediate priority was to provide essential services, food, water, medical care, and shelter. Makeshift camps proliferated on the islands, and volunteers from Greece and the international community stepped in to offer vital on-the-ground assistance. During this period, policymaking centred on crisis containment: registering and identifying new arrivals, decongesting the islands, and coordinating emergency funding through EU mechanisms and international organisations.

**Emergency-Driven Education Gaps**

Given the breadth of immediate needs, education for refugee children took a back seat in the earliest stages. The informal learning spaces in camps or through NGOs were frequently understaffed, under-resourced, and limited by infrastructure constraints. The overriding concern was to prevent a public health and security breakdown, leaving minimal bandwidth to design structured education programs or vocational pathways. Many families still hoped to continue onward to Northern or Western Europe, thus, the idea of a long-term stay in Greece was not always assumed.

## Evolving Policies and Institutional Reforms

### Transition to Structured Reception and Integration

As arrivals persisted and many refugees found themselves stranded in Greece due to border closures across the Balkans, policy priorities began to shift. Authorities recognised that refugees would remain in Greece for extended periods, compelling a move beyond emergency relief toward a more structured reception system and integration strategy. This was reflected in legislative reforms such as Law 4375/2016, which introduced updates to the asylum process and reception conditions.

### Collaborations and Strategic Plans

National and local authorities also began collaborating more systematically with international organisations like UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as well as with NGOs and municipal governments. Though sometimes imperfectly implemented, strategies such as the National Integration Strategy and action plans signalled a growing commitment to addressing language instruction, employment training, and social inclusion.

### Balancing Borders and Integration

Despite these shifts, the need to control irregular migration flows remained a top EU concern, culminating in the EU-Turkey Statement 2016. This policy measure reduced the number of new arrivals but introduced complex legal and administrative challenges, especially on the islands. The Greek state thus had to balance border management obligations with the need to advance integration measures for those already present. This dual demand still shapes policy decisions and public discourse.

## Bridging Short-Term Needs and Long-Term Opportunities

### Housing and Community-Based Solutions

Moving families from island hotspots to the mainland's urban areas represented an essential step toward normalising daily life and facilitating access to education and health services. Programs like **ESTIA** (Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation) aimed to replace camp settings with apartment-based accommodation, enabling families to live among residents, enrol children in nearby schools and integrate more fully into community life. Parallel initiatives like the HELIOS project started offering integration courses, language classes, and job placement support.

### Educational Access for Children

Within the Ministry of Education, the creation or expansion of **Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP)** and **Intercultural Schools** demonstrated a tangible move from ad hoc initiatives to more systematic educational structures. However, bridging the gap between short-term relief and long-term education remains challenging. Some children continue to move frequently due to bureaucratic delays, changes in housing programs, or family decisions, which disrupt their educational continuity.

### Importance of Language Training and VET

Language instruction, mainly Greek and English, has emerged as a linchpin of successful integration. Entry into the labour market or vocational pathways is exceptionally pressing for older youth and young adults. Here, VET programs can provide critical upskilling, offering a route to self-sufficiency and future career development. Yet, many VET centres lack specialised resources, multilingual materials, or trained staff to accommodate learners from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

## Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

### Local-Level Initiatives

As emergency responses transitioned toward a long-term perspective, community-driven projects and collaborations began to blossom. Municipalities, cultural organisations, sports clubs, and grassroots volunteer groups played increasingly vital roles; organising local language classes, cross-cultural events, and job mentoring. Teachers and VET trainers also formed informal networks to share best practices for teaching refugee learners.

### Building Trust and Acceptance

For refugees, meaningful integration extends beyond institutional policy. Genuine acceptance and day-to-day interactions with residents can make or break their sense of belonging. In areas where local populations have been more receptive, offering volunteer-run tutoring, community events, or mentorship programs, refugee children and their families have generally reported more positive experiences and better educational outcomes. Conversely, communities struggling with economic austerity or anti-immigrant sentiments sometimes pose barriers to successful integration, including protests against refugee school enrolment or reluctance from local businesses to offer internships.

## Persistent Challenges and the Road Ahead

### Fragmentation of Efforts

Despite notable progress, many stakeholders still describe Greece's integration approach as fragmented. Projects often rely heavily on short-term EU funding, leading to periodic discontinuities. Coordination among government ministries, municipalities, NGOs, and international organisations remains a work in progress, and policy changes at the national or EU level can disrupt integration initiatives.

### Need for Sustainable Funding and Institutional Capacity

Establishing permanent, well-resourced structures for refugee education and training is key to transitioning out of crisis mode. Shortfalls in public education budgets, insufficiently trained VET staff, and limited language support services continue to hamper efforts. Without predictable, multi-year funding streams and robust institutional capacity-building, many initiatives remain vulnerable to budget cuts or shifting political priorities.

### Opportunities for Systemic Improvements

On a more hopeful note, the lessons learned from 2015 to 2016 have provided valuable insights into what works. Urban housing schemes, intercultural education, and locally driven social-integration projects have all succeeded when appropriately scaled and supported. Moving forward, Greece can channel these insights into broader education reforms, professional development programs for teachers and VET staff, and community-led frameworks that foster inclusive environments.

### Role of Erasmus+ and HELP VET

Programs like **HELP VET** under the Erasmus+ umbrella are ideally positioned to build on these experiences facilitating knowledge exchange, cross-national collaboration, and co-creating targeted resources. By linking Greek VET institutions with international partners, such initiatives can catalyse best practices, highlight innovative pilot projects, and encourage peer-learning opportunities that reinforce the immediate needs and the long-term vision for integration (Asylum Information Database, 2024), (Kourachanis, 2022), (REFUGEE.INFO GREECE, 2024), (InfoMigrants, 2024), (UNHCR, 2024).

*Conclusion*

Greece's gradual transition from emergency response to sustained integration efforts illustrates the complexities of hosting large refugee populations. While early policy interventions centred on crisis management, migration flows' persistent and evolving nature has necessitated a deeper, more holistic approach. For refugee children, long-term stability, both in housing and education, is crucial for successful integration. As Greece continues to refine its policies and strengthen institutional capacities, the key challenge will be ensuring that emergency mechanisms evolve into robust, inclusive systems that empower the next generation with the skills and opportunities to thrive. Through carefully crafted, well-funded, and community-supported strategies, supported by programs like HELP VET, Greece can move closer to realising a cohesive, sustainable integration model for refugee children and youth.

# The actual needs, possibilities, difficulties and problems of migrants/refugees and their children as far as the integration process is concerned.

The experience of migration, particularly forced displacement, carries profound implications for individuals' social, economic, and cultural well-being. When refugees and migrants arrive in a new country, they often face opportunities and obstacles that affect their ability to rebuild stable lives and become active contributors to their host communities. For Greece, a frontline arrival point for significant numbers of people fleeing conflict and hardship, these integration challenges are especially pronounced. Refugees and migrants, as well as their children, bring diverse backgrounds, skills, and aspirations, yet they also encounter linguistic barriers, bureaucratic complexities, economic uncertainty, and the lingering effects of trauma.

This chapter delves into the varied and often interrelated issues that shape the integration journey for migrants, refugees, and their families in Greece. It begins by examining the socioeconomic factors, such as housing insecurity, employment limitations, and financial instability, frequently undermine efforts to find stability and a plan. The discussion then moves to challenges in education, with a spotlight on language acquisition and interrupted schooling. It highlights the needs of refugee children, who must adapt to a new school system while also managing psychological and emotional stress. Subsequent sections address the gender- and age-specific obstacles that some learners confront, emphasising the importance of tailored flexible support services.

By detailing the difficulties and the emerging possibilities for social inclusion, this chapter provides a critical context for stakeholders looking to strengthen policies and programs. Ultimately, understanding the real needs and challenges faced by refugee and migrant communities in Greece is the first step toward building more equitable, sustainable pathways to integration, both within formal education and training systems and in the broader social sphere.

*Socioeconomic Challenges and Labor Market Integration*

Socioeconomic stability forms the bedrock of any successful integration pathway for refugees and migrants. In Greece, which has experienced a protracted economic crisis throughout the past decade, competition for scarce resources and limited job opportunities amplifies the hurdles newcomers face. Additionally, complex administrative processes, legal uncertainties, and the lack of robust support structures can make it exceedingly difficult for newly arrived-families to secure long-term, dignified livelihoods. This section explores how these socioeconomic challenges affect refugees and migrants, and, in turn, their children, while highlighting the broader implications for integration.

**Employment Opportunities and Barriers**

**High Unemployment and Underemployment**

Despite economic stabilisation efforts, Greece's unemployment rate remains one of the highest in the European Union, hovering around double-digit percentages for much of the last decade. This environment of stiff labour competition often makes employers less willing to take risks in hiring non-Greek nationals, particularly those with limited documentation or language skills.

Underemployment is another significant issue. Even if refugees and migrants find work, they may be relegated to low-skilled, insecure, or informal jobs that do not align with their professional qualifications or aspirations.

**Administrative Hurdles and Legal Status**

Obtaining the legal right to work is a prerequisite for formal employment. However, bureaucratic delays in the asylum process and difficulties with residence permit renewals can leave refugees and migrants unable to secure stable jobs for months or even years.

Even once work permits are granted, navigating the Greek tax, social security, and healthcare systems can be daunting without adequate legal guidance or language support. Confusion around these processes often forces refugees to rely on informal networks, which can expose them to exploitation and precarious working conditions.

### Recognition of Qualifications and Skills

Many refugees and migrants possess valuable qualifications, university degrees, professional certifications, or trade skills, but Greece's procedures for recognising foreign credentials are notoriously lengthy and opaque. As a result, doctors, engineers, or teachers may be compelled to accept low-skilled positions or remain unemployed while awaiting official recognition of their credentials.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) could offer a pathway for skills upgrading or retraining, yet limited seats, language barriers, and a lack of tailored bridging programs can inhibit participation. This gap mainly affects those who have interrupted or incomplete education.

### Language Proficiency

Proficiency in Greek is critical for most forms of formal employment. While some roles in tourism or international NGOs may require English or other languages, most positions in Greece's labour market prioritise (or need) Greek.

Language courses are available through NGOs, municipalities, or adult education centres, but capacity often exceeds demand. Waiting lists can be long, and class times may not align with work or family commitments, creating additional obstacles for those seeking to improve their language skills to secure better employment.

## Housing Instability and Economic Insecurity

### Urban versus Camp Settings

Refugee families living in camps or reception centres, particularly on the islands, have limited access to local labour markets due to geographic isolation, restrictions on movement, and insufficient public transportation. This lack of opportunity perpetuates a cycle of dependency on humanitarian aid.

Although job opportunities may be more plentiful in urban areas, so are living costs. High rent in cities like Athens or Thessaloniki can push financially vulnerable families to substandard apartments or shared accommodations. Families may then prioritise day-to-day survival (paying rent, buying food) over investing in education or VET training, which yields longer-term benefits but may not offer immediate income.

### Impact on Children

When parents struggle to find stable employment, the family faces ongoing economic uncertainty that can disrupt children's schooling and well-being. Children may move frequently in search of cheaper housing, changing school multiple times and losing continuity in their education.

Financial stress can also create emotional strain within the household, limiting parents' ability to support children's homework, participate in school events, or invest in extracurricular activities. Over time, this environment of instability risks compounding the educational disadvantages refugee children may have already experienced.

## Informal Employment and Exploitation Risks

### Informal Labor Market

With bureaucratic obstacles and legal restrictions, some refugees and migrants turn to informal or undocumented employment. They might work in agriculture, food processing, construction, or domestic without proper contracts, social security coverage, or labour protections.

While these jobs can provide much-needed short-term income, reliance on the informal sector exposes workers to wage theft, unsafe working conditions, and limited recourse in cases of abuse.

### Exploitation and Vulnerability

Exploitative practices, including forced labour or severely underpaid work, are ongoing concerns. Migrants and refugees, especially those lacking legal documentation, can be reluctant to report exploitation to authorities, fearing deportation or negative repercussions for their asylum claims.

Young adults, including unaccompanied minors who have aged out of specialised care facilities, are at heightened risk of exploitation if they lack stable housing, adult mentorship, and connections to legal employment opportunities.

## Gender-Specific Challenges

### Women in the Workforce

Refugee and migrant women may face additional cultural or familial constraints that limit their participation in the labour force. Responsibilities for childcare, household duties, or language barriers can restrict their ability to attend training programs or seek full-time employment.

Cultural norms from countries of origin sometimes discourage women from working outside the home or engaging in co-ed educational spaces, complicating their integration prospects. Tailored initiatives, for instance, women-only language or vocational classes, can help address these issues, but supply is limited.

### Supporting Female-Headed Households

Single mothers or female-headed households may need specialised support, including childcare services, flexible training schedules, and safe transportation to and from work. Without these provisions, women risk being trapped in a cycle of low-paid, informal work that offers little potential for advancement.

## Policy and Programmatic Responses

### Pilot Projects and NGO-Led Initiatives

Several NGOs operate employment-focused programs, offering job counselling, CV-writing workshops, entrepreneurship training, and connections with potential

employers. While these initiatives often produce encouraging success stories, they remain relatively small in scope and rely heavily on external funding.

Other projects, sometimes in collaboration with municipalities, provide co-working spaces or social enterprises that employ refugees and migrants. These can be stepping stones to broader integration, but scaling up remains challenging.

### Role of VET in Fostering Integration

VET programs present an opportunity to gain practical skills that can quickly improve employment prospects. Sectors like tourism, hospitality, or specific trades may be more open to hiring newcomers, especially if they receive training and basic language instruction particular to the job context.

However, VET institutions need systematic inclusion strategies to be effective, such as partnerships with language schools, flexible scheduling to accommodate irregular work hours, and support for credential recognition. Access to apprenticeships and internships can also ease the transition into the formal labour market.

### Possible Policy Interventions

**Streamlined Asylum Procedures:** Reducing processing delays and clarifying work authorisation early in the asylum process would give refugees a more straightforward legal pathway to employment.

**Credential Recognition:** Improving and accelerating systems for assessing foreign qualifications could prevent skilled workers from languishing in menial jobs.

**Targeted Training and Subsidized Employment:** Subsidies and incentives for employers who hire refugees, coupled with intensive language or vocational training, could facilitate job matching.

**Holistic Support for Families:** Housing assistance, access to childcare, and psychosocial services help stabilise families, creating the foundation for individuals to engage in training or work effectively.

Socioeconomic challenges remain a linchpin in integrating refugees and migrants in Greece. While many possess robust skill sets and a strong desire to work, systemic barriers, from legal uncertainties to limited language support, can hinder their ability to secure stable, high-quality employment. The consequent economic instability, housing insecurity, and psychosocial stress weigh heavily on children's well-being, compounding educational disruptions and long-term developmental risks. Yet, there is growing recognition that targeted interventions, improved policies, and well-designed VET programs can help unlock refugees' potential to contribute positively to local economies. Achieving this, however, requires sustained political will, cross-sector collaboration, and the resolve to address broader structural inequities within the Greek labour market and education systems.

### *Educational Access and Language Acquisition Issues*

Education is among the most powerful tools for social inclusion, personal development, and long-term socioeconomic integration. Yet for refugees and migrants in Greece, obtaining formal education and mastering the Greek language can be fraught with obstacles. Although the country has introduced specialised programs and invested in intercultural education, many barriers remain,

affecting children and adults who seek to strengthen their language skills and pursue academic or vocational pathways.

## Enrollment and Attendance Challenges

### Legal and Administrative Hurdles

**Delayed Asylum Procedures**: Families often struggle to enrol children in public schools or training programs while awaiting asylum decisions. Uncertainty regarding their legal status and frequent relocations (from islands to the mainland or between different accommodation facilities), can disrupt schooling.

**Documentation Requirements**: Even if children are legally entitled to attend public schools, some schools may request documents (e.g., proof of residence and immunisation records) that are difficult for newcomers to provide, causing additional delays in registration.

### Insufficient Capacity and Infrastructure

**Overcrowding**: In areas with large refugee populations, classrooms may be overcrowded, straining both resources and teachers' ability to offer individualised support.

**Infrastructure Gaps**: In specific urban neighbourhoods, schools face infrastructural and staffing shortages, impacting the quality of education for all students, not just newcomers. Many rural or island schools also lack adequate facilities and staff training to meet the needs of diverse learners.

### Fragmented Reception Classes

**Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP)**: While these specialised classes exist to help refugee children transition into mainstream education, their availability is often inconsistent, and they might be far from refugee accommodation centres. Transportation issues, especially in island or rural contexts, make regular attendance difficult.

**Afternoon or Evening Shifts**: Some DYEP programs occur in the afternoons, separate from mainstream Greek students, which can unintentionally delay social integration. Parents may also find these schedules challenging, especially if they have work or other family commitments.

## Interrupted Schooling and Academic Gaps

### Diverse Educational Backgrounds

**Interrupted or Non-Existent Formal Education**: Many refugee children arrive in Greece after long periods without formal schooling or may have never attended school. This creates significant gaps in foundational skills such as literacy and numeracy.

**Inconsistency Across Age Groups**: Older adolescents may have missed several years of schooling, making placing them at an age-appropriate grade level challenging. Schools must, therefore, design flexible catch-up programs to bridge academic deficits.

### Psychosocial Factors

**Trauma and Displacement**: Children who have experienced conflict, violence, or perilous migration journeys may display emotional or behavioural issues (e.g., anxiety, lack of concentration) that hinder their academic progress.

**Family Responsibilities**: In some families, older children may need to work or look after siblings, reducing the time and energy they can devote to formal education or additional language classes.

### Lack of Supplemental Support

**Remedial Education**: While some NGOs or community centres offer tutoring and homework help, these resources are not always widely available or easily accessible.

**Limited Access to Technology**: Digital tools and e-learning platforms can be especially beneficial for students needing extra academic support, yet many refugee households lack stable internet connections, computer equipment, or digital literacy skills to use online resources.

## Language Acquisition Barriers

### The centrality of Greek Language Skills

**Integration Requirement**: Mastery of Greek is essential for daily life, employment prospects, and higher education opportunities. Without functional Greek language skills, refugees and migrants struggle to navigate public services, understand school curricula, or communicate with educators and peers.

**Secondary Language Needs**: In some fields, such as tourism, hospitality, or international NGOs, English or other European languages may also be critical. Balancing the need for Greek language fluency with other linguistic demands can be overwhelming.

### Inadequate Greek-Language Programs

**Limited Public Provision**: While the Greek state funds some language courses through adult education centres, public institutions cannot often accommodate high demand. Waiting lists are shared, and classes may not be tailored to different proficiency levels or learning styles.

**NGOs and Volunteer-Led Classes: Many refugees rely on NGOs or volunteer initiatives to learn Greek languages**. However, these classes may have irregular schedules, limited duration, or insufficiently trained instructors. As a result, learners often receive patchy instruction, prolonging the time required to achieve functional fluency.

### Lack of Specialized Teaching Materials

**Insufficient Multilingual Resources**: Suitable textbooks, bilingual dictionaries, and audiovisual aids designed explicitly for refugees or learners with low literacy backgrounds can be hard to find. Teachers and volunteers frequently must create or adapt their materials, which requires time and expertise they may not possess.

**Digital Learning Tools**: Online language-learning apps and interactive platforms have potential, but many refugee families have only essential smartphones with limited data plans. Unreliable internet connections and a lack of digital literacy also restrict the effectiveness of digital solutions.

**Social Integration and Cultural Adaptation**

### Peer Inclusion and Bullying Concerns

**Cultural Differences**: Newcomer children may feel isolated or misunderstood by Greek classmates, mainly if there are language barriers or cultural gaps. This can lead to bullying or exclusion, undermining children's motivation to attend school and engage with peers.

**Host Community Perceptions**: Some local communities have expressed reservations about integrating refugee children into neighbourhood schools, citing fear of overcrowding or cultural differences. In contrast, where strong multicultural initiatives exist, relationships between local and refugee students have proven mutually enriching.

### Intercultural Competence in Schools

**Teacher Training**: Teachers may lack formal training in intercultural communication, second-language pedagogy, or trauma-informed teaching methods. Access to specialised workshops or continuous professional development is crucial to equip them with practical strategies for diverse classrooms.

**Role of Cultural Mediators**: In some schools, cultural mediators or interpreters are essential in bridging linguistic and cultural gaps between students, families, and teachers. However, funding constraints and administrative hurdles mean these roles are not consistently available in all regions.

**Emerging Good Practices**

### Intercultural Schools and Reception Classes

**Targeted Support**: Some Intercultural Schools in significant cities provide enhanced language support, culturally adapted curricula, and professional development for teachers. These models demonstrate that specialised education systems can significantly ease refugee children's transition into mainstream education when well-resourced.

**Inclusive Curriculum**: Integrating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum, such as celebrating international holidays and encouraging peer-to-peer language exchange, can foster an inclusive learning environment and enrich the educational experience for all students.

### Partnerships with NGOs and Community Centres

**Supplementary Classes**: Collaborative projects between local authorities and NGOs can help fill gaps in language instruction or remedial education. Weekend or after-school programs offering one-on-one tutoring and homework support have proven effective in many neighbourhoods.

**Parental Engagement**: Community centres can host workshops or social events that engage refugee parents, explaining the Greek education system and offering child-rearing support in a new cultural context. When parents understand the system and feel welcomed, they are more likely to encourage consistent school attendance and monitor their children's progress.

### E-Learning and Hybrid Approaches

**Flexible Modalities**: Post-pandemic, blended learning approaches (combining face-to-face instruction with online resources) have gained traction. This flexibility can benefit older students with family or work responsibilities, allowing them to reinforce language skills and academic content at their own pace.

**Teacher Networks and Online Communities**: Greek educators increasingly share lesson plans, language modules, and intercultural teaching tips through digital platforms and social media groups, fostering a culture of collaboration.

Educational access and language acquisition challenges remain key stumbling blocks for refugee and migrant integration in Greece. Although the government, NGOs, and civil society have made strides in setting up specialised schools, reception classes, and intercultural programs, consistent implementation and sufficient resources are still lacking. Children and adolescents who arrive with interrupted schooling face difficulty catching up academically while simultaneously learning Greek. Moreover, adults often find their employability severely constrained by inadequate language skills.

Nevertheless, pockets of innovation, such as well-supported Intercultural Schools, NGO-led language courses, and community-driven supplemental programs, indicate what is possible when efforts are coordinated, adequately resourced, and guided by inclusive policies. By expanding and institutionalising these best practices, Greece can create an education ecosystem in which refugee and migrant learners gain critical academic and linguistic competencies and develop a sense of belonging that empowers them to thrive in their new environment.

### *Psychological Well-being and Community Integration*

The process of forced displacement exposes refugees and migrants to a range of traumatic experiences, from witnessing violence in conflict zones to enduring precarious journeys by land or sea. Upon arrival in Greece, many contend with ongoing stressors such as uncertainty about their legal status, difficult living conditions, and social isolation. These factors, taken together, significantly impact mental health and well-being and influence how newcomers integrate into local communities. In turn, the community's openness and capacity to respond to these needs affect the pace and quality of integration.

**Trauma, Displacement, and Mental Health**

**Pre-arrival Traumas**

**Exposure to Conflict**: Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and other war-torn regions may have endured airstrikes, bombings, or targeted violence before fleeing. These experiences can lead to symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression.

**Journey-related Challenges**: The migration route to Greece often involves perilous sea crossings or harrowing overland treks, during which refugees may face smuggling networks, violence, or extortion. These traumatic events can exacerbate psychological distress.

**Post-arrival Stressors**

**Uncertain Legal Status**: Prolonged asylum procedures create fear and anxiety about potential rejection or deportation. The lack of clarity regarding the future can compound pre-existing psychological issues.

**Overcrowded Camps and Inadequate Facilities**: Refugees living in hotspots or camp settings face persistent stress due to limited privacy, poor sanitation, and scarce mental health support.

**Financial Insecurity**: Economic challenges, whether linked to high unemployment or limited legal work options, can push individuals into precarious circumstances, further undermining mental health.

## Impact on Children and Adolescents

**Interrupted Childhood**: Children exposed to violence or unstable living conditions can develop anxiety, difficulty concentrating, or behavioural issues in classroom settings. Younger children may regress developmentally or have trouble bonding with peers.

**Adolescent Vulnerability**: Teenagers, especially unaccompanied minors, may grapple with identity crises, fear of authority, and heightened vulnerability to exploitation if they lack stable guardianship or support networks.

## Family Dynamics and Social Isolation

### Changing Family Roles

**Parental Stress**: Parents struggling with legal uncertainties, financial strain, or trauma may find it hard to provide emotional support to their children. Tensions can arise when adolescents assume adult responsibilities (e.g., translating, working) earlier than expected.

**Cultural and Generational Gaps**: Cultural transitions sometimes create intergenerational conflicts; youths may quickly adopt new customs or languages, while older family members feel isolated or alienated from the host society.

### Social Networks and Community Bonds

**Lack of Familiar Support Structures**: Many refugees have left behind extended families, religious communities, or neighbourhood ties that previously offered social and emotional support.

**Challenges in Forming New Connections**: Language barriers, discrimination, and logistical difficulties (e.g., lack of transportation) can limit participation in community events or social gatherings, perpetuating isolation.

## Access to Mental Health and Psychosocial Services

### Limited Professional Services

**Shortage of Specialized Providers**: Greece's public healthcare system has long struggled with resource constraints, which only intensified during the economic crisis.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers who specialise in refugee trauma are in short supply, particularly on the islands and in rural areas.

**Reliance on NGOs**: In many camps and urban areas, NGOs fill the gap by offering psychosocial support, counselling, and basic mental health screenings. However, these services are often overstretched and dependent on short-term external funding.

### Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

**Need for Interpreters**: Effective mental health care hinges on accurate communication, yet interpreters with training in psychological terminology are not always available.

**Stigma Around Mental Health**: In some cultures, discussing mental health challenges openly is taboo. This can deter individuals from seeking help, especially if female refugees or minors fear shame or social repercussions.

### Community-Based Approaches

**Peer Support Groups**: Some refugee-led or NGO-facilitated initiatives encourage community members to support one another through shared experiences, which can reduce isolation and stigmatisation.

**Trauma-Informed Schools**: Emerging best practices include training teachers to recognise signs of trauma in students and refer them to appropriate services, fostering safer learning environments.

## Community Integration and Social Inclusion

### Local Attitudes and Social Cohesion

**Welcoming vs. Resistant Communities**: In some municipalities, grassroots solidarity movements and local institutions embrace newcomers, organising cultural exchanges or volunteer-run language classes. These welcoming communities often report lower rates of social tension and better mental health outcomes among refugees.

**Discrimination and Hostility**: Conversely, instances of xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiments can lead refugees to withdraw further from public life, fuelling a cycle of fear and isolation.

### Participation in Civic Life

**Cultural and Recreational Activities**: Sports, arts, and cultural events help refugees forge new friendships, learn about Greek society, and showcase their traditions, fostering mutual understanding.

**Religious and Community Centres**: Mosques, churches, or community halls can become essential spaces for social bonding, reinforcing a sense of belonging among displaced individuals. Collaborative interfaith or intercultural initiatives help break down stereotypes and build solidarity.

### Role of Education and VET

**Schools as Integration Hubs**: For families, schools often serve as the first regular point of contact with Greek society. Positive interactions with teachers, fellow students, and other parents can help children and parents feel anchored in the local community.

**Vocational Training as Empowerment**: VET programs can accelerate economic self-reliance and foster social integration by equipping refugees with market-relevant skills. Individuals who secure meaningful work and contribute to the local economy are more likely to develop stable community ties.

## Strategies to Enhance Psychological Well-being and Integration

### Holistic Support Systems

**Integrated Service Delivery**: Linking mental health care with education, housing, and legal assistance ensures that families receive comprehensive support. For example, a child struggling academically due to trauma should have access to both a tutor and a psychologist.

**Ongoing Case Management**: Dedicated social workers or case managers can track a family's progress, anticipate stressors (like relocations or legal appointments), and intervene early when problems arise.

### Community Mobilization

**Volunteer Training**: Local volunteers can be trained in psychological first aid and cultural awareness, allowing them to offer immediate, low-level support and direct refugees to professional care when needed.

**Building Trust**: Consistent outreach programs, such as open houses, coffee mornings, or neighbourhood celebrations, help refugees feel welcome. These activities also expose residents to diverse cultures and experiences, reducing prejudice.

### Government and Policy Initiatives

**Funding for Mental Health Services**: Stable, multi-year funding streams from the Greek government and international donors can strengthen public mental health infrastructure and ensure the continuity of programs serving refugees.

**Trauma-Informed Policy**: Integrating mental health considerations into asylum and integration policies, such as expedited processing for vulnerable individuals, can ease stress and prevent crises.

**Collaborative Frameworks**: Effective integration requires collaboration between ministries (health, education, migration), local authorities, and civil society organisations. Sharing data and best practices can spur policy improvements and replicate regional successes.

Refugees and migrants in Greece frequently grapple with a dual burden of psychological trauma and the challenges of integrating into a new society. Lengthy asylum procedures, precarious living conditions, and the lack of comprehensive mental health services intensify their vulnerability. At the same time, supportive community networks, welcoming municipal policies, and inclusive educational or vocational programs can create the social scaffolding required for genuine recovery and self-reliance.

Promoting the psychological well-being of refugees is a moral imperative and a practical strategy for fostering cohesive, resilient communities. By investing in trauma-informed services, nurturing social connections, and empowering individuals through education and work opportunities, Greece can harness the strengths of newcomers and pave the way for more holistic, sustainable integration outcomes.

## *Gender-Specific and Age-Specific Challenges*

While refugees and migrants in Greece collectively face a host of barriers to social and economic inclusion, these obstacles often manifest differently according to gender and age. Women, men, children, adolescents, and older adults may all contend with varying cultural expectations, responsibilities, and vulnerabilities. Recognising and addressing these diverse needs is crucial for creating targeted interventions that support the entire refugee and migrant community holistically and equitably.

### Challenges Faced by Women and Girls

#### Socio-Cultural Constraints

**Traditional Gender Roles**: In many refugee communities, women and girls are expected to shoulder a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities, including childcare, cooking, and cleaning. This can limit their ability to attend language courses, vocational training, or community events that could aid integration.

**Educational Discontinuities**: In some cultures, girls may have had fewer educational opportunities in their countries of origin. These pre-existing literacy or formal schooling gaps can hinder their progress in Greek classrooms, especially when combined with linguistic barriers.

#### Vulnerability to Exploitation and Gender-Based Violence

**Exposure to Violence**: Conflict and displacement often increase the risk of gender-based violence (GBV), both en route to and within host countries.

Women and girls living in camps or informal housing may face harassment or abuse, particularly if facilities lack adequate security or privacy.

**Fear of Reporting**: Cultural stigmas, distrust of authorities, or concerns over legal repercussions (e.g., impacting asylum claims) can discourage women from reporting domestic violence, sexual harassment, or exploitative labour conditions.

## Reproductive Health and Access to Services

**Healthcare Gaps**: Limited access to specialised healthcare services, such as gynaecological care, prenatal services, or maternal counselling, can endanger both women and infants. Language barriers and cultural misconceptions further complicate matters, discouraging women from seeking help.

**Family Planning**: In some communities, family size is tied to cultural or religious beliefs, and information about contraception or reproductive rights may be scarce or taboo. This can lead to unwanted pregnancies, health complications, or disruptions in women's education and employment.

## Positive Developments and Interventions

**Women-Only Programs**: Some NGOs and community centres run women-focused language courses, job-readiness workshops, and safe spaces where participants can learn new skills without cultural or social pressures.

**Mentorship and Peer Support**: Connecting refugee women with established local women's groups or female mentors can foster empowerment, expand social networks, and facilitate the exchange of knowledge around parenting, self-care, and employment opportunities.

## Challenges Faced by Men and Boys

### Shifts in Traditional Family Roles

**Loss of Status**: Men once primary breadwinners may find their economic role eroded if they cannot obtain legal work permits or face underemployment. This can lead to stress, resentment, and strained family relationships.

**Cultural Adjustment**: Younger men may adapt more quickly to their new environment, learning Greek or picking up casual jobs. However, older men less familiar with technology or foreign languages can feel marginalised, compounding loss and frustration.

### Mental Health and Emotional Expression

**Stigma Around Vulnerability**: In many cultures, men are conditioned to mask emotional distress, potentially leading to undiagnosed depression, anxiety, or PTSD.

**Support Services**: Men and boys are often less likely to seek mental health support or enrol in psychosocial programs. Tailored interventions that respect cultural norms around masculinity can help break down barriers to treatment.

### Risk of Exploitation

**Irregular Employment**: Men who fail to secure stable jobs may resort to informal or exploitative work, leaving them vulnerable to wage theft or unsafe conditions.

**Social Isolation**: Those who fail to integrate, either socially or economically, can become isolated, turning to harmful coping mechanisms. In some cases, economic desperation or psychological distress may increase the risk of radicalisation or involvement in illicit activities.

### Positive Engagement Opportunities

**Sports and Recreational Programs**: Organized football leagues, running clubs, or community fitness centres can serve as gateways for socialisation and language practice.

**Vocational Training and Apprenticeships**: Certain trades (e.g., construction, mechanics, carpentry) may be more accessible to men, especially if they have relevant skills. Tailored apprenticeships backed by local businesses help men gain legitimate work experience and build community connections.

## Age-Specific Considerations

### Younger Children (Ages 5–12)

**Adaptability vs. Vulnerability**: Young children often adapt quickly to new languages and cultural norms, especially when enrolled in primary schools with supportive teachers and peers. However, they may also struggle emotionally with trauma or disruptions from frequent relocations.

**School Transition**: Younger children who have missed early years of schooling (e.g., due to conflict or displacement) may need significant remedial support in basic literacy, numeracy, and social skills.

### Adolescents (Ages 13–18)

**Educational Gaps**: Adolescents with interrupted schooling can face academic deficits that are difficult to bridge in secondary schools. They may be placed in classes with much younger students or lack sufficient Greek language skills to follow more advanced coursework.

**Identity and Peer Pressure**: Teenagers must navigate everyday adolescent challenges, forming friendships and establishing identity, while coping with trauma, cultural shifts, and uncertain legal futures. The risk of dropping out or disengaging is higher if schools do not offer individualised support.

**Unaccompanied Minors**: Adolescents who arrive without parents or guardians are especially vulnerable. They require specialised accommodation, legal advocacy, and emotional support to avoid exploitation, delinquency, or social marginalisation.

**Young Adults (Ages 19–30)**

**Transition to Independence**: Securing stable employment or pursuing higher education is critical for young adults. However, legal barriers, language deficits, and sporadic vocational training opportunities can stall their progress.

**Family Responsibilities**: In some cases, young adults are responsible for supporting younger siblings or elderly family members, which can force them to prioritise immediate income over education or career development.

**Older Adults (Ages 50 and above)**

**Limited Employment Options**: Older refugees may find it harder to secure work due to language difficulties, perceived lower productivity, or age-related health issues.

**Social Isolation and Healthcare**: Adjusting to a new culture is often more challenging later in life, especially if social networks are sparse. Additionally, older adults may have chronic medical conditions, requiring consistent healthcare access and further complicating integration efforts.

**Intersectional Perspectives**

It is essential to recognise that gender and age intersect with other factors such as ethnicity, religion, disability, and socio-economic status. For instance, a teenage girl from a minority ethnic group may face both cultural restrictions on education and discrimination from peers. An older adult with a disability may encounter additional hurdles in mobility and communication. Integration strategies that fail to account for these overlapping identities risk overlooking the most marginalised and vulnerable groups within the refugee and migrant population.

**Targeted Interventions and Policy Recommendations**

**Holistic Family Support**

**Family-Centred Services**: Coordinated programs that simultaneously address different family members' needs, such as childcare combined with language classes for mothers or mental health support for fathers and adolescents, can reduce barriers to participation.

**Multigenerational Approaches**: Encouraging joint activities (e.g., intergenerational language workshops or cultural events) helps bridge gaps between age groups and creates stronger family and community bonds.

**Gender-Sensitive Programming**

**Women's Leadership and Empowerment**: Supporting women-led organisations and leadership development can help female refugees shape programs that resonate with their communities.

**Preventing GBV**: Comprehensive measures that include safe housing, legal aid, and awareness campaigns about gender-based violence can protect women and girls and encourage earlier reporting of abuse.

## Tailored Education and VET Pathways

**Flexible Scheduling**: Offering classes in the evenings or weekends can accommodate the needs of women with childcare duties or youth who must balance work.

**Apprenticeships and Bridge Programs**: Adolescents and young adults who have missed years of schooling may benefit from transitional "bridge" programs before enrolling in mainstream education or VET.

**Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning**: Providing accessible adult education for older adults fosters social inclusion and helps them navigate daily life with greater independence.

## Accessible Healthcare and Specialized Support

**Age-Appropriate Care**: Healthcare systems should include geriatric services, mental health support for teenagers, and reproductive health for women.

**Trauma-Informed Services**: Training healthcare professionals to recognise and address trauma symptoms can improve outcomes for survivors of violence, regardless of their age or gender.

Gender-specific and age-specific dynamics significantly shape the experiences of refugees and migrants as they attempt to integrate into Greek society. Women and girls may battle systemic inequalities and cultural constraints hindering their educational and economic advancement. At the same time, men and boys grapple with different forms of stress, role shifts, and potential isolation. Children and adolescents must balance their developmental needs with disrupted schooling and psychological pressures, and older adults face difficulties adapting to new linguistic, cultural, and healthcare environments.

Addressing these diverse challenges requires a nuanced, intersectional approach that considers each group's unique vulnerabilities and strengths. By tailoring services, ranging from women-focused vocational training to specialised programs for unaccompanied minors, policymakers, NGOs, and local communities can help ensure that no demographic is left behind. In doing so, Greece can move closer to building an inclusive, equitable system that empowers all refugees and migrants to thrive, regardless of their stage of life or cultural background.

*Conclusion*

Refugees and migrants in Greece encounter a broad spectrum of interwoven challenges that complicate their efforts to integrate and thrive in their new environment. **Socioeconomic barriers**, including high unemployment rates, limited recognition of foreign qualifications, and bureaucratic hurdles, constrain newcomers' ability to secure stable livelihoods. At the same time, **educational obstacles,** marked by interrupted schooling, scarce specialised language programs, and difficulty enrolling in mainstream education, disproportionately affect children and adolescents, who often require extra remedial support to catch up academically.

Compounding these issues are the **psychological strains** of forced displacement and the complexities of adapting to a new culture. Trauma, social isolation, and uncertainty about the future can impact every aspect of daily life, impeding community integration and success in educational or vocational settings. Finally, the experiences of displaced people differ markedly depending on **gender and age**, with women, girls, unaccompanied minors, and older adults frequently facing additional vulnerabilities related to cultural expectations, family roles, or health needs.

Despite these many hurdles, pockets of innovation and resilience demonstrate what is possible. NGO-led programs, intercultural educational initiatives, trauma-informed services, and community-based support networks can create a more inclusive environment. Addressing the nuanced needs of diverse groups, through flexible VET pathways, targeted language instruction, and holistic family- or gender-specific support, provides a promising route to effective, sustainable integration. Ultimately, it is only by acknowledging and responding to the social, economic, cultural, and psychological factors outlined here that Greece and its partners can ensure a genuinely equitable and inclusive future for refugees and migrants.

## The expectations and day-to-day real-life problems of VET staff as far as the migrant/refugee integration process is concerned.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) staff in Greece are crucial in integrating refugee and migrant learners. Tasked with delivering market-relevant skills and competencies, these educators and trainers must also address diverse linguistic, cultural, and psychosocial challenges in their classrooms. Their work extends far beyond conventional pedagogy; many serve as cultural mediators, informal counsellors, and facilitators of day-to-day problem-solving for learners unfamiliar with local norms and systems.

This chapter explores the evolving **expectations** placed on VET personnel, shedding light on the **daily pressures and frustrations** that arise when institutional frameworks, funding allocations, and professional development opportunities fall short of meeting the realities on the ground. Drawing on first-hand observations and existing studies, the following sections illustrate how administrative barriers, lack of training in trauma-informed teaching, and the need for intercultural communication skills can overwhelm even the most committed educators. At the same time, this chapter highlights how innovative, collaborative approaches, often led by teachers, can make a significant difference in supporting refugee and migrant learners to flourish in vocational settings.

By examining these **day-to-day problems** through the lens of VET staff experiences, we understand how systemic challenges manifest in classrooms and workshop spaces, and, crucially, how they might be addressed through targeted policies, resource allocation, and professional development.

*Roles and Responsibilities of VET Staff in Refugee Education*

Vocational Education and Training (VET) staff occupy a pivotal position in the journey of refugee and migrant learners as they adapt to new social, cultural, and professional environments. While their principal mandate is to teach job-focused skills and competencies, their roles frequently expand beyond traditional pedagogical boundaries in practice. This section examines the multifaceted responsibilities that VET educators, trainers, and administrators carry when working with refugee students, highlighting the complexities and nuances of supporting learners who face linguistic, cultural, and psychosocial challenges.

## Traditional Pedagogical Duties

### Delivery of Vocational Curricula

**Core Technical Instruction**: VET staff impart specialised, hands-on skills, such as carpentry, hairdressing, IT support, culinary arts, or hospitality, that can quickly equip learners for the labour market. For refugee students, mastering these competencies can be a fast track to financial independence and social integration.

**Ongoing Assessment**: Evaluating learner progress, administering tests, and providing feedback are part and parcel of teaching. However, conventional assessment methods may need to be adjusted to accommodate refugee learners' varying levels of prior education and language proficiency.

### Curriculum Adaptation

**Differentiated Learning Materials**: VET instructors often must adapt or create teaching resources that cater to diverse literacy levels and linguistic backgrounds. This may mean using more visual aids, demonstrations, and simplified handouts to ensure comprehension.

**Flexible Scheduling**: Some refugee learners juggle job-seeking, legal appointments, and family responsibilities. VET staff must factor in these constraints, offering flexible class times or modular learning pathways that do not penalise irregular attendance.

**Flexible Scheduling**: Some refugee learners juggle job-seeking, legal appointments, and family responsibilities. VET staff must factor in these constraints, offering flexible class times or modular learning pathways that do not penalise irregular attendance.

## Language Support and Cultural Mediation

### Essential Linguistic Scaffolding

**Basic Language Training**: In many VET institutions, teachers offer improvised Greek (and occasionally English) language support during lessons or in separate sessions. Even minimal functional language skills can improve safety, job performance, and social interactions in practical workshops.

**Use of Translation Tools and Bilingual Assistants**: Where possible, VET staff coordinate with bilingual teaching assistants or rely on online translation tools for instant communication. However, these resources are not always available or sufficient, meaning teachers often need to develop creative strategies to bridge linguistic gaps.

### Cultural Orientation

**Navigating Workplace Norms**: Refugee learners may be unfamiliar with local labour laws, workplace etiquette, or customer service expectations. VET instructors often step in to explain fundamental cultural norms and professional standards, ranging from punctuality to dress codes and communication styles, so that students can adapt effectively to Greek work environments.

**Building Trust and Empathy**: Many refugees have experienced trauma and displacement, leading to mistrust of unfamiliar institutions. By creating an inclusive, respectful classroom atmosphere and learning about their students' cultural backgrounds, VET staff can help foster a sense of belonging and motivation to learn.

## Psychosocial and Pastoral Roles

### Emotional Support and Informal Counselling

**Safe Learning Environments**: Refugee learners may exhibit anxiety, stress, or withdrawal in class, stemming from traumatic experiences or ongoing uncertainty about their legal status. VET educators frequently act as first responders, providing reassurance, listening to concerns, and referring students to professional services as needed.

**Mentorship and Motivation**: Many newcomers grapple with low self-esteem, especially if they have faced multiple setbacks or stigmatisation. Through positive reinforcement and individualised attention, VET staff can nurture resilience and help learners envision tangible career goals.

### Liaising with Social Services and NGOs

**Holistic Support**: Effective refugee education often requires a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing health care, legal aid, housing, and mental health support. VET staff may coordinate with NGOs, social workers, or municipal services to ensure students receive comprehensive assistance.

**Referrals and Advocacy**: In some cases, teachers advocate on behalf of their students, writing letters of recommendation or connecting them with local businesses for internships and employment. These efforts are essential in bridging the gap between training and real-world opportunities.

## Administrative and Policy Implementation

### Enrolment and Documentation

**Complex Admissions Processes**: Refugee learners frequently lack standardised documents, such as proof of prior education, valid IDs, or birth certificates. VET administrators and teachers help navigate enrolment protocols by liaising with authorities, verifying asylum documentation, or facilitating alternative pathways for admission.

**Compliance with Funding and Reporting Requirements**: Some VET programs for refugees rely on EU or NGO funding, which often requires meticulous record-keeping and progress tracking. Educators may spend significant time fulfilling these administrative obligations, ensuring that learner attendance, skill acquisition, and outcomes are documented accurately.

### Implementing Government or EU Guidelines

**Evolving Policy Landscape**: Migration and integration policies are frequently shaped by national legislation and EU directives. To align teaching and student support efforts accordingly, VET staff must stay updated on such changes and understand eligibility criteria, reporting protocols, or new integration initiatives.

**Data Privacy and Protection**: Working with vulnerable populations mandates heightened attention to data protection and confidentiality. This includes following ethical standards when sharing personal information about refugee learners with external parties.

## Community Engagement and Stakeholder Collaboration

### Bridging VET Institutions and Local Communities

**Awareness and Sensitization**: Teachers may organise open-house events, workshops, or project exhibitions to educate local community members about refugee learners' potential and achievements. Highlighting success stories can help shift negative stereotypes and demonstrate the societal value of inclusive VET.

**Employer Partnerships**: VET programs often rely on local businesses for internships, apprenticeships, and job placements. Fostering positive relationships with employers, advocating for reasonable accommodations, and showcasing the benefits of hiring refugee graduates become integral parts of the VET staff's role.

### International Collaboration

**Knowledge Exchange**: Through Erasmus+ or similar programs, VET institutions and educators engage in cross-border collaboration to share best practices and develop innovative curricula tailored to diverse migrant backgrounds.

**Cultural Diplomacy**: In some cases, VET initiatives serve as microcosms of intercultural exchange. Teachers learn from and contribute to global efforts to improve refugee integration by participating in international projects or study visits.

## Balancing Multiple Responsibilities

The demands placed on VET staff can be both rewarding and overwhelming. On one hand, they witness the transformative power of skills training in helping refugees rebuild their lives. On the other hand, they face time constraints, limited resources, language barriers, and often inadequate professional development in intercultural competence or trauma-informed teaching. Balancing these responsibilities requires considerable flexibility, dedication, and emotional resilience.

Nevertheless, the expanded role of VET educators is increasingly recognised as a key driver of successful integration. By combining technical instruction with cultural orientation, psychosocial support, and stakeholder engagement, VET institutions can become true empowerment hubs for refugee learners. Ensuring that staff have access to the necessary training, resources, and collaborative networks is vital to sustaining these efforts and unlocking the potential of refugees and migrants who bring diverse experiences and talents to Greece's communities and labour market.

*Cultural Competence and Intercultural Communication Challenges*

As refugee and migrant learners bring an array of languages, cultural norms, and religious traditions into vocational classrooms, VET staff must navigate a dynamic interplay of values, expectations, and communication styles. Beyond language barriers, subtle differences in cultural assumptions, body language, and social hierarchies can lead to misunderstandings that inhibit effective

learning. This section explores these intercultural communication challenges, the importance of cultural competence, and practical strategies for fostering an inclusive environment.

## Language Barriers and Communication Styles

### Multilingual Classrooms

**Diverse Linguistic Backgrounds**: In a single VET class, learners may speak Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Somali, French, or other languages. While Greek remains the primary medium of instruction, teachers must often resort to a mix of gestures, visuals, or bilingual aides to ensure comprehension.

**Differing Learning Approaches**: Some cultures favour lecture-based, teacher-centred methods, while others emphasise interactive and collaborative learning. Adjusting to a new style or pace can confuse learners accustomed to distinct educational traditions.

### Reliance on Interpreters and Translators

**Limited Resources**: On-site interpreters or translators are in high demand and unavailable. Volunteers or fellow students with bilingual skills may assist informally, but varying levels of accuracy and professionalism can impede clear communication.

**Confidentiality Concerns**: Sensitive discussions, such as those about trauma, family issues, or legal status, require trustworthy interpreters with training in confidentiality and ethics. Without them, refugees may be reluctant to share critical information.

## Navigating Cultural Assumptions and Expectations

### Differing Norms of Politeness and Respect

**Nonverbal Cues**: Eye contact, personal space, and gestures carry different connotations across cultures. For instance, what may be perceived as politeness in one culture might be seen as disengagement or disrespect in another.

**Hierarchy and Status**: In some cultures, teachers are viewed as absolute authority figures, leading to minimal student participation or reluctance to question instructions. Conversely, refugees might find adapting to more hierarchical classroom norms in cultures that encourage open dialogue challenging.

### Gender Roles in Educational Spaces

**Mixed-Gender Classrooms**: Learners from conservative backgrounds may hesitate to interact freely in mixed-gender settings. This can manifest in reluctance to engage in group activities, limiting opportunities for peer learning and language practice.

**Teacher-Student Interactions**: Female VET staff might be met with resistance or scepticism from learners unaccustomed to female authority figures, requiring careful boundary-setting and culturally sensitive communication.

## Importance of Cultural Competence

### Building Trust and Rapport

**Empathy and Active Listening**: By acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds and personal histories, educators create a respectful space where refugees feel safe to express themselves. This trust can dramatically improve attendance, motivation, and learning outcomes.

**Validation of Cultural Identity**: Incorporating students' traditions, holidays, or culinary preferences into VET activities or discussions can signal respect for their heritage, making the learning process more engaging and relevant.

### Teacher Training and Continuous Professional Development

**Intercultural Workshops**: Specialized training programs in intercultural communication, conflict resolution, and inclusive pedagogies can equip VET staff with the skills to navigate cultural differences effectively.

**Peer Mentoring and Exchange**: Teachers benefit from sharing best practices with colleagues who have experience working with diverse classrooms. Regular staff meetings or online forums allow for exchanging lesson plans, success stories, and troubleshooting advice.

## Strategies to Overcome Intercultural Communication Barriers

### Collaborative Learning Approaches

**Group Projects and Peer Teaching**: Small-group assignments can foster interaction between learners of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, encouraging them to help one another while practising Greek or other shared languages.

**Visual and Hands-On Methods**: Demonstrations, infographics, role-plays, and practical exercises reduce reliance on written text, making lessons accessible for students with limited literacy or language proficiency.

### Use of Cultural Mediators

**Bridging Social Gaps**: Cultural mediators (often refugees themselves or bilingual community members) can serve as liaisons between VET staff and learners, clarifying cultural norms, mitigating misunderstandings, and guiding conflict resolution.

**Organised Workshops**: Sessions led by cultural mediators on workplace expectations, gender norms, or local legislation can ease learners' transition into Greek society while helping educators understand their students' perspectives.

### Inclusive Communication Policies

**Clear Classroom Guidelines**: Setting shared norms around respect, punctuality, and participation can prevent cultural misunderstandings. Involving learners in developing these norms encourages ownership and mutual accountability.

**Feedback Mechanisms**: Regularly soliciting students' feedback through surveys, suggestion boxes, or informal chats can highlight areas of miscommunication and inform subsequent course adjustments.

## Benefits of a Culturally Competent VET Environment

### Enhanced Learner Engagement

When refugees feel respected and understood, they are more likely to attend classes consistently, participate in hands-on activities, and collaborate with peers. This leads to improved skill acquisition and stronger motivation to complete their training.

### Reduced Conflict and Misunderstandings

VET staff can minimise classroom tensions by proactively addressing cultural differences and providing structured ways to resolve disputes. A smoother learning environment also supports the development of trust and social cohesion among learners.

### Long-Term Employability

Practical intercultural communication skills prepare refugee learners for workplaces where they interact with diverse colleagues, customers, and supervisors. By modelling professional communication in class, VET staff help students build competencies valued by employers in Greece and beyond.

Cultural competence is more than an optional skill set for VET educators working with refugee and migrant learners, it is a foundational element of effective teaching and learning. By honing intercultural communication strategies, adapting pedagogical methods, and creating welcoming, inclusive spaces, VET staff can significantly enhance learners' educational experiences and pave the way for successful integration into the labour market and broader Greek society. This requires ongoing commitment to professional development, institutional support, and collaborative partnerships with interpreters, cultural mediators, and community organisations. Ultimately, a culturally competent VET ecosystem benefits not only refugees and migrants but also fosters innovative, empathetic learning environments that enrich all participants.

## *Administrative and Policy-Level Barriers*

While the success of refugee integration in Vocational Education and Training (VET) settings often hinges on individual instructors' dedication and resourcefulness, the broader **administrative and policy environment** significantly shapes what is feasible. From funding uncertainties to conflicting regulations, VET staff must navigate a complex web of systemic barriers that can hamper effective teaching and student support. This section explores educators' and institutions' principal administrative challenges, highlighting the need for coherent policies and streamlined processes.

### Fragmented Governance and Policy Overlaps

#### Multiple Authorities and Ministries

**Shared Responsibilities**: In Greece, responsibilities related to refugee and migrant integration are divided among several ministries, ranging from the Ministry of Migration and Asylum to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and from the Ministry of Labor to local municipal governments. While each has a role, a lack of a unified policy framework often leaves VET staff without clear guidelines or support structures.

**Coordination Gaps**: Conflicting objectives and unaligned timelines among these authorities can produce contradictory requirements for VET programs. For example, one ministry may push for rapid labour-market integration, while another emphasises language training before any vocational specialisation. These misalignments cause confusion and slow decision-making processes.

#### Inconsistent Local Implementation

**Varying Regional Policies**: The degree of flexibility and support for refugees in VET programs can differ sharply between urban centres and rural regions or between one municipality and another. In some places, local governments proactively collaborate with NGOs to facilitate language classes or apprenticeships; elsewhere, they may lack resources or political will.

**Administrative Delays**: Application procedures for funding, program approvals, or partnership agreements can be prolonged, leaving VET instructors in limbo. Delays also disrupt learners' progress, as crucial steps, like course enrolment or internship placement, are tied to bureaucratic authorisations.

## Complex Funding Structures and Resource Constraints

### Reliance on External Funding

**EU and NGO Grants**: Many integration-focused programs rely heavily on short-term grants from the European Union, philanthropic foundations, or international NGOs. While these grants can jumpstart innovative projects, they often have strict reporting requirements and fixed end dates. This lack of long-term continuity can result in successful programs being downsized or shut down once grant cycles end.

**Fluctuating Budgets**: Even when available funding is available, it may not be allocated predictably. Changes in political priorities or economic conditions can lead to sudden cuts or reallocations, putting VET staff under pressure to do more with fewer resources.

### Under-Resourced Institutions

**Limited Staffing**: VET centres seldom have enough dedicated personnel, such as specialised language teachers, intercultural mediators, and administrative assistants, to adequately serve the growing number of refugee learners. This shortage forces existing staff to assume multiple roles, increasing burnout and reducing overall program quality.

**Inadequate Facilities and Equipment**: Hands-on vocational training requires well-equipped workshops, classrooms, and safety measures. Budget constraints can hamper essential upgrades, leaving teachers with outdated tools or insufficient materials for comprehensive practical lessons.

## Bureaucratic Complexity for Refugee Learners

### Documentation Requirements

**Unclear Eligibility Criteria**: Although refugees and asylum seekers, in principle, have the right to access VET programs, they often face administrative hurdles, such as needing an official ID, proof of address, or recognised diplomas, which can be challenging to obtain or verify.

**Residency and Asylum Procedures**: Prolonged asylum procedures and frequent relocations (between camps, mainland cities, or even different EU states) can disrupt learners' ability to enrol in and complete vocational courses. VET staff find themselves trying to track down paperwork or re-enrol students who were abruptly transferred to a new location.

### Recognition of Prior Learning

**Credential Validation**: Refugees who possess vocational skills or professional certifications from their home countries often struggle to have these formally recognised in Greece. The process can be lengthy, costly, or bureaucratically opaque, forcing learners to start from scratch.

**Impact on Placement**: Without recognised credentials, learners may be placed in inappropriate skill levels, wasting time for students and instructors. This misalignment

can lead to frustration or dropouts, as overqualified learners lose motivation or underqualified ones feel overwhelmed.

## Shifting Policy Environments and Legal Insecurities

### Frequent Policy Changes

**Legislative Amendments**: In response to evolving migration pressures or EU-level directives, Greek authorities periodically revise laws and regulations relating to asylum, labour market access, and education entitlements. These sudden shifts can nullify existing protocols or require VET staff to rapidly adapt lesson plans, enrolment criteria, or course structures.

**Unclear Implementation Guidelines**: Even when new policies are introduced, official guidelines for frontline educators may lag. Lacking up-to-date information, VET institutions risk inadvertently violating legal requirements or failing to offer mandated services.

### Legal Status Uncertainty

**Interim Permits and Renewals**: Students' legal status can change multiple times (asylum seeker, recognised refugee, subsidiary protection, etc.), each with different rights and obligations for educational and work-related activities. Tracking these changes and ensuring compliance creates administrative strain.

**Fear of Deportation**: Learners who fear deportation or have had asylum claims rejected may drop out of VET programs or avoid them altogether, undermining their chances of gaining new skills and stabilising their futures.

## Impact on VET Educators and Administrators

### Emotional and Professional Strain

**Time-Intensive Paperwork**: Teachers and administrators can spend an inordinate amount of time managing forms, coordinating with different government agencies, and troubleshooting bureaucratic obstacles on behalf of their students.

**Work Overload**: Many educators find that administrative responsibilities, such as reporting, grant compliance, and learner documentation, consume time they would prefer to dedicate to teaching, coaching, and lesson preparation.

### Lack of Policy Clarity or Training

**Need for Clear Directives**: VET staff rely on timely, accurate information about refugee rights, funding avenues, and regulatory changes. Ambiguities can lead to inconsistent or incorrect rule application, negatively affecting learners.

**Scarce Professional Development**: While workshops on intercultural communication or trauma-informed teaching exist, few training programs focus specifically on navigating refugee education's administrative and policy aspects. Consequently, educators learn by trial and error, risking burnout and high turnover rates.

## Strategies for Overcoming Administrative Obstacles

### Policy Harmonization and Clear Guidelines

**Inter-Ministerial Collaboration**: Joint committees or task forces among relevant ministries (Education, Migration, Labor, etc.) can create unified strategies and reduce conflicting mandates for VET institutions.

**Standardised Protocols**: Clear, streamlined checklists and guidelines for enrolling refugees, handling paperwork, and allocating funds can minimise confusion at the institutional level.

### Sustainable Funding Models

**Multi-Year Commitments**: Encouraging longer-term support from the EU and other donors would allow VET programs to plan and innovate without fear of abrupt funding cessations.

**Performance-Based Incentives**: Linking a portion of funding to measurable outcomes, like student retention, completion rates, or job placements, can motivate institutions to refine their approaches without risking total financial collapse after a grant cycle.

### Administrative Support and Training

**Dedicated Staff**: Allocating or hiring administrative coordinators who specialise in navigating refugee-related documentation, policy, and funding helps educators focus on teaching.

**Professional Development**: Offering training sessions on policy updates, documentation workflows, and best practices for engaging with government agencies can boost staff confidence and competence.

### Leveraging Technology

**Online Portals**: Digital systems for enrolment, attendance tracking, and credential verification can reduce paperwork, expedite processes, and ensure data consistency across ministries.

**Information-Sharing Platforms**: Establishing a centralised database of regulations, forms, and deadlines could allow educators to access reliable information quickly, improving compliance and planning.

The administrative and policy-level barriers VET staff face in Greece form a complex tapestry that demands creativity and resilience. Conflicting regulations, uncertain funding streams, and cumbersome bureaucracies often stretch educators' time and resources to their limits, threatening the continuity and quality of refugee-focused vocational programs. Yet, these challenges are not insurmountable. With more explicit policy frameworks, more dependable funding mechanisms, and dedicated administrative support, VET institutions could deliver on their mandate more effectively, ultimately allowing refugee and migrant learners to build valuable skills and contribute meaningfully to Greek society. Fostering collaboration among government bodies, streamlining procedures, and investing in capacity-building for frontline educators are pivotal steps in achieving a more cohesive, reliable integration system.

*Support Systems and Professional Development Needs*

Vocational Education and Training (VET) staff who work with refugee and migrant students operate under immense pressure, balancing conventional teaching duties with cultural facilitation, psychosocial mentoring, and administrative advocacy. For these educators to succeed (and for their learners to thrive), robust support systems and targeted professional development opportunities are

essential. This section discusses the multifaceted types of assistance VET staff require, exploring how training, peer collaboration, and institutional backing can bolster resilience and efficacy in the classroom.

## Training in Intercultural Competence and Trauma-Informed Pedagogy

### Intercultural Awareness and Sensitivity

**Cultural Frameworks**: VET teachers need a firm grounding in how cultural norms, values, and communication styles vary across global contexts. Workshops on intercultural competence can foster empathy, reduce unconscious bias, and empower educators to create inclusive lessons.

**Self-Reflection Exercises**: Self-assessment tools, role-plays, and group discussions help educators recognise their cultural assumptions, biases, or blind spots. By acknowledging these factors, teachers can better navigate cultural nuances in the classroom.

### Trauma-Informed Teaching Methods

**Recognising Signs of Trauma**: Many refugee learners have experienced conflict, displacement, or family separation. Educators should be trained to identify indicators of post-traumatic stress, anxiety, or depression and understand how these might manifest in student behaviour (e.g., withdrawal, aggression, difficulty concentrating).

**Classroom Strategies**: Trauma-informed pedagogy emphasises creating safe, supportive learning environments. Techniques include establishing predictable class routines, using non-triggering language, and offering private check-ins for distressed students.

### Ongoing Professional Development

**Short Courses and Certifications**: Many educators benefit from structured programs offered by universities, teacher-training centres, or NGOs on second-language acquisition, conflict resolution, and human rights education.

**Online and Blended Learning Options**: Given time constraints, flexible professional development (webinars, online courses, and collaborative digital forums) enables teachers to upskill on their schedule.

## Mentoring, Peer Collaboration, and Networking

### Peer Mentorship Programs

**Expert Guidance**: Pairing new or less-experienced educators with mentors who have worked extensively with refugee and migrant populations can accelerate skill development and confidence-building. Mentors can offer classroom observations, real-time feedback, and resource-sharing.

**Emotional Support**: Teaching refugee students can be emotionally taxing. Having a peer mentor to debrief challenges, brainstorm solutions, and provide moral support reduces isolation and burnout.

### Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

**Knowledge Exchange**: Regular meetings or online forums where VET staff share lesson plans, innovative teaching tools, and best practices encourage collective problem-solving. Teachers can jointly design culturally appropriate curricula or adapt materials for multilingual use.

**Collaborative Projects**: PLCs can foster joint initiatives, such as hosting intercultural events, inviting guest speakers, or developing shared resource libraries. This cooperative spirit enhances teaching quality and models cooperation for students.

### Conferences and Seminars

**Networking Opportunities**: National or regional conferences on adult education, refugee integration, or multiculturalism allow VET staff to connect with peers from other institutions, NGOs, and governmental bodies. These events help them stay informed about policy changes, emerging research, and innovative teaching methodologies.

**Cross-Border Collaborations**: Through platforms like Erasmus+, teachers can attend international workshops or staff exchanges, gaining insights into how other European countries address similar integration challenges.

## Institutional and Organizational Support

### Administrative Backing and Clear Guidelines

**Reduced Bureaucratic Load**: Dedicated administrative staff who handle documentation and funding applications and liaise with government agencies, free teachers to focus on pedagogy. Without this support, educators risk burnout and reduced instructional quality.

**Coherent Policies**: Clear institutional policies on refugee enrolment, language requirements, and social inclusion measures reduce staff confusion and ensure consistent student service.

### Adequate Resources and Facilities

**Classroom Materials**: Providing bilingual dictionaries, visual aids, and technology (e.g., tablets or projectors) assists in creating dynamic, inclusive learning environments.

**Safe and Equipped Workshop Spaces**: Hands-on vocational training requires well-maintained tools and safety gear. When institutions invest in modern equipment, instructors can properly teach practical skills.

### Coordination with External Stakeholders

**NGO Partnerships**: Working closely with NGOs that offer legal aid, psychosocial support, or shelter services enables VET staff to refer learners who need help beyond the scope of the classroom.

**Local Businesses**: Strong relationships with local employers can lead to internships, apprenticeships, or job placements for refugee graduates, boosting their confidence and employability.

## Emotional Wellness and Self-Care for Educators

### Stress Management and Burnout Prevention

**Wellness Workshops**: Institutions can offer stress management sessions, counselling, or mindfulness programs specifically tailored to teachers dealing with secondary trauma and high emotional demands.

**Self-Reflection Tools**: Journaling, peer-sharing groups, or relaxation exercises help educators process challenging classroom incidents and maintain emotional equilibrium.

### Clear Boundaries Between Professional and Personal Life

**Decompressing after Class**: Setting designated times to handle administrative tasks or respond to student messages can prevent after-hours overwhelm.

**Access to Mental Health Resources**: Teachers should have the option to consult psychologists or employee assistance programs when they feel anxious or overloaded, ensuring they remain resilient and effective.

## Examples of Effective Support Models

### Structured Teacher Training Programs

**Specialised Certification**: Some institutions collaborate with universities or teacher-training colleges to develop certification pathways in refugee education or intercultural competence. This formal recognition boosts morale and professional credibility.

**Layered Mentoring**: Larger VET centres sometimes adopt a multi-tiered mentoring system where senior teachers guide mid-level educators who mentor newcomers. This system distributes expertise and builds a supportive internal culture.

### Community Resource Hubs

**Centralised Resource Libraries**: Physical or digital libraries with teaching aids, lesson plans, and culturally sensitive materials benefit all staff members. A rotating system of material updates keeps content fresh and relevant.

**Local Volunteer Pools**: When demand exceeds institutional capacities, partnerships with volunteer organisations can provide extra assistants, interpreters, or counsellors.

### International Exchange and Collaboration

**Erasmus+ and Transnational Projects**: Participation in EU-funded programs exposes VET staff to successful practices from other countries. Collaborative projects often yield new teaching modules, cross-cultural student exchanges, and published best-practice toolkits.

**Virtual Exchange Platforms**: Online communities of practice, like those hosted by EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe), allow VET educators to troubleshoot issues and share innovative approaches with peers across Europe.

Robust support systems are a lifeline for VET staff at the nexus of education and refugee integration. Targeted professional development in intercultural communication and trauma-informed pedagogy helps educators effectively reach learners with diverse backgrounds and complex life experiences. Mentoring networks and collaborative communities of practice reduce isolation, promoting collective expertise and continuous improvement. Equally vital is the backing of institutional leadership and well-coordinated administrative frameworks, ensuring teachers have the resources, policies, and partnerships they need to succeed.

Ultimately, a well-supported, professionally prepared corps of VET educators improves outcomes for refugee learners and elevates the quality and inclusiveness of the entire vocational training system. Investing in these support systems and professional development avenues is essential to building more cohesive, empowered, and future-ready VET institutions in Greece.

## Conclusion

VET staff in Greece fulfil multiple, overlapping roles in integrating refugee and migrant learners. Beyond the core mandate of teaching job-relevant skills, they often serve as cultural mediators, informal counsellors, and advocates within a complex educational and administrative system. These

expanded responsibilities arise in the context of **linguistic barriers**, **cultural nuances**, and **policy-level challenges**, all of which can hamper effective teaching and learning if left unaddressed.

Yet, the experiences shared in this chapter also demonstrate the profound impact that VET staff can have when **adequate support systems** and **professional development opportunities** are in place. Training in intercultural competence and trauma-informed approaches can help educators respond to the diverse needs of learners and create a more inclusive, engaging classroom environment. At the same time, mentoring networks, peer collaboration, and close coordination with NGOs and community stakeholders bolster teachers' capacity to deliver holistic support, helping refugee and migrant students navigate everything from enrolment procedures to career pathways.

Addressing administrative and policy barriers is equally crucial. Streamlined processes, sustainable funding, and clear institutional guidance allow VET professionals to focus on pedagogy rather than paperwork. Ultimately, this chapter underscores a simple but powerful truth: **VET educators can transform vocational classrooms into gateways for social integration and future success with the right tools and resources.**

## The current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) teachers occupy a uniquely challenging position in Greek education. Tasked with transmitting market-relevant skills to diverse groups of learners, they encounter additional complexities when working with refugee children, who may bring disrupted educational histories, varying levels of literacy, and unique psychological or socio-cultural needs to the classroom. These challenges require agile teaching strategies, specialised training, and robust institutional support. This chapter offers an in-depth exploration of the pressing needs, day-to-day expectations, and persistent hurdles VET educators face in their mission to guide refugee learners toward vocational and personal success.

*Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Adaptation*

**Differentiated Instruction and Flexible Curriculum**

**Multi-level Classrooms**: Refugee children enter VET programs with diverse educational backgrounds, some have interrupted schooling or no formal education. In contrast, others may have advanced academic skills in their native languages. Teachers must design lesson plans simultaneously catering to these varied proficiency levels.

**Practical, Hands-On Learning**: Because many refugee learners may struggle with theoretical concepts in a new language, VET instructors often rely on visual aids, demonstrations, and hands-on activities. These methods can be more engaging and accessible than text-heavy lesson plans.

**Contextualised Learning Materials**

**Cultural Sensitivity**: Incorporating cultural references and examples relevant to students' experiences helps bridge gaps in understanding. For instance, vocational tasks or case studies can be adapted to reflect situations familiar to refugee learners (e.g., small-scale agricultural practices if students come from rural areas or references to common professions in their home countries).

**Translating Technical Content**: Key vocational terms must often be translated into the learners' native languages or presented via bilingual glossaries. However, teachers

must also be mindful of the many languages refugee students speak, making it challenging to produce multilingual resources.

### Ongoing Assessment and Feedback

**Formative Assessment Techniques**: Regular check-ins, quizzes, or one-on-one conversations help teachers understand whether students grasp course material. Adapting these assessments for low-literacy or linguistically diverse populations is an ongoing challenge.

**Feedback Loop with Learners**: Providing constructive, culturally sensitive feedback can boost learners' self-esteem and clarify misunderstandings. Teachers often need training to ensure input is both motivating and linguistically accessible.

## *Overcoming Language Barriers and Educational Gaps*

### Intensive Language Support

**Basic Greek as a Foundation**: Mastering foundational Greek is key to academic and social integration. VET teachers may informally teach language basics or collaborate with specialised language instructors, but many programs lack a dedicated language component aligned with the vocational curriculum.

**Supplementary Language Classes**: Some schools and NGOs offer additional language support after regular class hours. While beneficial, these sessions can be sparsely attended if transportation or childcare is an issue.

### Bridging Gaps in Literacy and Numeracy

**Remedial and Catch-Up Classes**: Refugee children with limited schooling often need intensive reading, writing, and basic math lessons. VET teachers without formal training in remedial education must innovate, designing exercises that integrate literacy or numeracy practice into vocational tasks (e.g., measuring in carpentry, writing instructions for cooking).

**Digital Learning Tools**: Educational apps and e-learning platforms can theoretically help students practice essential skills outside the classroom. However, limited internet access and a lack of digital literacy can restrict the effectiveness of these tools.

### Ensuring Progression and Retention

**Motivational Challenges**: Learners who struggle with language and academic basics may quickly become discouraged. Teachers must identify signs of disengagement early and develop individualised support strategies, such as pairing students with peer tutors or offering extra study sessions.

**Coordination with Other Stakeholders**: Collaborations with social workers, counsellors, and translators can help learners address external factors (e.g., unstable housing and family obligations) that may impede academic progress and attendance.

## *Classroom Management, Trauma-Informed Teaching, and Psycho-Social Support*

### Trauma-Informed Strategies

**Recognising Signs of Distress**: Refugee children may display heightened anxiety, trouble concentrating, or emotional outbursts related to past traumatic events. Teachers

need the training to understand these behaviours as potential trauma responses rather than mere discipline issues.

**Creating Safe Spaces**: Designing classroom routines that offer predictability, clear timetables, consistent rules, and calm transitions can reduce stress for learners. Simple techniques like "quiet corners," calming music, or mindfulness exercises help students self-regulate.

**Behaviour Management and Conflict Resolution**

**Cultural Differences in Discipline**: Perceptions of acceptable classroom behaviour or authority may vary across cultures. Teachers must adopt inclusive discipline methods that respect students' backgrounds without compromising classroom order.

**Peer Interactions**: Mixed refugee and host-community classrooms can enrich learning and lead to misunderstanding or conflict. Implementing peer mediation programs or group projects that encourage cooperation fosters mutual respect.

**Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals**

**School-Based Counselling**: Ideally, VET institutions would have access to counsellors or psychologists trained in cross-cultural and trauma-informed care, but this is not always the reality. Teachers often serve as informal confidants for students' emotional struggles, highlighting the urgent need for professional support networks.

**Referral Systems**: Clear protocols for referring students to specialised mental health or social services, especially in cases of severe trauma or abuse, can ease teachers' burden and ensure students get the help they need.

*Mentorship, Peer Exchange, and Teacher Networks*

**Peer Support Groups**

**Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**: VET teachers benefit from regularly scheduled meetings with colleagues who face similar challenges. These sessions enable the exchange of teaching materials, classroom management tips, and success stories related to refugee education.

**Emotional Solidarity**: Working with traumatised or at-risk students can strain a teacher's mental health. Peer support groups offer a space to debrief, share coping strategies, and reaffirm a sense of collective purpose.

**Mentorship Programs**

**Experienced Educators Guiding Newcomers**: Veteran VET teachers or intercultural education specialists can mentor newly hired staff, conduct classroom observations and give feedback on lesson design.

**Cross-Institutional Collaboration**: Partnerships between different schools or regions allow educators to visit each other's classrooms, observe best practices, and create collaborative lesson plans. These connections can be formal (e.g., through Erasmus+ projects) or informal local initiatives.

**International Exchanges and Training**

**Erasmus+ Initiatives**: Training events and job-shadowing opportunities in other EU countries expose VET teachers to innovative refugee education models. By learning

from peers abroad, Greek educators can import fresh ideas, adapt them, and enhance local solutions.

**Online Forums and Webinars**: Time constraints and budget limitations may hinder international travel. Instead, virtual platforms, such as the EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe), enable remote collaboration, offering webinars and discussion forums where teachers can crowdsource advice.

### Institutional and Policy-Level Support

Though the focus of this chapter is on the needs and difficulties of individual VET teachers, it is essential to note that systemic change can substantially ease the burdens these educators carry:

**Stable, Long-Term Funding**: Ensuring adequate and predictable resources for language training, remedial classes, counselling, and classroom materials would alleviate many teachers' day-to-day struggles.

**Clear Guidelines and Bureaucratic Simplification**: Streamlined admission procedures, credential recognition, and policy alignment (between the Ministries of Education, Migration, and Labor) reduce administrative hurdles. Teachers can devote more time to lesson planning and student mentorship when freed from excessive paperwork.

**Professional Development Infrastructure**: Dedicated teacher-training programs at national or regional levels focusing on intercultural competence, trauma-informed pedagogy, and language acquisition can significantly boost educators' confidence and effectiveness.

### Conclusion

The realities of teaching refugee children in Greek VET programs demand a holistic approach that extends well beyond conventional instruction. **Pedagogical adaptation**, **integrated language support**, and **trauma-informed classroom management** are essential in meeting the complex needs of learners who bring diverse skills, experiences, and emotional backgrounds. Furthermore, **mentorship structures**, **networking opportunities**, and **policy-level advocacy** can significantly bolster educators' capacity to navigate these challenges.

When systemic support is in place (stable funding, clear admission procedures, accessible professional development), VET teachers are better equipped to unleash the potential of each refugee child, paving a path toward meaningful employment and social inclusion. By investing in the specific areas highlighted in this chapter, educational stakeholders can transform vocational classrooms into spaces of empowerment and bridge-building, ultimately benefiting refugee learners and the broader communities in which they reside.

## The availability of tools, materials, and knowledge exchange in the field of the best-suited ways of helping refugee children for the staff and institutions of the VET sector.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs equip young refugees with practical skills, facilitate their transition into the Greek labour market, and nurture a sense of belonging in their new communities. Yet, the effectiveness of these programs hinges on educators' access to **appropriate teaching tools**, **evidence-based methodologies**, and **robust networks** for knowledge exchange. Over the past decade, various resources have been developed, from government guidelines and NGO toolkits

to multinational collaborative projects. Nevertheless, gaps in **accessibility, cultural relevance, and sustainability** continue to hamper VET initiatives' efficacy for refugee learners.

This chapter offers an in-depth look at the **key resource categories**, the **digital and offline platforms** where they can be found, and the **collaborative frameworks** (including Erasmus+ and international partnerships) enabling continuous innovation and best practices sharing. The section also addresses **persistent challenges** in finding, adapting, and updating materials to serve refugee students in Greek VET classrooms.

*Existing Curricular Guides, Toolkits, and Training Materials*

**Government-Issued Guidelines and Initiatives**

- **Reception Facilities for Refugee Education (DYEP) Resources**

The Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, often collaborating with regional educational directorates, has produced guidelines and curricula to support the "Reception Facilities for Refugee Education" (DYEP). Although these guidelines primarily target primary and secondary students, they contain foundational approaches to language instruction, psychosocial support, and cultural integration that can be adapted to VET contexts. For example, modules on **essential Greek language acquisition** or **intercultural communication** can be repurposed to suit vocational workshops.

- **Intercultural Education Frameworks**

Several policy briefs, ministerial circulars, and pilot programs have emerged under intercultural education, urging Greek schools and VET centres to promote **respect for diversity** and **inclusive pedagogical methods**. While these documents often lack the granular detail needed for hands-on VET instruction, they set a valuable policy backdrop. They typically emphasise project-based learning, cultural sensitivity, and methods to engage migrant families, which can be relevant for vocational teachers looking to expand their skill sets.

- **Digital School and E-library Platforms**

The Ministry's Digital School portal occasionally includes resources on language teaching and inclusive education. Though not exclusively focused on refugees, teachers can find supplementary materials on Greek language acquisition, lesson plans for technical subjects, and links to broader educational strategies. Some resources may need adaptation to address the specific learning gaps and trauma-related challenges faced by refugee youth.

**NGO and International Organization Toolkits**

- **UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF Publications**

These agencies have produced various **multilingual guides, policy recommendations, and psychosocial toolkits** to support educators working with displaced populations. Specific examples include manuals on **trauma-informed teaching**, **child safeguarding**, and **intercultural dialogue**. Many of these resources highlight real-life scenarios from Greek contexts, such as life in reception camps on the islands or urban centres like Athens, making them more relevant for VET teachers seeking culturally attuned materials.

- **Greek NGOs (e.g., Arsis, METAdrasi, Solidarity Now, Greek Council for Refugees)**

Local NGOs are also active in producing or translating relevant materials. For instance, METAdrasi's focus on **interpretation services** has yielded practical guides on how educators can communicate effectively across language barriers. Organisations like Arsis and Solidarity Now,

which run youth centres, often share tools for **social inclusion**, **basic life skills**, and **vocational orientation,** components that can be integrated into VET lesson plans.

**EU-Funded Project Outputs**

- **Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships**

Numerous Erasmus+ projects have resulted in **online toolkits, pedagogical manuals, and training modules** specifically geared toward the needs of migrant and refugee learners. For example, projects might develop step-by-step curricula for blending **language instruction** with **vocational skill-building** in hospitality, construction, or IT sectors. These toolkits frequently include lesson plans, evaluation rubrics, and guidelines for forming school-business partnerships.

- **European Training Foundation (ETF) Publications**

Although ETF's focus is broader (covering policy-level guidance for EU neighbourhood and enlargement countries), its reports contain **best-practice examples** of refugee vocational integration. ETF case studies often detail how to **recognise informal skills**, **align curriculum with local labour markets**, and **create bridging programs** that fill gaps in academic background.

**University-Led Teacher Training Modules**

- **Continuing Education and Professional Development Programs**

Greek universities occasionally collaborate with foreign institutions and offer **certified training** in **second-language pedagogy**, **adult learning principles**, and **intercultural communication**. Some courses specifically address the educational challenges of refugee children and unaccompanied minors.

- **Open-access research and Academic Papers**

Universities often publish research findings and pilot evaluations, which can guide teachers in **evidence-based** methods. While these academic texts might require some interpretation to be classroom-ready, they offer insights into **longitudinal outcomes**, **learner motivation**, and **successful integration models** that can inspire new practices in VET institutions.

*Digital Platforms, Online Communities of Practice, and Open Educational Resources (OERs)*

**National and EU-Level Platforms**

- **EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe)**

EPALE is a central hub where educators share lesson plans, case studies, and event announcements relevant to adult education, including vocational training for migrants and refugees. Users can filter resources by topic (e.g., literacy, language support, inclusion) and language. Greek educators who join EPALE often report benefiting from the webinars and blog posts contributed by peers from across Europe.

- **School Education Gateway and eTwinning**

While these platforms primarily target schools, eTwinning projects sometimes incorporate vocational strands, mainly if a school runs upper secondary or vocational tracks. Teachers can find **collaborative projects** that integrate **multilingual resources**, digital tools, and **intercultural exchanges,** all adaptable for refugee learners in VET.

**Open Educational Resource (OER) Repositories**

- **Global MOOC Platforms (Coursera, EdX, OpenLearn)**

These platforms occasionally host **free or low-cost courses** on refugee education, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), or inclusive teaching practices. Educators can better glean theoretical knowledge and practical strategies to support their students' language and psychosocial needs.

- **Subject-specific OER for Vocational Skills**

Online repositories, such as **SkillsCommons** or **OpenLearn Works**, contain tutorials and modules for practical trades (carpentry, hospitality, IT basics, etc.). Although these resources are not always in Greek or tailored to refugee contexts, they can be **adapted** with culturally relevant examples and translated instructions.

## Online Communities of Practice and Social Media Groups

- **Teacher-focused Facebook or WhatsApp Groups**

Grassroots communities have emerged on social media, where Greek educators exchange tips, highlight upcoming training sessions, and share personal experiences working with refugee children. Such forums can be especially valuable in **real-time problem-solving** or connecting with resource people (e.g., interpreters and NGO staff).

- **Professional Networks on LinkedIn**

Greek VET teachers who join international networks can discover conferences, funding calls, and newly published toolkits. LinkedIn groups focusing on **refugee integration**, **ESL teaching**, or **migrant education** can broaden teachers' professional horizons and foster cross-border connections.

## Mobile Apps and Digital Language Tools

- **Apps for Basic Greek and Vocational Terminology**

While mainstream language apps (Duolingo, Memrise) do not focus on vocational jargon, they help newcomers acquire everyday Greek. In specific pilot projects, local developers have created specialised apps or modules addressing basic technical terminology for automotive repair, building trades, or culinary arts.

- **Video Demonstrations and YouTube Channels**

Many educators or skilled tradespeople post short demonstration videos in Greek or with subtitles covering safe tool usage, step-by-step cooking methods, or mechanical repairs. Teachers can incorporate these videos into lesson plans to bridge linguistic gaps and explain complex procedures visually.

*Gaps in Resource Accessibility and Relevance*

## Fragmented and Scattered Resources

- **Lack of a Central Repository**

Although many valuable resources exist, they are dispersed across websites, organisational portals, and social media groups. Teachers with limited time may struggle to **navigate** or even **discover** relevant material.

- **Varied Quality and Outdated Content**

Some toolkits and guides are created under **short-term project funding** and remain **un-updated** once the project concludes. Others offer broad concepts with minimal practical detail, requiring significant teacher adaptation.

## Cultural and Contextual Relevance

- **Generic European Focus**

A toolkit developed for general refugee education in Europe may overlook Greek VET institutions' specific policy frameworks, socio-economic contexts, and daily realities. Adapting materials to local contexts, such as Greek labour laws, ministry regulations, or local job markets, can be time-consuming.

- **Underrepresentation of Certain Refugee Groups**

Many existing resources assume a predominance of Arabic-speaking learners from the Middle East. However, Greece also hosts refugees from Afghanistan, various African countries, and beyond, each community bringing distinct linguistic and cultural nuances.

## Insufficient Guidance on Implementation

- **Gap Between Theory and Practice**

While some materials present in-depth theories on intercultural communication or language pedagogy, teachers often need **practical lesson plans**, **classroom activities**, and **realistic assessment methods**.

- **Mismatch in Pedagogical Format**

Resources may presume access to interactive whiteboards, stable internet, or small class sizes, which is not guaranteed in every Greek VET setting, particularly in camp-based or under-resourced centres.

## Limited Sustainability and Updates

- **Time-Bound Project Cycles**

Many robust toolkits and digital platforms originate from 2-3 year EU-funded projects. Once the funding ends, websites may go offline or remain **unmaintained**, quickly becoming obsolete.

- **Changing Demographics and Needs**

Fluctuating refugee arrival numbers, evolving asylum laws, and shifting labour demands mean that resources can become **outdated** if not periodically revised to match contemporary realities.

*Opportunities for International Collaboration and Erasmus+ Support*

## Structured Partnerships and Mobility Programs

- **Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2)**

KA2 projects encourage **multilateral cooperation** between VET centres, NGOs, and European policy bodies. By jointly developing toolkits or testing pilot approaches, partners produce resources that address **common challenges** (e.g., bridging language and skills gaps) while **locally adaptable** to Greek contexts.

- **Staff Mobility and Job Shadowing**

Greek VET teachers can apply for **short-term mobilities** in other EU countries. They will observe successful models of refugee education and return with fresh insights, materials, and a peer network, thereby **strengthening domestic practices**.

## Multinational Resource Creation and Localization

- **Co-Developed Curricula**

Collaborating with foreign institutions that have experience in migrant integration (e.g., in Germany, Sweden, or Italy) can result in **shared vocational modules** that incorporate second-language acquisition strategies and trauma-sensitive pedagogies.

- **Translation and Cultural Adaption**

Translating existing resources into Greek (and possibly the main refugee languages) with contextual examples, such as Greek labour regulations or local industries, enables teachers to integrate them seamlessly into daily lessons.

## Knowledge-Sharing Platforms and Events

- **Centralized Online Libraries**

Erasmus+ consortia or national education agencies could host **dedicated web portals** compiling updated materials, best-practice examples, and teacher testimonials. Such a platform might include **filters by vocational field**, language levels, and trauma-informed approaches.

- **Annual Conferences and Workshops**

Regular physical or virtual events create dedicated forums to **showcase new tools**, **announce project results**, and **foster peer networking**. The Greek Ministry of Education or major NGOs can partner with Erasmus+ national agencies to arrange thematic sessions on VET for refugees, ensuring an ongoing cycle of innovation and refinement.

## Strengthening Local-International Synergy

- **Aligning National and EU-Level Efforts**

Coordination between Greek ministries and European bodies can reduce duplication, streamline documentation, and encourage **joint investment** in successful pilot programs.

- **Amplifying Grassroots Successes**

Community-based organisations and smaller VET centres often generate **highly effective localised** materials, such as bilingual dictionaries or targeted lesson plans, that remain in local silos. International collaborations can **scale up** and refine these grassroots efforts, distributing them more widely.

### *Conclusion*

Although **substantial resources** exist to guide VET educators in working with refugee children, ranging from governmental frameworks and NGO toolkits to digital platforms and multinational project outputs, the landscape remains **fragmented and inconsistently updated**. Finding the right resource at the right time can be challenging for teachers juggling heavy workloads and immediate classroom needs. Moreover, many existing guides require **localisation**, whether in language, pedagogy, or contextual references, to be truly impactful in Greek VET settings.

Nevertheless, there are **promising paths forward**. Erasmus+ projects and other international partnerships offer opportunities for **co-creation** and **mutual learning**, ensuring that new resources are

shaped by direct classroom experience and continuously refined to align with shifting refugee demographics and

evolving labour market demands. By investing in **centralised repositories**, **ongoing professional development**, and **collaborative knowledge-sharing events**, Greek VET systems can transform today's scattered materials into cohesive, actionable toolkits that empower both educators and refugee students. Ultimately, bridging this resource gap will enhance vocational learning outcomes and facilitate **greater social inclusion** and **economic participation** for refugee youth in Greece.

# Part II – Interviews

**Introduction**

In this part of the report, we will present the most critical findings from the Individual In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) conducted in Greece with representatives of the VET sector.

The general aim of the IDIs was to specify the broad picture of migrant/refugee issues in the partner regions/countries so that the situation could be understood entirely. This will help identify the difficulties migrants/refugees deal with daily. Therefore, it will be easier to identify effective measures that can be introduced to improve their situation and to what extent the project's results may help fulfil this task.

**Interview Objectives**

The interviews aimed to:

- Identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children regarding integration.

- Understand the daily difficulties faced by migrants/refugees.

- Learn about the real-life problems and expectations of VET staff concerning the integration process of migrants/refugees.

- Determine VET teachers' current needs, expectations, and difficulties working with refugee children.

- Enhance the availability of tools, materials, and knowledge exchange to assist refugee children effectively.

- Raise awareness about the migrant/refugee situation in the region/country.

**Methodology**

The interviews took place on September 30, 2024, in Larissa (Greece) with two representatives who work closely with migrants and their children. During the interviews, which lasted approximately 45 minutes each, VET staff asked five questions regarding several topics.

**Key Findings**

**1. Integration Challenges for Migrants and Refugees:**

Respondents pointed out that the real needs of refugee children are initially to be accepted by the new environment in which they find themselves and learn the country's language so that they can communicate and integrate into the shared community.

As we can see from the answers, the enormous difficulty is that they are not motivated to learn Greek and want to leave Greece as soon as possible. At the same time, they live in a camp far from the city, which further distances them from a real opportunity for inclusion.

**2. Challenges Faced by VET Staff:**

Respondents pointed out that VET personnel face difficulties adapting educational programs for refugees due to a lack of vocational education staff trained to manage cultural and language differences. There is also a significant deficiency in educational materials tailored for refugees.

As we see from the answers, a worker with refugee children's first desire is to make them feel accepted and safe, help them learn the language as quickly as possible, and help them understand essential elements of the host country's culture to make their daily lives easier.

However, the fact that our country is not the destination but a passage to their destination reduces their motivation to try with stubbornness and will.

**3. Needs and Difficulties of VET Teachers Working with Refugee Children:**

According to the interviewees, VET teachers working with refugee children must see results in their training. But this is not the case, as students often do not attend classes or are not interested in them.

For this reason, VET teachers need support from the educational community. As the participants documented, good communication, good intentions, and the coexistence of all teachers who meet these students are essential.

**4. Availability of Educational Tools and Materials:**

From the answers of the VET staff, we can see a need for staff to educate refugee children. They believe there are already enough tools and educational materials to help the teacher respond to the needs of the specific students.

However, their answers suggest that it is always helpful for teachers to network and share the practices they use to deal with specific difficulties in the classroom.

**5. Additional Comments and Suggestions:**

From these answers, both respondents emphasise the need for training in the existing educational tools and teacher communication.

**Conclusion**

The interviews highlight a complex array of integration challenges faced by migrants and refugees in Greece, spanning educational and social issues.

Both VET representatives stressed the urgent need for training, better language support, and comprehensive integration programs.

Addressing these issues requires collaborative efforts involving multiple stakeholders to enhance the support structures for migrants and refugees in Greece.

# Part III - Online survey

In this part of the report, we will present the findings from survey research conducted among VET staff in Greece. An online survey was conducted (using Google Forms) from October 10 to October 22, 2024.

The survey aimed to provide a broad picture of migrant/refugee issues in the project's countries to fully understand the situation.
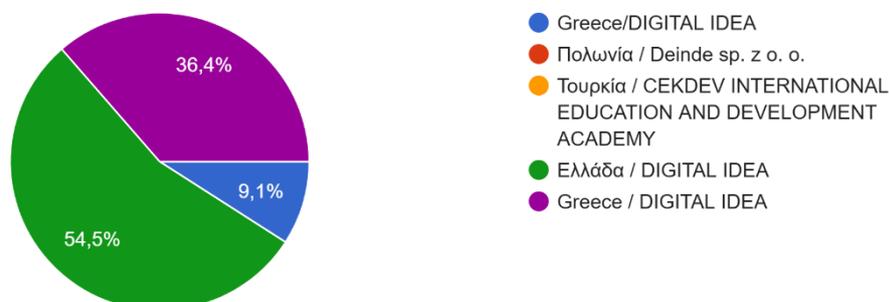In more detail, the aims were:
- to identify the actual needs and problems of migrants/refugees and their children in the integration process.
- to specify the current needs, expectations and difficulties of VET teachers working with refugee children.
- to raise awareness of the migrant/refugee situation in the region/country.

The anonymous survey consisted of seventeen (17) questions. Eleven (11) people representing the VET sector in Greece participated in the research.

1. Question No. 1: From which country are you completing the survey / from which institution did you receive the invitation to complete the survey?

1. From which country are you completing the survey / from which institution did you receive the invitation to complete the survey?
11 απαντήσεις



- Greece/DIGITAL IDEA
- Πολωνία / Deinde sp. z o. o.
- Τουρκία / CEKDEV INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY
- Ελλάδα / DIGITAL IDEA
- Greece / DIGITAL IDEA

2. Question No. 2 referred to the responders' position in the VET sector.

2. Please specify your most relevant professional position in the vocational education and training (VET) / education system:

11 απαντήσεις



- ● Teacher
- ● Coach
- ● Σύμβουλος καριέρας
- ● Εκπαιδευτής
- ● Διοργανωτής εκπαιδευσεων
- ● Φροντιστής
- ● Αξιολογητής
- ● Καθηγητής / Δάσκαλος

▲ 1/2 ▼
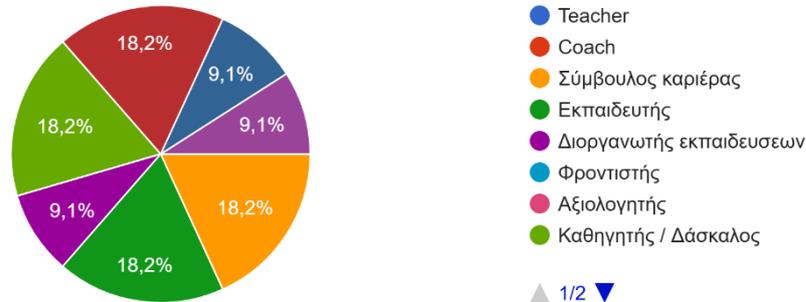
The largest group are teachers (27.9%), followed by instructors, trainers and career advisors (18.2% each). The next group are facilitators and evaluators (9.1% each).

3.  Question No. 3: "*How long have you worked in the VET sector/education system?*"

3. Πόσο καιρό εργάζεστε στον τομέα της ΕΕΚ του εκπαιδευτικού συστήματος;

11 απαντήσεις



- ● Έως 2 έτη
- ● Από 2 έως 5 έτη
- ● Πάνω από 5 έτη
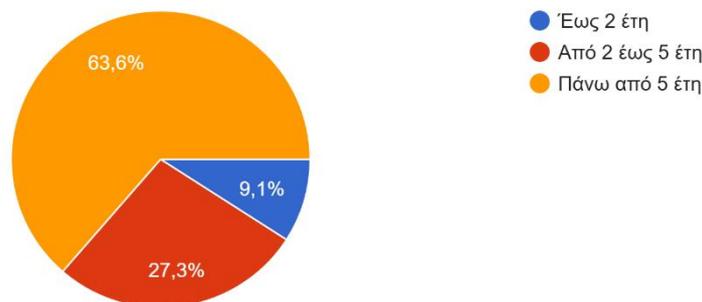
Most responders (63.6%) indicated they have worked in the VET sector or education system for over five years. 27.3% of respondents had two to five years of experience in VET. Additionally, 9.1% of respondents reported that they have been working in the VET sector for up to two years.

4.  Question No. 4 in the survey was: "*What do you think are the most important needs of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country?*"

4. Ποιες πιστεύετε ότι είναι οι σημαντικότερες ανάγκες των ενήλικων μεταναστών/προσφύγων κατά τη διαδικασία ένταξης στη χώρα μας; Παρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικές.

11 απαντήσεις



| Ανάγκη | Αριθμός (Ποσοστό) |
|---|---|
| Η εκμάθηση της γλώσσας | 10 (90,9%) |
| Η σταθερή απασχόληση | 3 (27,3%) |
| Η αναγνώριση επαγγελματικών… | 0 (0%) |
| Η πρόσβαση στην επαγγελματι… | 4 (36,4%) |
| Η πρόσβαση στην υγειονομική… | 8 (72,7%) |
| Οι ασφαλείς συνθήκες στέγασης | 6 (54,5%) |
| Η νομική υποστήριξη | 2 (18,2%) |
| Η ψυχολογική υποστήριξη | 3 (27,3%) |
| Η πολιτιστική κατανόηση και α… | 6 (54,5%) |
| Η ενσωμάτωση στην τοπική κοι… | 8 (72,7%) |
| Η άμεση οικονομική στήριξη | 3 (27,3%) |
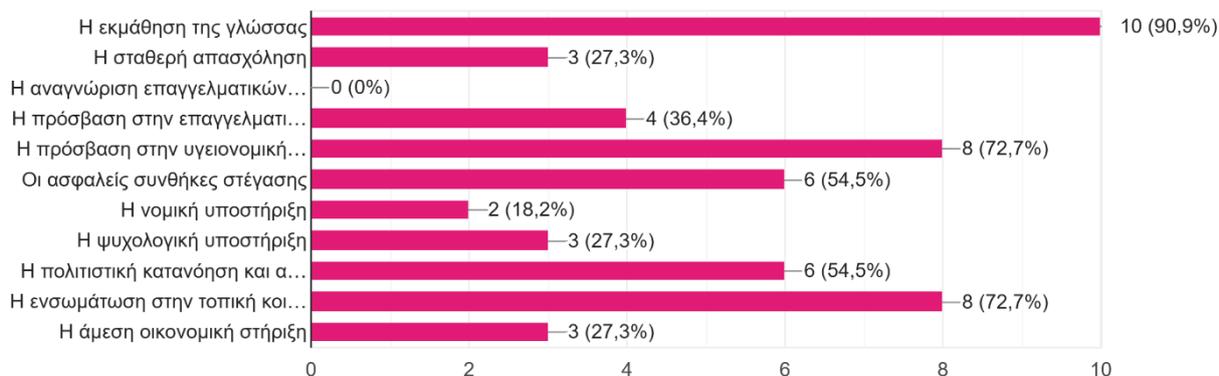
Responding to the given question, 10 respondents indicated that the most crucial need for adult migrants or refugees is learning the Greek language. Eight respondents indicated Access to Healthcare and Integration with the local community. 6 respondents indicated Safe housing conditions and Cultural understanding and acceptance. Other respondents were chosen from 3 to 1 respondent.

5. The next question was: "*In your opinion, what are the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country?*"

5. Κατά τη γνώμη σας, ποιες είναι οι σημαντικότερες ανάγκες των παιδιών μεταναστών/προσφύγων κατά τη διαδικασία ένταξ…ρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικές.

11 απαντήσεις



| Ανάγκη | Αριθμός (Ποσοστό) |
|---|---|
| Η εκμάθηση της γλώσσας | 9 (81,8%) |
| Η πρόσβαση σε δημόσιους παι… | 4 (36,4%) |
| Η ενσωμάτωση με τους συνομ… | 9 (81,8%) |
| Η ψυχολογική υποστήριξη | 5 (45,5%) |
| Η πολιτιστική κατανόηση και α… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Η υποστήριξη στην μάθηση | 5 (45,5%) |
| Οι Ευκαιρίες συμμετοχής σε εξ… | 3 (27,3%) |
| Η βοήθεια προσαρμογής στο ν… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Η πρόσβαση στην υγειονομική… | 7 (63,6%) |

In response to the given question, the most significant number of respondents (9 people) indicated that the most essential need of migrant or refugee children is learning Greek and their Integration with peers. The remaining needs had 3 to 5 options.

6. Question No. Six in the survey was: "*What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by adult migrants/refugees in the integration process? in our country?*"

6. Ποιες πιστεύετε ότι είναι οι βασικές δυσκολίες και τα προβλήματα που αντιμετωπίζουν οι ενήλικοι μετανάστες/πρόσφυγες κατά τη διαδικα...αρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικά.
11 απαντήσεις
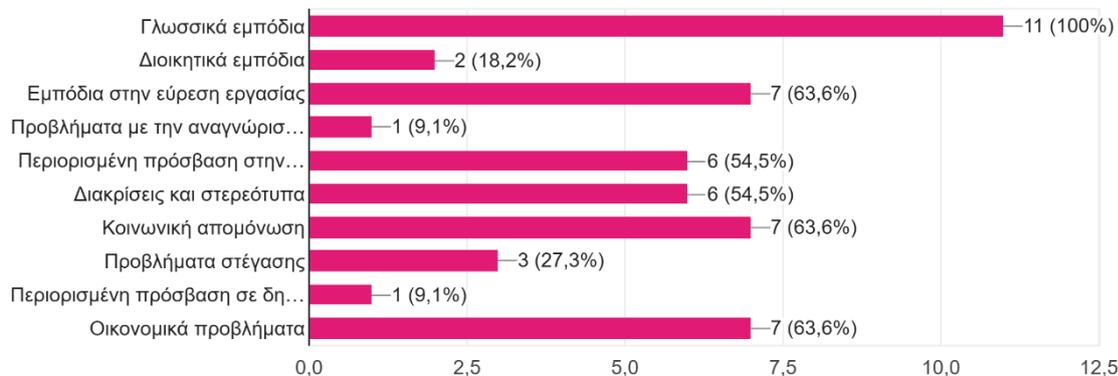


The key difficulties are the language barriers (11 responders), difficulties in finding a job, Social isolation and financial problems (7 responders)

7. In question No. 7, "*What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by migrant/refugee children in the integration process? in our country?*"

7. Ποιες πιστεύετε ότι είναι οι βασικές δυσκολίες και τα προβλήματα που αντιμετωπίζουν τα παιδιά μεταναστών/προσφύγων κατά τη διαδικασί...αρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικά.
11 απαντήσεις



The key difficulties and problems faced by migrant or refugee children in the integration process the VET staff indicated: language barrier (11 responses), Difficulty in making friends (8 responses), Difficulty in adapting to the new education system (7 responses)

8. The 8th question was: "*What do you think are the key opportunities for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process? in our country?*"

8. Ποιες πιστεύετε ότι είναι οι βασικές ευκαιρίες για τους ενήλικες μετανάστες/πρόσφυγες στη διαδικασία ένταξης στη χώρα μας; Παρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικές.
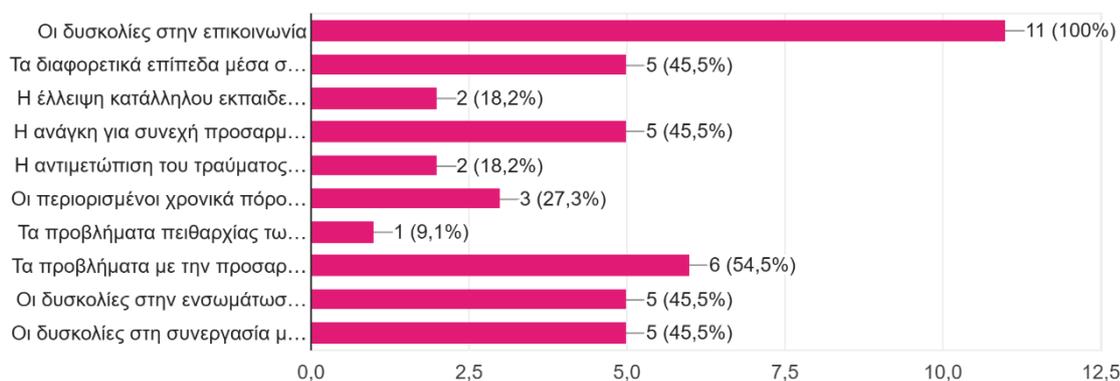
11 απαντήσεις
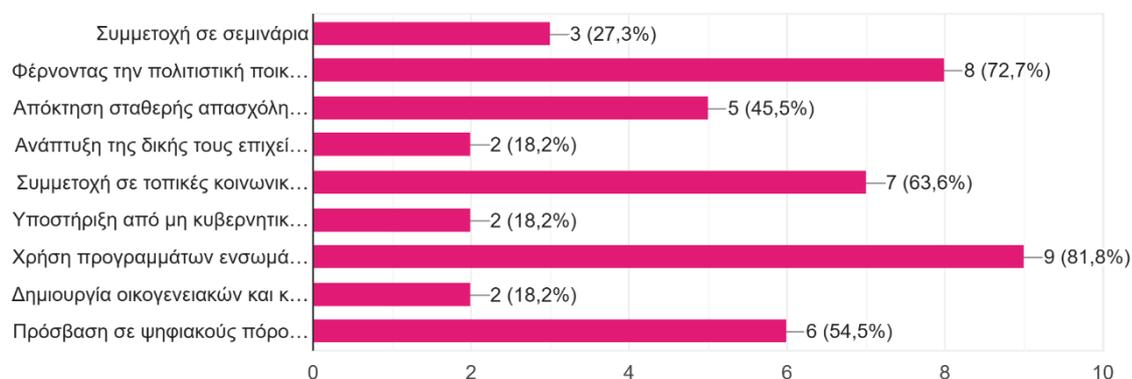


In response to the given question, nine respondents indicated that the key opportunity for adult migrants or refugees in the integration process is using integration programs, eight respondents indicated bringing cultural diversity to society, and seven answered getting involved in local social initiatives.

9. In the next step, the respondents answered, "What do you think are the key opportunities for migrant/refugee children in the integration process *in our country?*"

9. Ποιες πιστεύετε ότι είναι οι βασικές ευκαιρίες για τα παιδιά μεταναστών/προσφύγων στη διαδικασία ένταξης στη χώρα μας; Παρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικές.

11 απαντήσεις
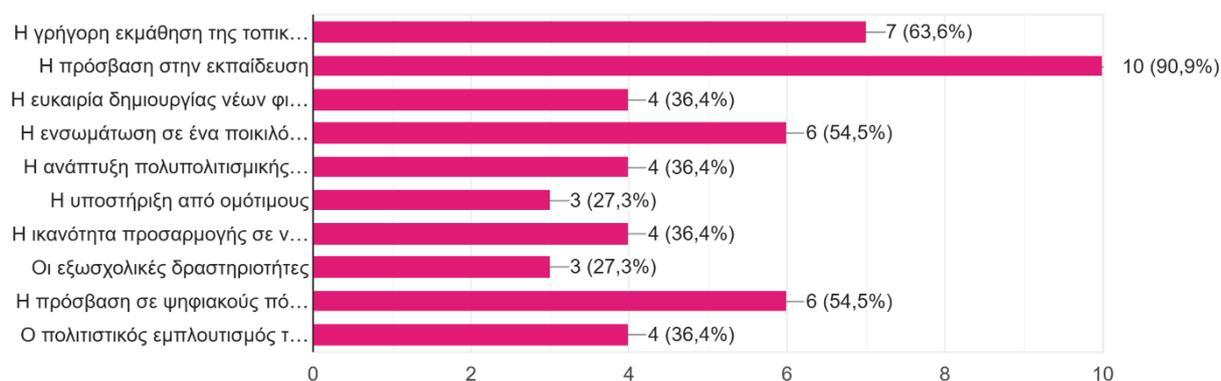


The following responses were provided regarding the key opportunities for migrant and refugee children in the integration process in our country:
- 10 respondents selected the Access to education,
- 7 people answered Quickly learning the local language
- 6 respondents selected integration in a diverse environment and Access to digital resources and technologies

10. Question No. 10 in the survey was: "In your opinion, what are the everyday problems, difficulties and challenges for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration into *our country?*"

10. Ποια είναι, κατά τη γνώμη σας, τα καθημερινά προβλήματα, οι δυσκολίες και οι προκλήσεις για το εκπαιδευτικό προσωπικό που εργάζεται με...αρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικά.
11 απαντήσεις



| | |
|---|---|
| Οι δυσκολίες στην επικοινωνία | 11 (100%) |
| Τα διαφορετικά επίπεδα μέσα σ… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Η έλλειψη κατάλληλου εκπαιδε… | 2 (18,2%) |
| Η ανάγκη για συνεχή προσαρμ… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Η αντιμετώπιση του τραύματος… | 2 (18,2%) |
| Οι περιορισμένοι χρονικά πόρο… | 3 (27,3%) |
| Τα προβλήματα πειθαρχίας τω… | 1 (9,1%) |
| Τα προβλήματα με την προσαρ… | 6 (54,5%) |
| Οι δυσκολίες στην ενσωμάτωσ… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Οι δυσκολίες στη συνεργασία μ… | 5 (45,5%) |

The enormous number of respondents indicated difficulties in linguistic communication with students.

11. The 11th question was: "*In your opinion, what are the needs and expectations of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in their integration into our country?*"

11. Κατά τη γνώμη σας, ποιες είναι οι ανάγκες και οι προσδοκίες του εκπαιδευτικού προσωπικού που εργάζεται με παιδιά μεταναστών...αρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικά.
11 απαντήσεις



| | |
|---|---|
| Εκπαίδευση στη διδασκαλία πα… | 8 (72,7%) |
| Υποστήριξη εκμάθησης γλωσσ… | 5 (45,5%) |
| Πρόσβαση σε εκπαιδευτικό υλι… | 6 (54,5%) |
| Βοηθώντας τους μαθητές να αν… | 0 (0%) |
| Αυξημένη ψυχολογική υποστήρ… | 2 (18,2%) |
| Υποστήριξη σε ποικίλες μεθόδ… | 6 (54,5%) |
| Μεγαλύτερη εμπλοκή της σχολι… | 0 (0%) |
| Δυνατότητα διαβούλευσης με ει… | 8 (72,7%) |
| Υποστήριξη στην οικοδόμηση… | 6 (54,5%) |
| Διευκόλυνση της προσαρμογής… | 5 (45,5%) |

Most respondents indicated that the most crucial need and expectation of training staff working with migrant/refugee children is training in teaching children from different cultures and the possibility of consulting with integration experts (8 answers).

12. The next question in the survey was: "*How do you assess the effectiveness of existing integration strategies used in educational institutions in the integration of refugee/migrant children in our country?*"

12. Πώς αξιολογείτε την αποτελεσματικότητα των υφιστάμενων στρατηγικών ένταξης που χρησιμοποιούνται στα εκπαιδευτικά ιδρύματα για ...ώ επιλέξτε 1 από τις πιο σχετικές απαντήσεις.
11 απαντήσεις



- Πολύ αποτελεσματική - οι στρατηγικές είναι καλά προσαρμοσμένες και παρά…
- Αποτελεσματική - αλλά απαιτεί κάποιες διορθώσεις και προσαρμογές στις πρ…
- Μερικώς αποτελεσματική - ορισμένες πτυχές εφαρμόζονται καλά, αλλά υπά…
- Εφαρμόζονται σωστά - αλλά ο αντίκτυπός τους στην ένταξη των παιδ…
- Αναποτελεσματική - οι τρέχουσες στρατηγικές αποτυγχάνουν να αντιμετ…

81.8% of respondents selected the answer: "partially effective – some aspects are well implemented, but there are significant gaps", and 18.2% of respondents pointed out "They are implemented well, but their impact on children's inclusion is limited."

13. The question No. 13 was: "*Is the support offered by the state system (e.g. Ministry of Education, Education Authority) for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country is sufficient and appropriate for your needs in everyday work?*"

13. Είναι η υποστήριξη που προσφέρει το Υπουργείο Παιδείας στο εκπαιδευτικό προσωπικό που εργάζεται με παιδιά μεταναστών/προσφύγων κατά ... επιλέξτε 1 από τις πιο σχετικές απαντήσεις.
11 απαντήσεις



- Ναι, η υποστήριξη είναι επαρκής και καλά προσαρμοσμένη στις ανάγκες μου.
- Ναι, αλλά υπάρχουν ορισμένοι τομείς στους οποίους η υποστήριξη θα μπορ…
- Κάποια υποστήριξη είναι χρήσιμη, αλλά υπάρχει έλλειψη λεπτομερών πόρων…
- Όχι, η υποστήριξη είναι διαθέσιμη, αλλά είναι πολύ γενική και πρέπει να προσα…
- Όχι, η στήριξη είναι ανεπαρκής και δεν καλύπτει τις βασικές μου ανάγκες.

The most significant number of VET staff (54.5 %) pointed out that some support from educational authorities and bodies is useful, but there is a lack of detailed resources and training in key areas. In the opinion of 27.3 % of respondents, Support is available but too general and needs to be better tailored to specific situations.

14. The following question in the survey was, "Does the educational institution where you work offer its support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their integration into *our country?*"

14. Does the educational institution where you work offer its own support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their integration in our country? Please select 1 answer.
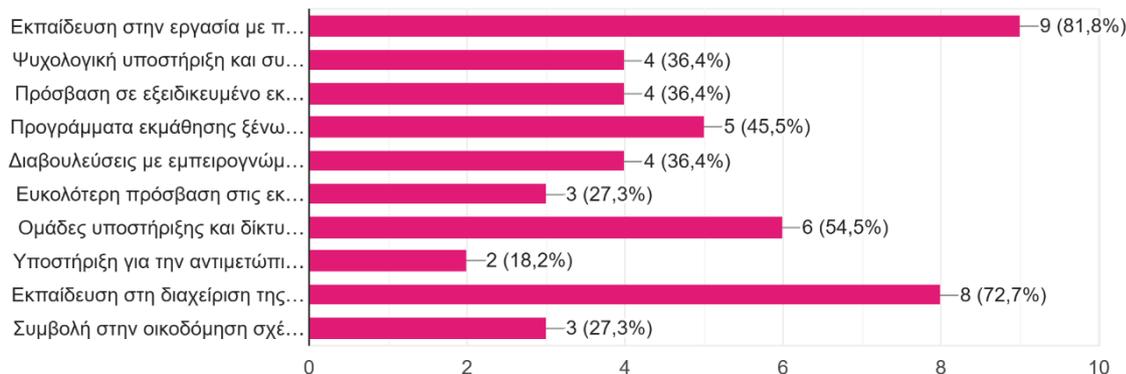
13 answers



- Yes, it offers comprehensive support, including training and educational materials.
- Yes, but support is limited to basic training and resources.
- Yes, but support is only available on an ad hoc basis, no permanent programs.
- Partially, support is available, but needs to be improved and expanded.
- No, it does not currently offer adequate staff support.
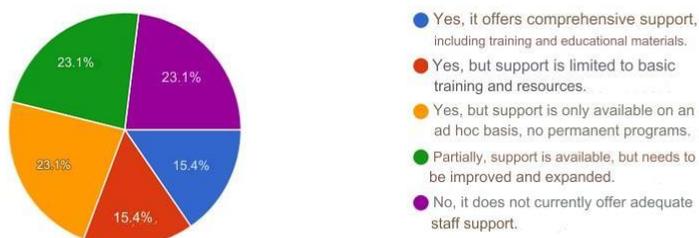
14. Το εκπαιδευτικό ίδρυμα στο οποίο εργάζεστε προσφέρει τη δική του υποστήριξη στο προσωπικό που εργάζεται με παιδιά πρόσφυγες/με... επιλέξτε 1 από τις πιο σχετικές απαντήσεις.
11 απαντήσεις



- Ναι, προσφέρει ολοκληρωμένη υποστήριξη, συμπεριλαμβανομένης τη…
- Ναι, αλλά η υποστήριξη περιορίζεται στη βασική εκπαίδευση και τους πόρους.
- Ναι, αλλά η υποστήριξη είναι διαθέσιμη μόνο κατά περίπτωση, δεν υπάρχουν…
- Εν μέρει, η υποστήριξη είναι διαθέσιμη, αλλά πρέπει να βελτιωθεί και να επεκτ…
- Όχι, δεν προσφέρει επί του παρόντος επαρκή υποστήριξη

36.4% of the responders selected that Support is only available on an ad hoc basis, with no permanent programs. 27.3% selected that Support is limited to basic training and resources, and another 27.3% selected that Support is available but needs to be improved and expanded.

15. The next question asked the respondents: "What support would be most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in their integration into our country?"

15. Ποια υποστήριξη θα ήταν πιο κατάλληλη και χρήσιμη για το εκπαιδευτικό προσωπικό που εργάζεται με παιδιά μεταναστών/προσφύγων κατά...ακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 5 πιο σημαντικές.
11 απαντήσεις

| Κατηγορία | Αριθμός |
|---|---|
| Εκπαίδευση στην εργασία με π... | 9 (81,8%) |
| Ψυχολογική υποστήριξη και συ... | 4 (36,4%) |
| Πρόσβαση σε εξειδικευμένο εκ... | 4 (36,4%) |
| Προγράμματα εκμάθησης ξένω... | 5 (45,5%) |
| Διαβουλεύσεις με εμπειρογνώμ... | 4 (36,4%) |
| Ευκολότερη πρόσβαση στις εκ... | 3 (27,3%) |
| Ομάδες υποστήριξης και δίκτυ... | 6 (54,5%) |
| Υποστήριξη για την αντιμετώπι... | 2 (18,2%) |
| Εκπαίδευση στη διαχείριση της... | 8 (72,7%) |
| Συμβολή στην οικοδόμηση σχέ... | 3 (27,3%) |

Most of the VET responders (9 people) pointed out that the most appropriate and valuable for educational/training staff would be training in working with children from different cultures.

16. The following question in the survey was: "*How would you rate the availability of effective and adequate educational tools and materials for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children?*"

16. Πώς κρίνετε τη διαθεσιμότητα αποτελεσματικών και επαρκών εκπαιδευτικών εργαλείων και υλικών για το εκπαιδευτικό προσωπικό που ε...αρακαλούμε επιλέξτε έως και 3 πιο σημαντικά.
11 απαντήσεις

| Κατηγορία | Αριθμός |
|---|---|
| Πολύ περιορισμένη διαθεσιμότ... | 4 (36,4%) |
| Χαμηλή ποιότητα των διαθέσιμ... | 7 (63,6%) |
| Η διαθεσιμότητα ποικίλλει ανάλ... | 2 (18,2%) |
| Μέση διαθεσιμότητα, με κενά σ... | 5 (45,5%) |
| Παραμετροποιημένα υλικά είναι... | 2 (18,2%) |
| Καλές πηγές αλλά δύσκολο να... | 2 (18,2%) |
| Καλές πηγές, αλλά ακριβές ή δ... | 0 (0%) |
| Διαθέσιμα εργαλεία υψηλής ποι... | 1 (9,1%) |
| Πηγές υψηλής ποιότητας και εύ... | 0 (0%) |
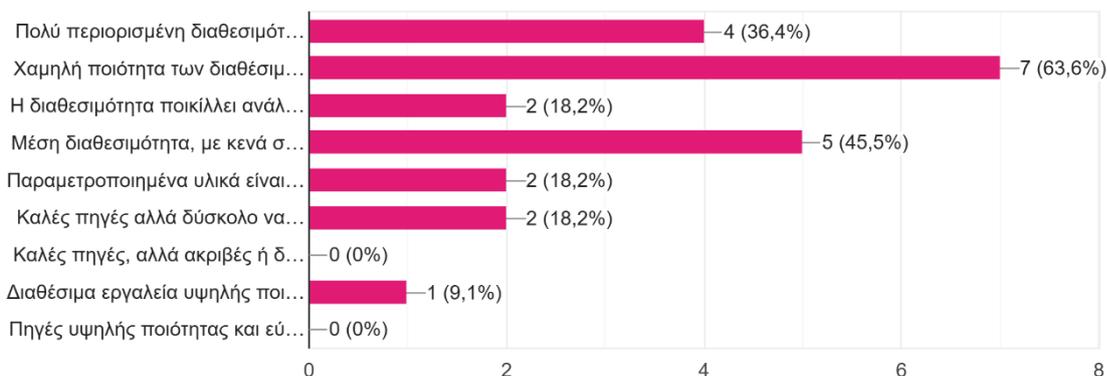
The most considerable number of VET staff (7 people) address the Low quality of available tools and materials.

17. The last question was open-ended. The VET staff could share any additional information or observations they had with us.

Respondents provided the following answers:
- Perhaps the integration of migrants should be done in multicultural structures.

- The education of refugee children should be linked to holistic migrant management strategies at the livelihood level.

- Much more needs to be done in this direction.

- Structures need to be set up to be fully integrated.

- Integration and inclusion of migrants in the Greek school culture.

# Conclusions

- **Persistent Barriers to Refugee Integration**
  - Refugee learners often view Greece as a temporary transit point rather than their final destination, resulting in weak motivation to learn Greek or engage in long-term integration.
  - Physical distance, living in remote camps, further diminishes opportunities for direct interaction with local communities and sustained attendance in VET programs.
- **Challenges for VET Staff**
  - VET teachers face significant gaps in training and support when adapting curricula for culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms.
  - Materials tailored for refugee learners remain limited, and educators often struggle to find or adapt existing resources without structured guidance or localised examples.
- **Need for Holistic Support and Collaboration**
  - Many refugee students grapple with trauma and psychosocial issues that require sensitive, multifaceted approaches (including safe classroom environments, psycho-emotional support, and trauma-informed teaching).
  - Integration efforts must extend beyond the classroom; cooperation among educators, social workers, NGOs, and local authorities is key to building robust support networks.
- **Importance of Building Teacher Networks**
  - VET staff stress the value of networking and practice-sharing. Access to peer support, shared lesson plans, and real-time communication channels significantly enhance teachers' ability to respond to emerging challenges in refugee education.
- **Underused Tools and Resources**
  - While a range of generic educational materials exist, few are adapted for the specific needs of refugee learners in vocational contexts, particularly about vocation-specific terminology, cultural relevance, and step-by-step language acquisition strategies.
  - Inconsistent teacher training on how to use these materials further hampers widespread adoption and efficacy.

# Chapter 4 – Merged data from Online Surveys in three partner countries

# Introduction

As part of the project, 36 online surveys were collected from VET staff across three countries. This allowed for the collection of significant data on the topic of the project.

Chapter 4 focuses on presenting the most popular response options that were frequently chosen during the interviews. This approach highlights both the similar and differing trends among respondents from the three countries, offering a comparative perspective on their preferences and opinions.

By analyzing these patterns, the chapter aims to provide valuable insights into shared priorities and unique national distinctions, helping to shape more tailored and effective project strategies.

# Survey overview

Question 1 in the survey was: "From which country are you completing the survey / from which institution did you receive the invitation to complete the survey?"
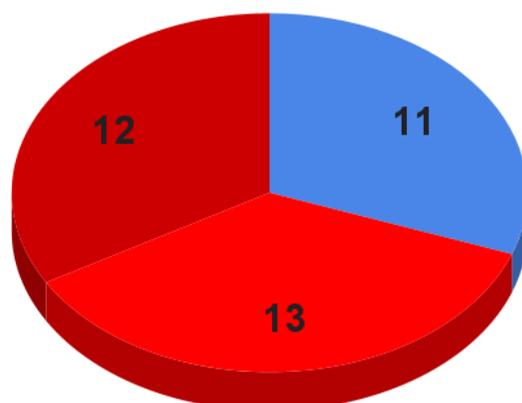


● Greece ● Poland ● Turkey

In all three partner countries 36 responders in total took part in the research. The number of filed online surveys was similar in each country, from 11 in Greece to 13 in Poland. Thanks to that there is no methodological issues with data comparison.

In question 2 the responders were asked to specify their most relevant professional position in the vocational education and training (VET) / education system.
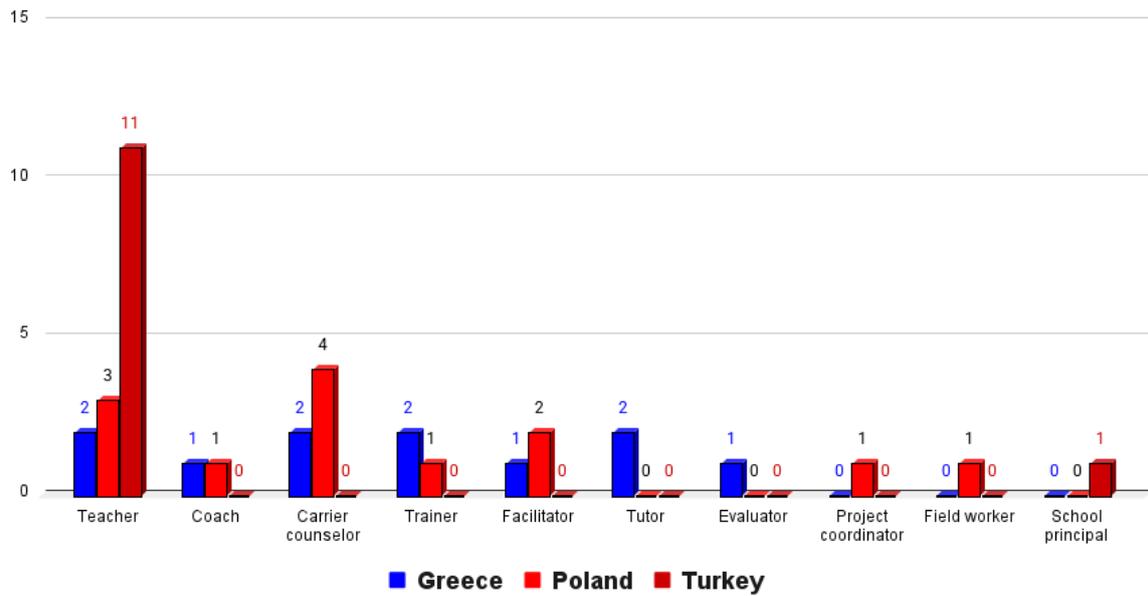
As we can observe on the chart, dominated vocational profession of responders was teacher, than career counsellor, trainer and facilitator.

In question 3, the responders were asked: "How long have you been working in the VET sector/education system?
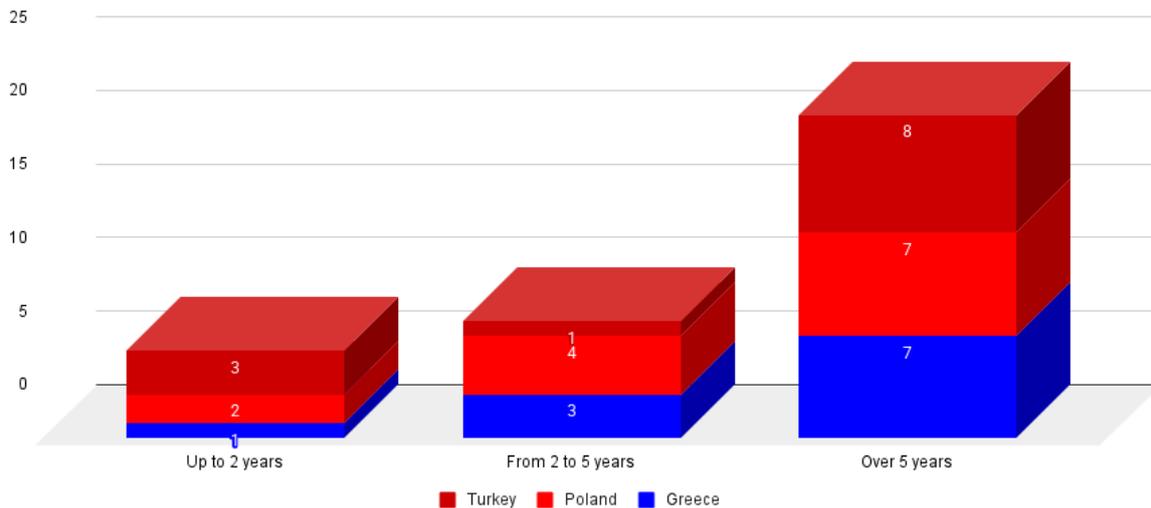


From the responses to this question, the majority of survey participants have over 5 years of experience in the VET sector/education system, with 22 responders falling into this category.

Question 4 in the survey was: "What do you think are the most important needs of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country?
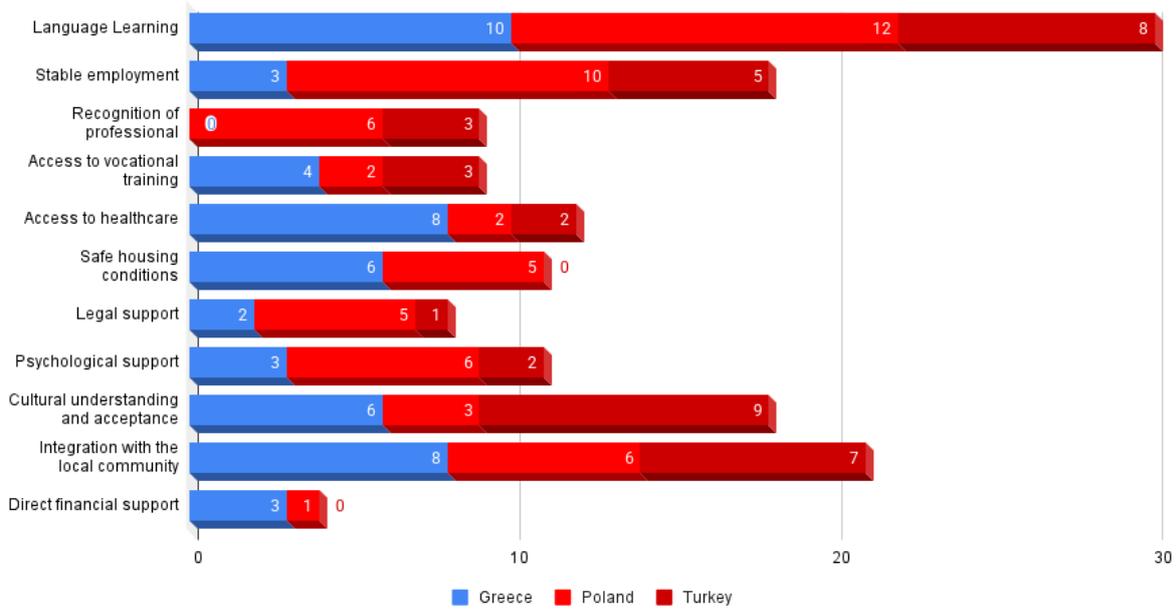
As we can see on the chart, the most important need of adult migrants/refugees in the integration process, in the opinion of the responders, was language learning, than integration with local community, stable employment and cultural understanding and acceptance.

In question 5, the VET staff was asked: "In your opinion, what are the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country?
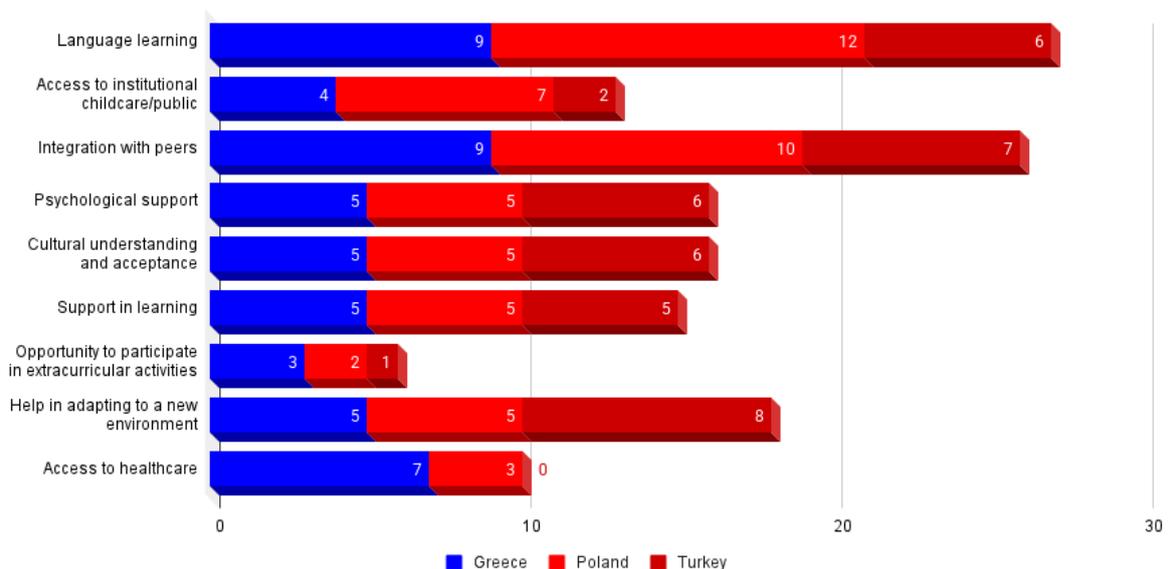


As we can observe on the chart, the responders pointed out that the most important needs of migrant/refugee children in the integration process are: language learning, integration with peers and help in adaptation in new environment.

Question 6 in the survey was: "What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country?
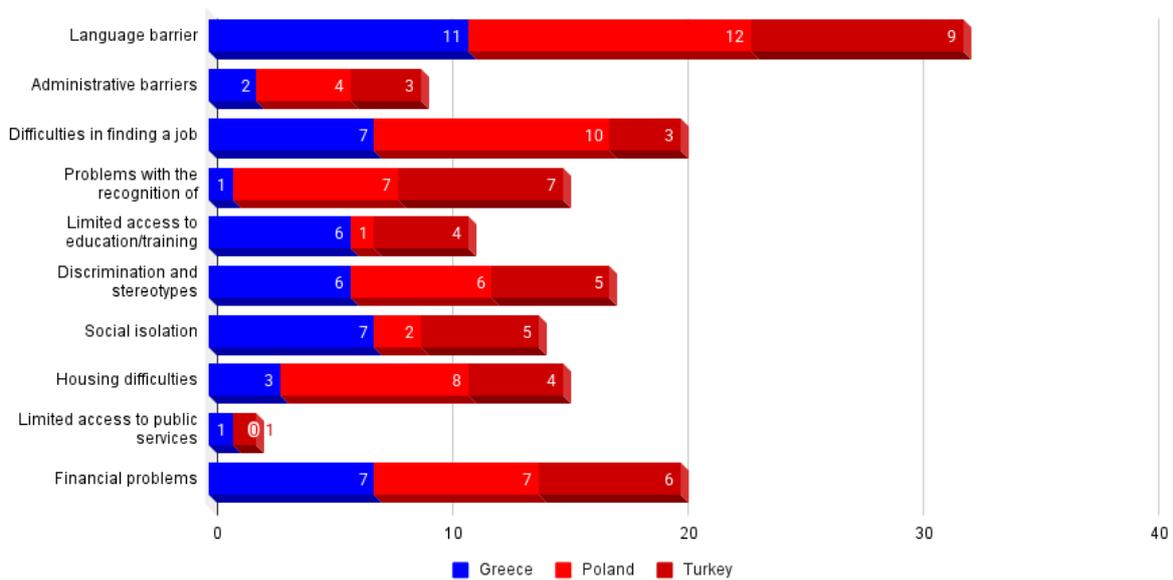


This bar chart shows that the key difficulties and problems faced by adult migrants and refugees during the integration process in the country, according to the interview participants are: language barriers, difficulties in finding a job, and financial problems.

In question 7, the responders were asked "What do you think are the key difficulties and problems faced by migrant/refugee children in the integration process in our country?"
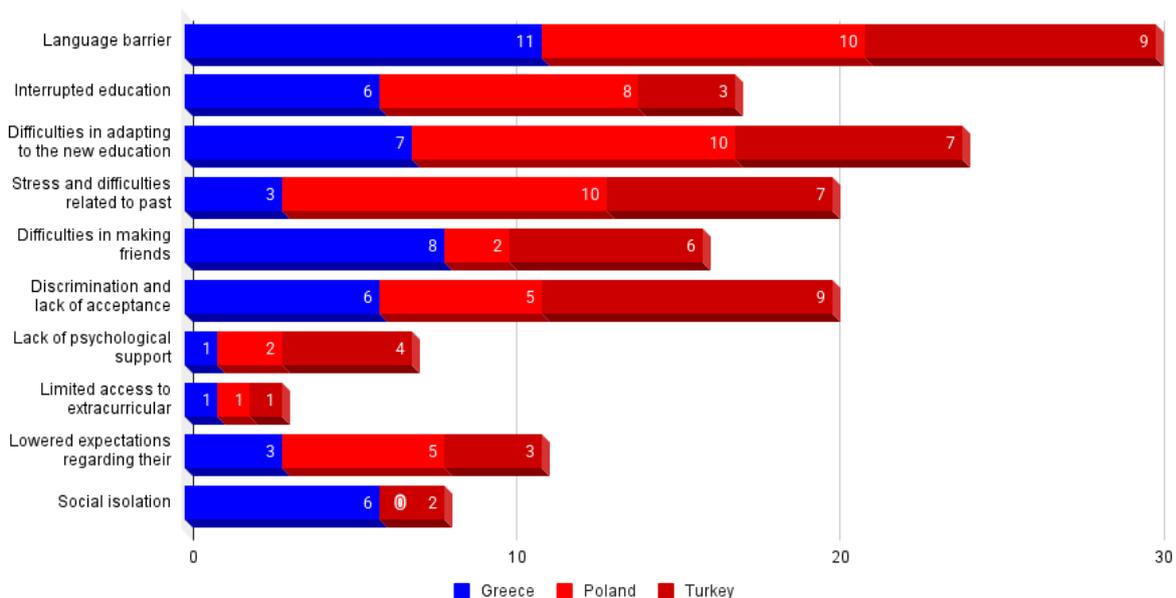


This graph shows that the most important answers selected by the responders were: language barriers, difficulties in adapting to the new education system, discrimination, and lack of acceptance as the key difficulties.

Question 8 in the survey was: "What do you think are the key opportunities for adult migrants/refugees in the integration process in our country?"
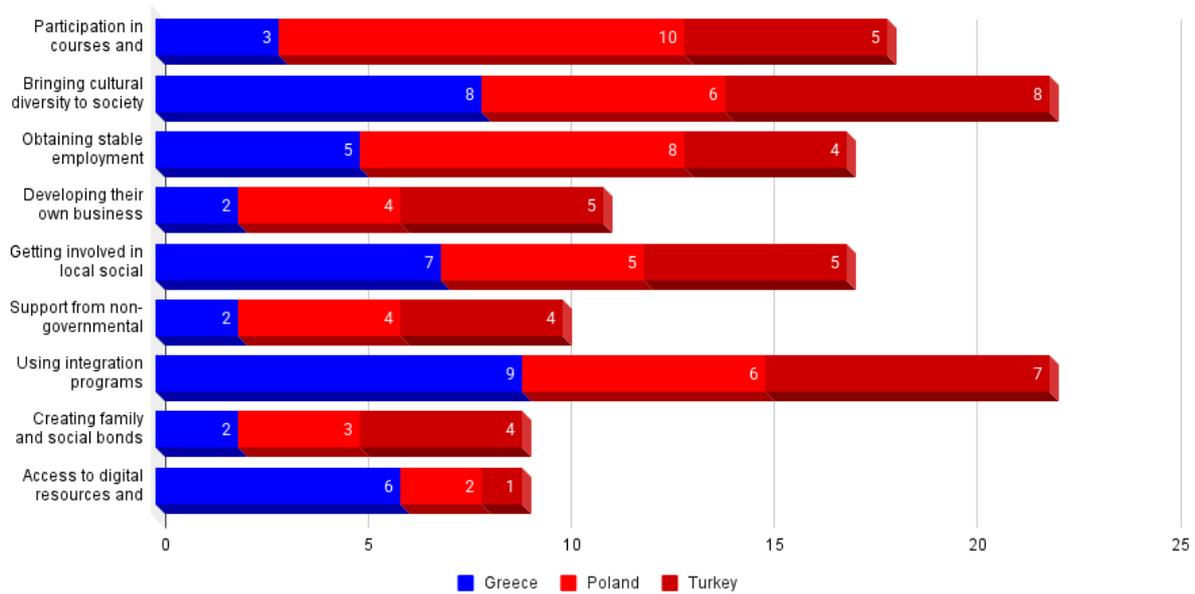


As we see form the given graph, responders believe, integration can be enriched through bringing cultural diversity to society, participation in courses and trainings, using integration programs structured support programs.

In question 9, the responders were: "What do you think are the key opportunities for migrant/refugee children in the integration process?"
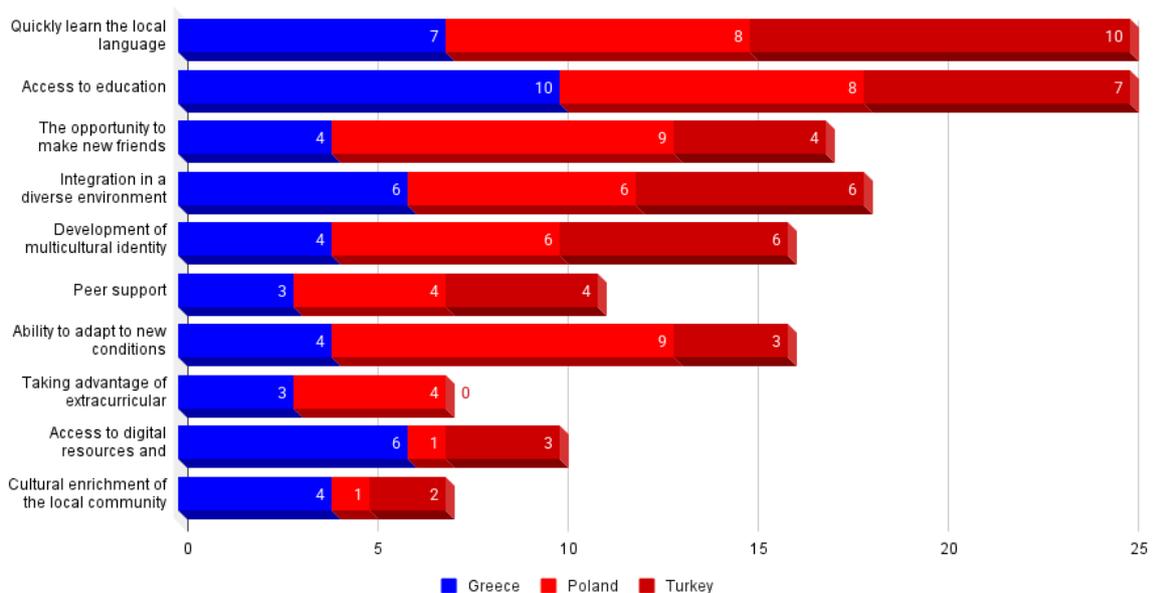


As the bar chart shows, the most commonly selected answers by the respondents were: quickly learning the local language, access to education, and integration into a diverse environment.

Question 10 in the survey was: "In your opinion, what are, the everyday problems, difficulties and challenges for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?"
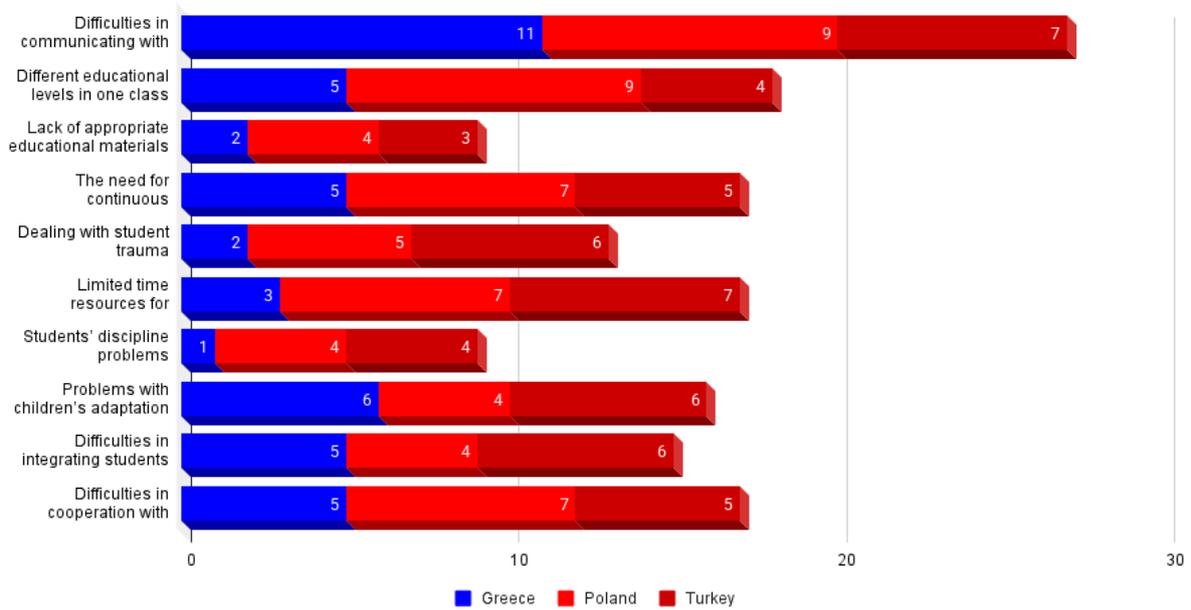


As we can see from the graph, the majority of respondents consider that the main problems and challenges faced by educational and training staff are in communicating with students, different educational levels in one class, the need for continuous adaptation of teaching methods and difficulties in cooperation with parents.

In question 11, the VET staff was asked: "In your opinion, what are the needs and expectations of educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?"
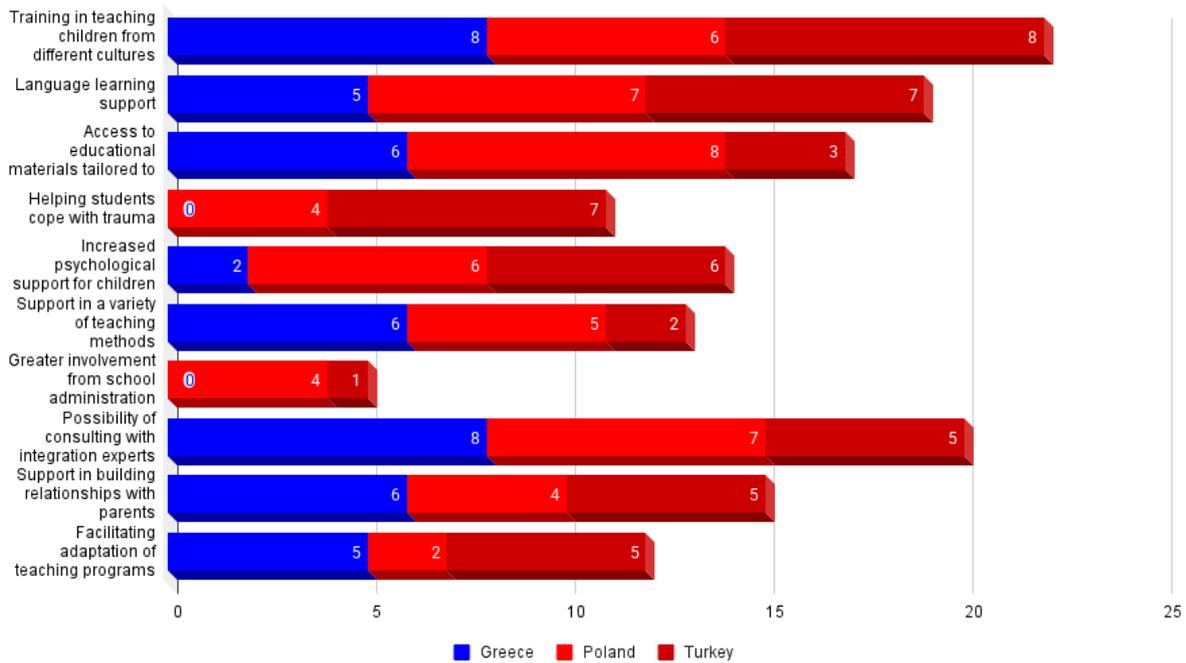
The responses to this question indicate that the most important needs and expectations of educational and training staff working with migrant and refugee children are training in teaching children from different cultures, the possibility of consulting with integration experts, and support for language learning.

Question 12 in the survey was: "How do you assess the effectiveness of existing integration strategies used in educational institutions in the integration of refugee/migrant children in our country?"
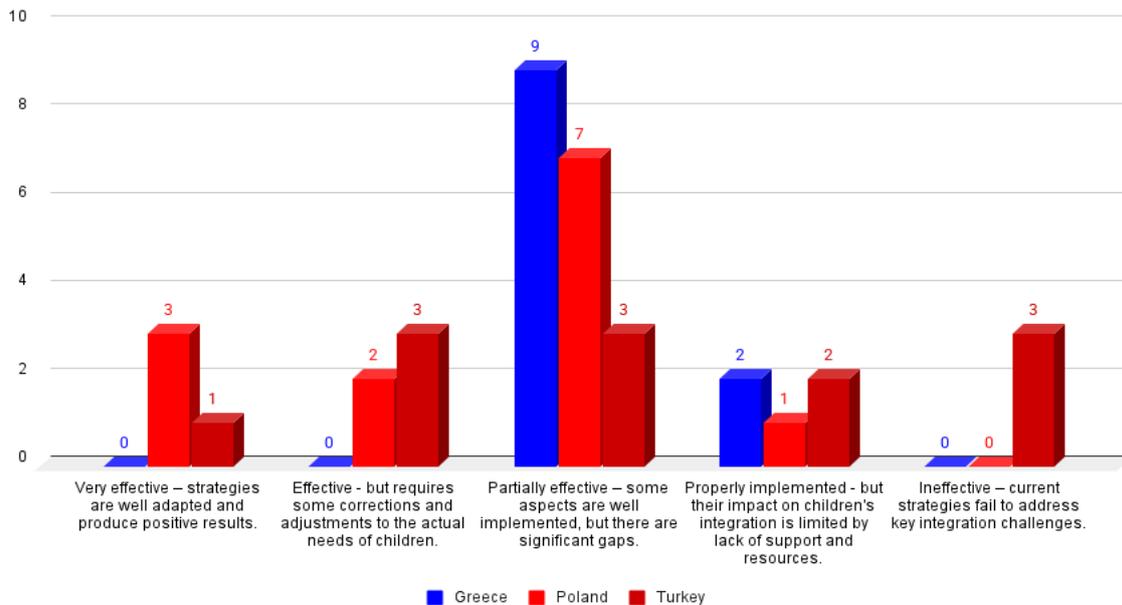


As we see from the given graph, responders from the three countries believe that the existing integration strategies for refugee and migrant children can be considered partially effective, with some aspects well-implemented but significant gaps remaining.

Question 13 in the survey was: "Is the support offered by the state system (e.g. Ministry of Education, Education Board) for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country is sufficient and appropriate for your needs in everyday work?"
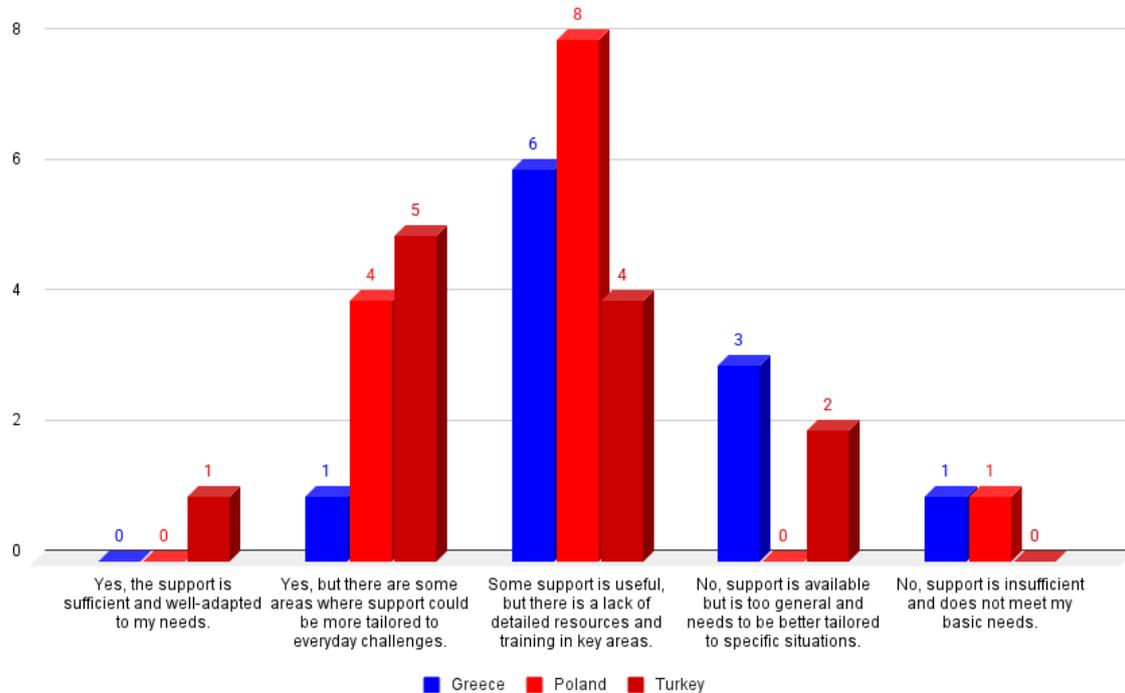


As we can see from the graph, the majority of responders chose the answers: "some support is useful, but there is a lack of detailed resources and training in key areas", "yes, but there are some areas where support could be more tailored to everyday challenges", and "no, support is available but is too general and needs to be better tailored to specific situations".

In question 14, the responders were asked: "Does the educational institution where you work offer its own support for staff working with refugee/migrant children in the process of their integration in our country?"
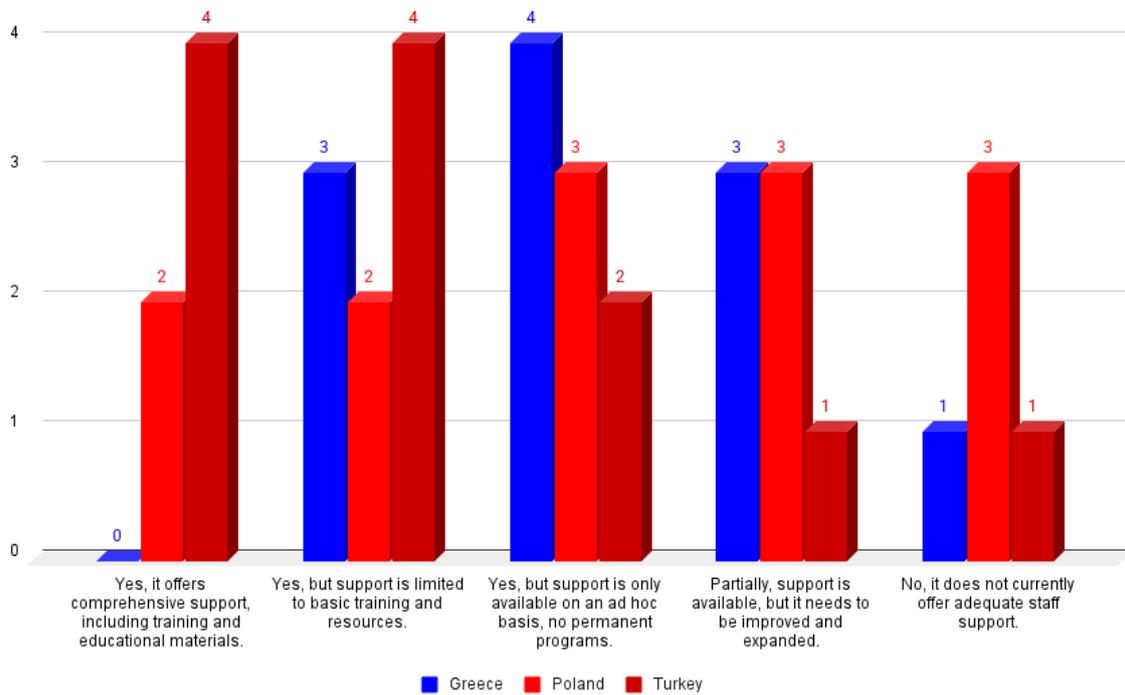
The bar chart indicates, that in respondents' opinion, while some educational institutions offer support for staff working with refugee/migrant children, the support varies, with some providing comprehensive resources, others offering only basic training, and some only offering assistance on an occasional or ad hoc basis without permanent programs.

Question 15 in the survey was: "What support would be most appropriate and useful for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children in the process of their integration in our country?"
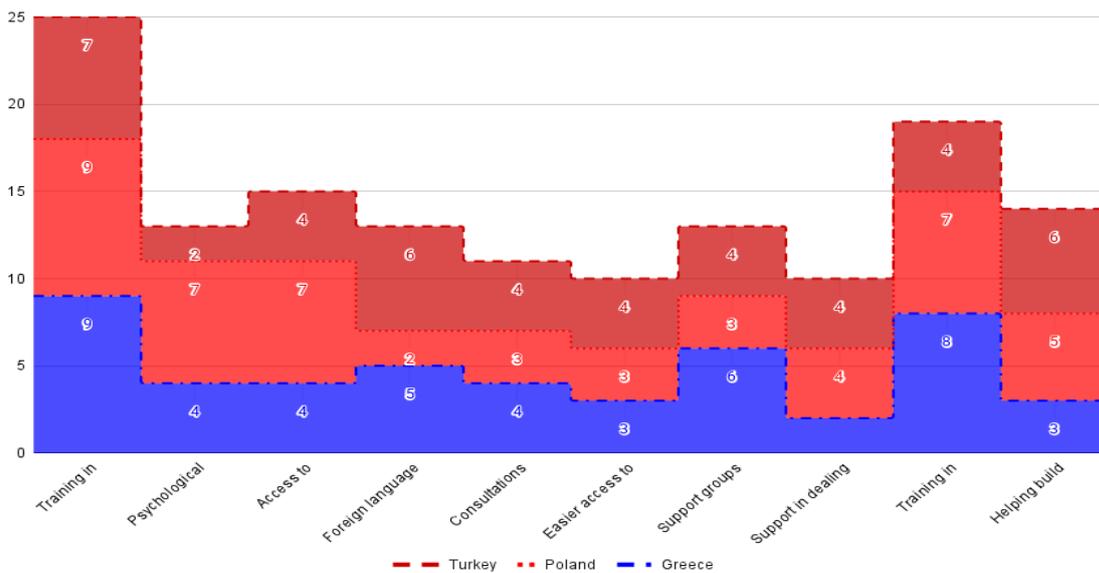


The graph suggests that the most appropriate and useful support for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children would include training in working with children from different cultures, training in managing diversity in the classroom, and access to specialized educational materials.

Question 16 in the survey was: "How would you rate the availability of effective and adequate educational tools and materials for educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children?"
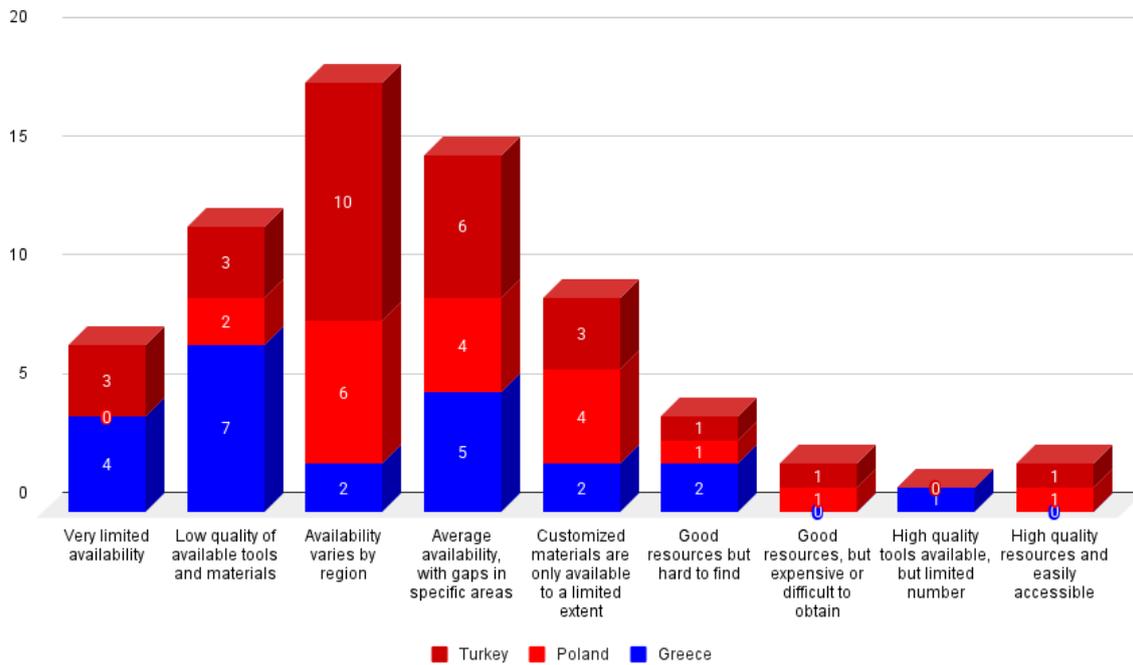


The last bar chart shows, that the majority of answers selected by the VET educational/training staff working with migrant/refugee children were: "low quality of available tools and materials", "availability varies by region" and "average availability, with gaps in specific areas".

# Recommendations for future project works on an e-book

## Polish recommendations

1) Centralized resource hub for educators: the e-book should serve as a comprehensive resource hub, offering centralized information for educators. This should include step-by-step guides for accessing VET services, legal aid, housing, and education options for children. Clear navigation should help users easily find relevant information, regardless of their linguistic or cultural background.

2) Language support materials: given that language remains one of the most significant barriers, the e-book should provide resources for language acquisition in both Polish and other key languages such as Ukrainian. This can include downloadable lesson plans, exercises, and links to digital language learning platforms. For educators, it should include practical methods for integrating language learning into vocational training.

3) Psychological and trauma support guidelines: the e-book should feature guidelines on how to support refugees who have experienced trauma. Sections aimed at VET staff should offer strategies for addressing psychological issues, particularly in children. This could include case studies, checklists for identifying signs of trauma, and links to mental health support services.

4) Cultural integration resources: cultural understanding is key to successful integration. The e-book should offer cultural exchange activity ideas, resources for organizing cultural awareness programs, and success stories of integration. This could help foster mutual understanding between refugees and the host community, easing tensions and encouraging collaboration.

5) Practical training for VET staff: the report indicated that VET staff lack sufficient training in areas like managing diverse classrooms and working with students who have limited language skills. The e-book may include additional sources / links to the professional development materials / best practices in inclusive teaching, managing multilingual classrooms, and overcoming cultural challenges.

6) Support for extracurricular and creative activities: given the findings that refugee children benefit from extracurricular activities, the e-book should recommend creative ways to engage refugee students outside of formal education. This could include guides for setting up after-school clubs, sports activities, or creative arts programs aimed at fostering emotional expression and community integration.

7) Toolkits for recognizing and utilizing refugee skills: many adult refugees have professional skills that are not recognized in Poland due to qualification issues. The e-book should provide a toolkit for VET staff to help refugees translate their qualifications into the local job market. This could include links to recognition programs, vocational assessment tools, and advice on how to tailor vocational training programs to help refugees gain meaningful employment.

8) Collaboration and best practice sharing: The e-book should promote collaboration between VET institutions, NGOs, and government bodies. Sections that showcase successful integration programs or share best practices from different regions (Poland, Greece, Turkey) would be invaluable. This will foster a sense of shared learning and encourage VET staff to adapt strategies that have been proven successful in other contexts.

9) Digital tools and learning platforms: given the increasing role of digital learning, the e-book should link to online learning platforms that offer free or low-cost vocational courses for

refugees. It could also include tools for digital literacy training, which would help refugees better integrate into the increasingly digital workforce.

By addressing the major gaps identified in the research through targeted recommendations and resources, the e-book will play a crucial role in supporting the integration of refugees into VET systems across Poland and beyond. It should not only serve as a practical guide but also as a collaborative platform for sharing best practices and fostering innovation in migrant integration efforts.

## Turkish recommendations

1. **Targeted Training Programs for VET Staff:** Develop comprehensive training focused on the unique needs of migrant and refugee children, covering essential topics such as second language instruction, trauma-informed practices, and intercultural competencies.

2. **Access to Language and Learning Resources:** Provide high-quality, easily accessible language support materials to assist refugee children in overcoming language barriers, which is fundamental to their academic and social integration.

3. **Consistent Emotional and Psychological Support:** Establish guidelines for implementing school-based psychological support, including access to trained counselors to help children cope with the emotional impacts of displacement.

## Greek recommendations

- **Enhance Teacher Training and Professional Development**
  - **Specialized Workshops:** Develop targeted workshops on trauma-informed teaching, intercultural communication, and second-language instruction for VET settings.
  - **Modular Online Courses:** Offer flexible e-learning modules for educators who cannot attend in-person seminars, including video tutorials, interactive forums, and practical assessments.
- **Develop and Localize Vocation-Specific Materials**
  - **Thematic Toolkits:** Co-create resources that blend Greek language lessons with hands-on vocational tasks (e.g., carpentry, IT, hospitality), ensuring direct relevance to workplace scenarios.
  - **Translation and Adaptation:** Invest in translating and adapting existing European refugee education resources to reflect Greek regulations, cultural references, and local labour market needs.
- **Strengthen Peer-to-Peer Networks**
  - **Online Platforms and Mentoring:** Establish digital communities of practice (via social media groups or dedicated project platforms) where teachers can share lesson plans, troubleshoot classroom challenges, and recommend new tools.
  - **Regional Meetings and Exchanges:** Organize periodic meetups or mini-conferences that bring together VET instructors from different regions, fostering practical knowledge exchange and collaborative problem-solving.
- **Improve Access and Motivation for Refugee Learners**
  - **Transportation Solutions:** Advocate for better transport links or mobile VET units that can serve refugee camps directly, reducing barriers to consistent class attendance.

- **Motivation Strategies:** Incorporate career counselling, hands-on internships, and success stories from former refugee students to build a purpose and encourage persistence.
- **Promote Comprehensive, Multi-Stakeholder Engagement**
  - **Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Engage municipalities, NGOs, employers, and community leaders to design wraparound services that combine language lessons, vocational training, psychosocial support, and job placement.
  - **Policy Dialogue:** Share project outcomes with national and EU-level policymakers to align refugee integration efforts with broader strategies, ensuring sustainable funding and consistent guidelines.
- **Monitor, Evaluate, and Scale Successful Initiatives**
  - **Data Collection and Feedback:** Implement clear monitoring frameworks that track student attendance, skill acquisition, and psychosocial well-being, allowing for evidence-based adjustments to program design.
  - **Scaling Up Proven Models:** Where pilot programs demonstrate strong results, seek additional funding to replicate successful approaches in other regions or with different vocational specialisations.

By pursuing these recommendations, future project work can tackle the most pressing challenges highlighted in the IDIs, namely, **motivation, accessibility, psychosocial support,** and **pedagogical training,** to foster a more inclusive VET environment for refugee learners in Greece. Well-resourced and well-coordinated vocational programs will equip displaced youth with the skills and confidence to integrate into the local community or continue their journeys with greater resilience and autonomy.

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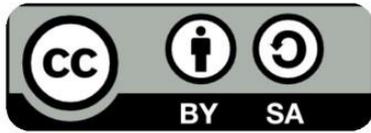
**Co-funded by the European Union**

# Project "Experience-exchange to Help VET Professionals Integrate Refugee Children into the Local Community"

no. 2023-2-EL01-KA210-VET-000174377

**HELP VET**

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