

A light grey outline map of the world is in the background. A red square is placed over the Balkan region of Europe, with a thin black line extending from it to the left, underlining the word 'Sofia' in the header.

Better Inclusion of Young Refugees in Education, Labour Market and Society

The Role of Youth Organisations

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- The report is reflecting on an international conference, which gathered together over 40 European and national policy makers, international and national experts, youth representatives and activists and over 40 young participants across Europe, the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions.
- In theory, young people have access to social protection, but in practice if you are a young refugee then you are often denied access to any services and benefits. The recent migration crisis has also shown that European policies are inadequate in ensuring the rights of all young people in Europe are respected.
- Youth organizations across Europe have turned out to be one of the main driving forces toward a better social inclusion and integration of refugees. Many youth movements launched welcoming campaigns of refugees and started their own project for social inclusion of young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

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1. Introduction

This report aims to present the statements, proposals and conclusions made during the international conference “Youth in Europe – Better Europe. The Role of Youth Organizations for Better Inclusion of Refugees in Education, Labour market and Society” held between 2nd and 4th of November 2017 in Sofia, Bulgaria. The conference gathered together over 40 European and national policy makers, international and national experts, youth representatives and activists and over 40 young participants from across Europe, the Black Sea and Mediterranean regions. Work on the report is done in three phases:

researching institutional framework, official documents and reports of national and European Union institutions and agencies, UNHCR – The United Nations Refugee agency and Member States’ documents and reports and youth organizations’ statements;

holding the conferences and discussing the current state of young refugees in different countries and implemented politics for their social inclusion; gathering all proposals and conclusions from the conference;

The conference was organized by the National Youth Card Association- Bulgaria and National Youth Forum – Bulgaria in cooperation with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – Office Bulgaria and the European Commission in Bulgaria.

2. Refugees situation at European and national levels

Based on the European values enshrined in the European Social Charter, Member States of the European Union should guarantee the successful inclusion of young refugees. Nevertheless, social inclusion of young refugees is facing challenges at both national and European levels related to their inclusion in society – looking mainly at integration into education and into the labour market but also at access to other social services such as health and housing.

In general, the social rights of young people today are under threat. Youth unemployment is still high, precarious forms of work are prevalent amongst youth and young people are now the group at highest risk of social exclusion and poverty. Whilst in theory young people have access to social protection, in practice if you are a young refugee then you are often denied access to any services and benefits. The recent migration crisis has also shown that European policies are inadequate in ensuring that the rights of all young people in Europe are respected.

The on-going war in Syria since 2011 accounts for the world’s largest humanitarian crisis since the outbreak of World War II¹. An entire generation of children and young people are being exposed to violence and war, and are held back from their access to basic rights. More than 12.2 million Syrians are in need of humanitarian assistance. Approximately 7.6 million Syrians are internally displaced, accounting for the largest number in any country worldwide. Over 4 million Syrians have fled the country since the outbreak of the war - half of them children².

At the same time the European Union has failed to find a united single solution for all Member States. In 2015, the European Union faced the so-called refugee crisis. Some analyses interpret the crisis not as a crisis on a single topic, which met a variety of political solutions, but as a political crisis of the European Union as a united political body, which is having the same direction for all Member States. The line of “Refugees Welcome” and open borders was followed by a few Member States. The refugee crisis raised more than one question for the future of the Union – are Member States following the same political line or not; who is deciding on the direction of the security policy; how will Member States make sure that newcomers have access to social rights? The lack of concrete answers to all these questions led to different political solutions in different Member States. Most of the solutions were/are mainly focused on how to prevent refu-

1. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/syria_en.pdf

2. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2015/migrant-situation-eu-takes-heavy-toll-children>

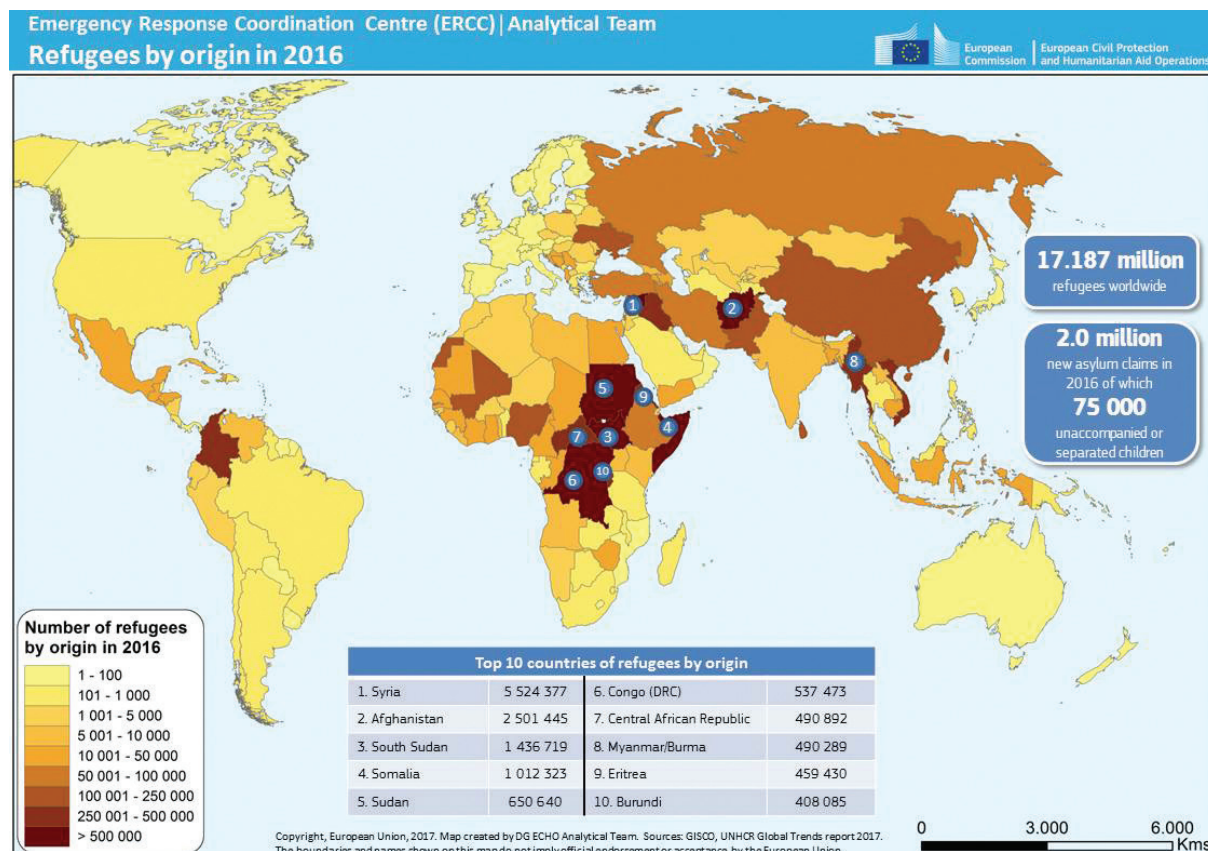
gees from crossing European borders, rather than discussing and ensuring their further inclusion and integration. The report will focus on the migration situation at a European level and in different national states, as well as what measures they introduce for the social inclusion of the newcomers.

In 2016, EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid gave more than € 1,972 million, or some 87% of its annual budget, to projects helping the forcibly displaced and their host communities in 56 countries (Turkey, Greece, Syria, Iraq and South Sudan being the top 5). This helps to:

- meet the most pressing needs of these extremely vulnerable populations;
- protect and support displaced people during their displacement and when returning to their homes;
- increase the self-reliance of displaced people and reduce their dependency on aid;

The Commission's assistance to the forcibly displaced is making a difference in the lives of many: Syrian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Greece; Afghan refugees in Iran and Pakistan; Somali refugees in Kenya; Congolese refugees in the Great Lakes region; Palestinian refugees; Myanmar refugees in Thailand; Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh; and Sahrawi refugees in Algeria. Vulnerable internally displaced people are equally targeted by Commission assistance, particularly in Syria, Colombia, South Sudan, Iraq and Yemen.

The Commission channels its financial support to forced displacement situations through organisations dealing with refugees, IDPs, vulnerable migrants and (in some cases) host communities. Its main partners include UNHCR, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).³



3. https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons_en

Neighbouring Lebanon hosts almost 1.2 million Syrian refugees and has, together with Jordan, the highest per capita number of refugees in the world. Turkey is a host to more than 1.9 million Syrian refugees, meaning that it hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide⁴. At the same time, Sweden and Germany are the countries in the EU that take the largest share of refugees. Germany currently has a number of more than 161,000 Syrian refugees⁵, while other European countries refuse on solitarily hosting refugees and close their borders instead.

However, refugees are not fleeing solely from Syria. More than a dozen other conflicts have broken out in the past five years in different regions in the world, including Iraq, South Sudan and Ukraine⁶. According to UNHCR, one in every 122 human beings worldwide is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum⁷. Globally, 43% of the world's refugees are children⁸.

The security environment in 2017 will remain challenging as the impact of ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Ukraine continue to resonate throughout Europe.

Large numbers of people continue to risk their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in search of safety and protection in Europe. Between January and June 2016, 38 countries in Europe had received nearly 625,000 asylum applications, a 22 per cent increase compared to the same period in 2015, with applicants originating mainly from Syria (216,900), Afghanistan (128,000) and Iraq (94,300).⁹

While the number of arrivals to Greece so far in 2016 is lower than for the same period in 2015, the number of people arriving in Italy remains

the same as that of 2015. The number of asylum applications in the region increased in 2016, with Germany receiving by far the most applications. There are still people of concern, who see themselves as being in transit, in countries in the Western Balkans. The majority are concentrated in Serbia where more than 6000 asylum seekers and migrants are accommodated in various types of government facilities across the country.¹⁰

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country"¹¹.

Observing specific numbers and data on young refugees and asylum seekers, we cannot neglect the numbers of minor refugees and their specific situation. During the first six months of 2015, more than 110,000 children and youth (under 18 years old) have sought asylum in Europe, accounting for an average of 18,000 every month¹². Each of them has their own story and their own needs. They are not only deprived of their childhood or youth, but they are also at a high risk of their rights being violated and neglected. They are, already, according to the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, deprived of some of their basic rights; e.g. Article 6 and Article 19.¹³

At the opening session in Sofia, the Vice-President of the Republic of Bulgaria Iliana Iotova emphasized on unaccompanied minor refugees in her speech. Vice-President Iotova listed some of the difficulties minor refugees face – a significant number of minor refugees don't travel with their parents; they don't know the people they are travelling with; minor refugees are victims of trafficking; they don't speak foreign languages; they have

4. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>

5. <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/057/1805799.pdf>

6. http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.180806439.1402508050.1433438836

7. <http://www.unhcr.org/558193896.html>

8. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2015/migrant-situation-eu-takes-heavy-toll-children>

9. <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/5874f9b77/unhcr-global-appeal-2017-update-europe-regional-summary.html>

10. <http://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/5874f9b77/unhcr-global-appeal-2017-update-europe-regional-summary.html>

11. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html>

12. <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/the-syrian-conflict-and-europes-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>

13. <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

physiological troubles caused by the war; they don't have personal documents.

One psychological factor is unique to children and youth: they are developing. And their development does not stop because of their refugee situation. While young refugees have special needs because of their age, they might also be separated from their parents or attachment figure, as is the case of unaccompanied minor refugees. This very insecure and disruptive situation can harm young people's cultural, intellectual, physical, psychological and social development. But children and youth are not only affected by what happens to them, but also by what they are deprived of, for example access to education or leisure activities.¹⁴

According to the European Migration Network Synthesis Report "Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in the EU Member States and Norway", May 2015, more than 24,000 UAMs applied for asylum in the EU plus Norway in 2014. The numbers of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum has steadily grown in recent years – especially in Sweden, Germany, Italy and Austria. At the same time, the overall proportion of asylum applicants who are unaccompanied minors in the EU plus Norway has decreased since 2009, accounting for 4% of the total number of asylum applications in 2014. Most of the UAMs applying for asylum in the EU plus Norway were boys (86%), as opposed to girls (14%). In 2014, the main countries of origin of these minors were Afghanistan (26% of the total number applying for asylum in the EU), Eritrea (19%), Syria (13%), Somalia (10%), The Gambia (4%) and Morocco (3%).

While all fleeing children and youth must be protected, such as unaccompanied minors¹⁵ some of them face even greater risks. Recent data indicates that the arrival of unaccompanied minors in Europe from conflict-affected regions is becoming

a long-term characteristic of the migration process. Yet, these vulnerable migrants are dealt with using a variety of methods across the EU and no coordinated approach has been designed in Europe. At the same time, child protection faces many challenges ranging from a lack of coordination to the limited evidence base and exchange of good practices in areas such as parental child abduction or bullying.

Unaccompanied minors account for the most vulnerable group among refugees. The situation of unaccompanied minor refugees is especially complicated if we consider the variation of rights and support within different countries in Europe. They are often treated as adults in terms of the types of accommodation, legal support, psychological treatment etc. Many human rights violations can and effectively do occur under these circumstances.

The perception and consideration of the needs and interests of all young refugees must follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, guided by the child's best interests and the child's will.

Vice-President Iotova concluded her speech by saying: Children are our most natural allies – if we do not simply protect them, but rather give them the weapon of education, if we learn to listen to them, appreciate them, so that we give them a future, then they will surely bring the world back to values and human rights.

3. European and national policy for social inclusion of young refugees

Young refugees leave their countries and homes in search of a secure environment where their human rights would be protected and guaranteed. Europe and the European Union has been seen a strong defender of rights, equality and social protection for all. But most of the newcomers to Europe face many barriers and limitation for their stay and social inclusion in the hosting countries.

At a European level the biggest platform for young organizations – the European Youth Forum, de-

14. http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/12/Resolution_Protection-and-Integration-of-Young-Refugees-in-Europe.pdf

15. According to UNHCR an unaccompanied minor is "a person under 18, unless the law applicable to the child stipulates a younger age of majority, who is separated from both parents and is not under the care of another adult who has such responsibility, whether by law or by custom." <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf>

scribes the social inclusion of young refugees as a process which will give equal opportunities for all: Inclusion means equal opportunities for participation in key areas of social life for all people. Inclusion, in this sense, is not unilateral, but reciprocal and a mutually influencing process, representing an opportunity and a challenge for all – it is a task for everyone. An inclusive society stands for openness and willingness to change and the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The aim is to create a positive, welcoming culture to facilitate participation and to point out opportunities; briefly, to strengthen inclusive societies.

To support the long-term inclusion of young refugees, it is crucial to promote this understanding throughout the whole population and in all basic institutional structures, such as kindergartens, schools, offices, governments and hospitals. Furthermore, an objective debate, based on tolerance and respect in the media and in politics, is an important step.

The presence of people of many cultural backgrounds in Europe greatly enriches our society and should be respected and valued. The European society, culture and economy have benefited, and will continue to benefit, from immigration of people from around the world. Furthermore, European countries have international humanitarian and legal obligations to grant asylum and reunite families.¹⁶

At the conference the Spokesperson's Service, Coordinating Spokesperson of the European Commission, Natasha Bertaud, said: "The European Union was a project borne by a generation, which the political programmes had no choice but to follow. But if our grandparents' generation's mantra was 'never again war', our generations' mantra must be 'no more hate' - the political programmes will follow." Ms. Bertaud has also encouraged young people and youth organisations to apply for funding for their social inclusion and integration projects by programmes as Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps.

The British Labour Member of the European Parliament, Julie Ward, sent a strong video message to

the participants at the conference in Sofia, Bulgaria. Ms. Ward pointed out in her statement: European policy for social inclusion of young refugees in education, in the labour market and in the society. These are the biggest challenges European societies are facing today. We can't have a successful inclusion without providing refugees with quality and inclusive education. Education is a human right after all and it is the key to both economic and social inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers and migrants, in particular young people. And that's why the Culture Committee has put forward the notion of "education corridors" and encourages further support for the cooperation between EU universities and universities in places of conflict. To ensure that children and young people who have to leave their country can at least continue their education. It is not only important for the welcoming countries who are benefitting from the economic contribution of the educated newcomers. It's a moral duty for European societies – to guarantee that those young people have the opportunity for a brighter future.

Ms. Julie Ward also highlighted the importance of informal learning for the social inclusion of young refugees and the intercultural dialogue and exchange as possible ways to avoid stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination by majority.

Ms. Ward concluded her statement by saying: The role of education, intercultural dialogue and youth participation must be part of a long-term strategy to develop successful, functional and welcoming communities – united in diversity.

European institutions motivate their policy on welcoming refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, but at the same time the migration policy of Member States has been rather different from one state to another. This was one of the reasons for the organisers of the conference to invite policy makers, experts and participants from different countries and backgrounds.

A detailed analysis of the different European states' framework regarding the migration policy was presented by Ms. Olivera Vucotic from the Regional Representation of the United Nations High

16. http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/12/Resolution_Protection-and-Integration-of-Young-Refugees-in-Europe.pdf

Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In her presentation, she emphasized on the fact that there is no single strategy on and approach of all European Member States to the migration and further inclusion and integration of newcomers. She underlined that the situation is completely different from one country to another. The main division is between Western European states, where there is an integration policy, and Eastern European states, where there isn't an integration policy. Ms. Vucotic also mentioned the importance of language for the inclusion process, but very few countries offer language classes and enough hours for refugees to master the local language and be integrated in the community. Ms. Vucotic also described as very problematic the access to basic services – especially housing, because many young refugees are exposed to homelessness. The accommodation problem in Central Europe is because it is one of the weak areas in these countries for all, not only for refugees, but for locals as well. Most of the refugees are lacking health and psychological access to services – if they want to have access they have to pay for it.

The variety of accessible social services for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from one country to another is quite different. Some countries like Germany and Sweden invest in social inclusion of refugees, while other Member States do not invest in social inclusion and integration, but instead in building walls and fences to protect their borders.

During the conference, several examples of social inclusion of young refugees in different countries was discussed. The Minister of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Bulgaria, Krasen Kralev, brought the first example at the opening session in Sofia. Mr. Kralev said that the role of young people in building a peaceful, secure and united society is

a leading priority for the Bulgarian state policy on youth. This is going to be also a main topic during the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2018. Minister Kralev emphasized on the government's will to work for strengthening the solidarity among young people and to promote the main values of the European Union – human rights protection for the citizens of the European Union, justice and freedom. Mr. Kralev reminded that the social inclusion for all young people, including young migrants, is a key goal for the European Youth Strategy (2010 - 2018).

Since August 2013, Bulgaria has experienced a big increase in asylum applications predominantly from Syria, Afghanistan, and a few Middle Eastern countries, which the national and regional institutions have not been fully prepared to handle¹⁷.

At the same time, the Vice-President of the Republic of Bulgaria, Iliana Iotova, said in her speech: "One thing is certain – from 2013 until now, the focus is mainly on security, crossing the migration routes and, unfortunately, building walls. During these years, very little was said about welcoming these people, the majority of whom was running because they wanted security for their lives and future for their children. This important discussion has not begun, yet."

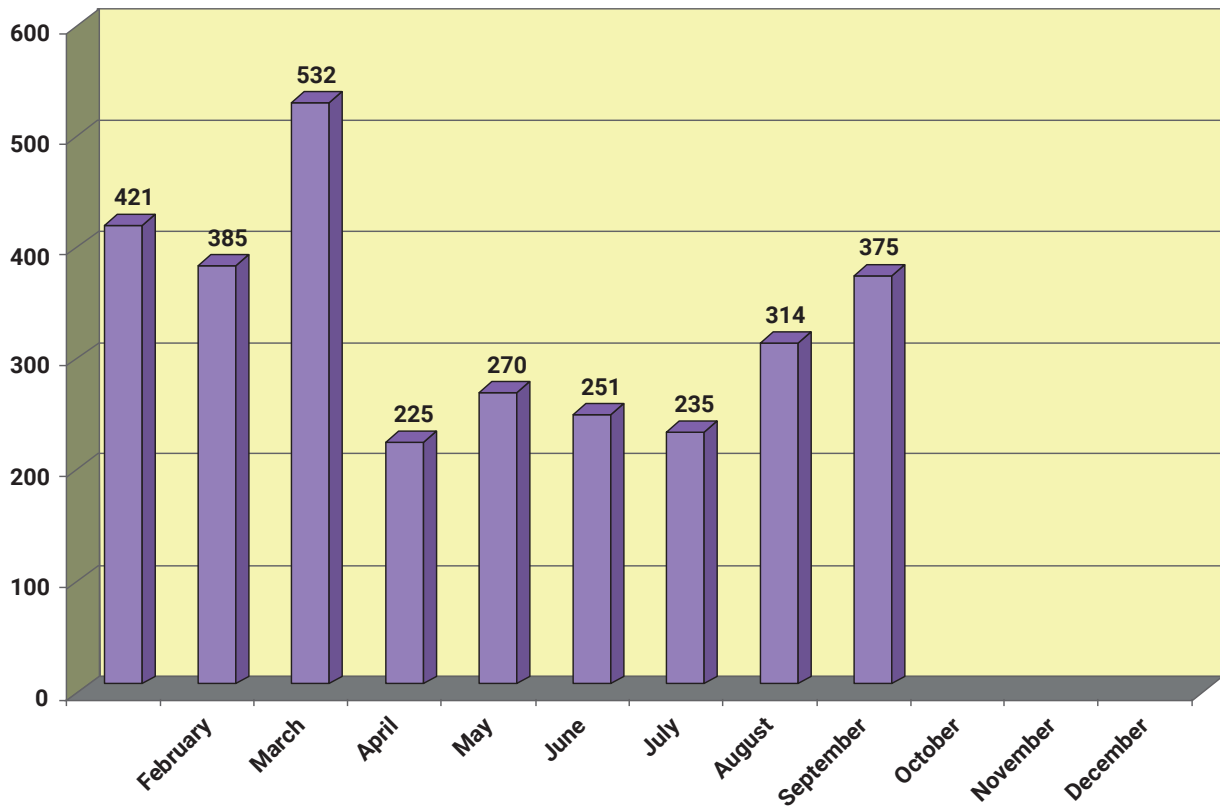
Indeed, Bulgaria is both a country of transit and a receiving country for migrants. Each year since 2011 Bulgaria has been adopting strategic aims for the State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers¹⁸.

From the beginning of 2017 to the end of September 2017, 706 people got the refugee status in Bulgaria. Also, the data shows that in September 2017, 375 people asked for refugee or asylum status.

17. Report "Private Sector Engagement in the Employment of Beneficiaries of International Protection", UNHCR Bulgaria, 26. 04. 2017

18. <http://www.aref.government.bg/index.php/bg/planirane-i-otchetnost/celi>

Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees
Total number of applications for international protection submitted,
2017



The Bulgarian state has a specialized administration, which organizes and coordinates the activities related to the adaptation and initial integration of asylum seekers. This special unit facilitates access to the educational system, labour market and healthcare system. The agency also identifies vulnerable persons, assesses needs and refers to specialized services. It provides a special social service for the unaccompanied minors. The agency is also working on integration profiles for people who are granted protection.

In the education field, the Bulgarian State Agency for Refugees assists the enrolment of refugee children in public schools; assists parents and unaccompanied minors in filling in application forms; consults and supports schools, working with refugee children.

While the relevant state institution, the State Agency for Refugees (SAR), is assessing their claim, asylum seekers have, among others, the right to a legal stay, shelter, food and medical insurance. In Bulgaria, an asylum seeker is permitted to work 3 months after they filed their application. Within a period of 6 months (or up to a maximum period of 21 months in complicated cases) and based on the assessment, the SAR issues either a positive decision, granting a refugee or humanitarian status, or a negative decision, rejecting the application claim. Asylum seekers retain the above-mentioned rights during appeal procedures following a negative decision on their asylum applications. There is an indicative period in the relevant legislation within which the respective courts should take a decision on a case. However, in reality, the duration of the appeal procedures depends on the workload of the courts and may last

for years before a final decision on an asylum claim is taken¹⁹.

Speaking of social inclusion of young refugees and migrants, we should note that in Bulgaria there has not been a youth opinion research on refugees' migration topic.

During the conference Maria Pisani from the Department of Youth and Community Studies at the University of Malta presented the Maltese experience on the migration topic. Malta was one of the first Member States to face the migration crises.

In Malta the legislation and policy, governing the detention system, have undergone several important changes. The passing of revisions to the Immigration Act and the Refugees Act (Reception Regulations) in December 2015 prohibited the detention of children except as a measure of last resort and removed a requirement to detain persons arriving to Malta irregularly, while also providing for administrative review of detention. Meanwhile a new policy framework also issued in December 2015 outlined the creation of an Initial Reception Centre (IRC), where asylum-seekers would be confined, screened medically, and assessed for release to the community or issuance of a detention order²⁰.

Malta has put the migration topic on the top of the political agenda of the European Union during the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2017²¹.

Maria Pisani underlined in her presentation the importance of the community in the process of inclusion of young refugees. As examples of good practices of community integration projects, she shared several projects:

- in 2004, a specialized NGO, Integra Foundation for integration of the refugees, was created. They

work for advocacy, research, community education and development, partnerships, social capital. They work also on the field in the camps to create a relationship of trust and transition between participants and refugees.

- UNHCR Global Youth Consultations (2015) – young refugees were gathered together to speak about their problems and obstacles. They created their own organisation “Spark 15” and it is a good example of inclusion because young refugees' empowerment helped them to take the lead and they helped themselves by taking a proactive role in the inclusion process²².

Another country, which was one of the first to experience migration crises, is Italy. In total, 83,650 people have reached Italy by sea since the beginning of 2017, which represents an increase of almost 20% compared to the same period last year. About 200,000 accommodation places are available for refugees and migrants across the country, but nearly all are full.

Among those arriving, many require special care and support. There is an alarmingly high rate among arrivals of unaccompanied children or victims of sexual and gender based violence. Many have suffered extremely traumatic events, including extortion, kidnapping, sexual violence, and abuses back home and in countries on their way to Europe.

The number of unaccompanied and separated children went up by 109 per cent between 2015 and 2016, to reach 25,846 at the end of last year²³.

During the conference the President of Italian Youth Council Maria Pisani said: “So, a key focus of today's discussions is understanding how refugees could be included into the national development plans by the countries that host them.

“We need to answer the question: “Is it possible to come to a win-win situation for refugees and host communities?”

19. Report “Private Sector Engagement in the Employment of Beneficiaries of International Protection”, UNHCR Bulgaria, 26. 04. 2017

20. <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,MLT,,57b850dba,0.html>

21. <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,MLT,,586520344,0.html>

22. <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/globalconsult/59f84c9f7/malta-national-consultation-summary-report.html?query=malta>

23. <http://www.refworld.org/country,,UNHCR,,ITA,,595a226c4,0.html>

"Evidence says that yes, it is possible, and I would like to share with you some examples from my country, from Italy.

"In Italy, as we have said before, the refugees' reception system is facing several troubles, but even with all these problems, we can identify a lot of good practices and examples of integration.

"The establishment of the System of Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR), created by an Italian Parliament law, has allowed many refugees to settle in Italy and contribute to the economic and social life of the country.

"For example, in the South of Italy, many small towns are becoming ghost towns: more and more schools close, homes are abandoned, community economics stops.

"For this reason, an experiment was launched in Camini, a small town of 800 inhabitants in Southern Italy, and it was revolutionary: here the local community has welcomed more than one hundred refugees, and they are now repopulating the schools and the streets of the town. Today, they work, they go to school and they take care of the abandoned houses, bringing new life to the village.

"But also in large cities, as Turin, a win-win solution to the refugees' crisis is possible. It happened that, more than a hundred employers wrote a letter to regional and local institutions, asking them to create the conditions to hire refugees and migrants. People recognized that refugees are an important resource for the Italian economy and that offering them a regular work is the only way to get them out of illegality."

The cases of Bulgaria, Malta and Italy are presenting countries which face the migration at the borders of the European Union. In many cases these countries are only a transition country for the newcomers and the migrants' goal is to reach Germany as one of the countries offering the best integration and social inclusion policies emplaced.

The UNHCR Resettlement Handbook Country Chapter for Germany starts with the following numbers:

"Following the decision of the Conference of the Ministers of the Interior of the Federal States (Innenministerkonferenz) in December 2011, Germany took part in a resettlement programme during the years 2012 to 2014 and resettled 300 persons per year (UNHCR submissions). The number increased in 2015 with 500 persons resettled annually. According to the EU council decision from 20th July 2015, Germany will resettle 1,600 persons in 2016 and 2017 combined; potentially 800 each year.

"Expecting further need for resettlement to arise under the 1:1 scheme, Germany agreed to transfer the commitments under the existing relocation decisions, notably all of the currently unallocated 13,500 German places (out of 54,000 in the EU in total), to the 1:1 scheme. This would be in line with the Commission's existing policy of considering resettlement and humanitarian admission to be equivalent to relocation, as all are concrete expressions of solidarity with other Member States or third countries experiencing a mass influx of migrants. Germany expects to transfer up to 13,500 places. Admission under this scheme will start when all of the 1,600 resettlement places are occupied. If this happens during 2016, the admission of the 13,500 persons will commence in 2016, otherwise it will begin at a later point."²⁴

In 2015, many asylum seekers arrived in Germany. Some went on to other EU countries, while many others have stayed in Germany. This situation has created major challenges in public administration at the federal, state, and local levels. To address and manage these challenges, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has meanwhile implemented an integrated system for refugee management. The heart of this system are the arrival centers. At the arrival center, many previously separate steps in the asylum procedure are now bundled into one integrated process. Whenever possible, the entire asylum procedure takes place "under one roof" in the arrival center. As a result, the arrival centers are now the doorway to the asylum procedure in Germany – and to all relevant social services. Mean-

24. <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/5162b3bc9/unhcr-resettlement-handbook-country-chapter-germany.html?query=germany>

while, there is now at least one arrival center in each of Germany's 16 federal states²⁵.

At the opening session, the Director of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Bulgaria, Helene Kortländer, said: "Despite difficulties at the start, many people from migrant families are now firmly rooted in our civil societies. Countless people who once felt like strangers in Germany now feel at home there. An open, liberal society founded on the Basic Law has given them the freedom to choose their own beliefs, religion and lifestyle - something that was not at all possible, or not to the same degree, for many of them in their country of origin. They have found their place in a new country with its laws, background and history. Many feel profoundly grateful." Ms. Helene Kortländer concluded her speech as the German President Gauck stated in a speech in 2016: Conflicts, ladies and gentlemen, are not a sign of failed integration – quite the opposite! For societies renew themselves through constructive conflict and the more openly problems are discussed, the more peaceful societies are. Our society is open to change, provided that such change is negotiated in a democratic process.

4. The role of youth organizations - good practices

Youth organizations across Europe have turned out to be one of the main driving forces for a better social inclusion and integration of refugees. Many youth movements launched welcoming campaigns of refugees and started their own project for social inclusion of young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

In 2015 the biggest youth platform – the European Youth Forum, launched its migration portfolio by starting a Migration Network and exchange of good practices.

Different youth organizations have taken different actions on the migration topic in order to facilitate access to education, labour market and society

for the young refugees, asylum seeker and migrants. During the conference we collected a set of good practices existing in different European countries. The European Youth Forum Vice-President, Carina Autengruber, presented the best practices which European Youth Forum member organisations have done to implement measures to grant young refugees the access to education, vocational training and labour market.²⁶

4.1 Youth organisations non-formal educational work with young refugees and migrants

- The German National committee for international youth work (DNK) represents all German youth organisations. Almost all of the member organisations of DNK have projects with young refugees and migrants. The prime goals are giving them a warm welcome in German society, bringing them in contact with local youngsters and fostering their language, cultural and social skills.
- The Cyprus Youth Council, which represents Cyprus youth organisations, is organising plenty of activities for welcoming young refugees. One of their projects is Restart.eu, which is raising awareness on migration issues. The goals of the project will be achieved through a specific set of actions:
 - ✓ Workshops, in order to promote youth engagement in the policy making on the subject
 - ✓ Structured Dialogue, in order to bring policy makers and the public closer and promote social understanding on a European level
 - ✓ Trainings, in order to educate the society on human rights and asylum seekers rights
 - ✓ Volunteer program, where young people will interact and train refugees on their rights and obligations in the EU

25. https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Publikationen/Broschueren/broschuere-integriertes-fluechtlingsmanagement.pdf?__blob=publicationFile

26. European Youth Forum list of Best Practices on Youth Migration - http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2016/06/0086-16_YFJ_Best_Practices_Education_Labour1.pdf

- ✓ Simulation game, in order to give young people the chance to experience policy making
 - The Cyprus Youth Council is working together with municipality councils on several actions:
 - ✓ They offer Greek Language lessons and Computer lessons to migrants/refugees for free.
 - ✓ Support centre for migrants/refugees (Info – Law Services – Food – Housing – Children Creative Activities – Educational and Cultural Activities – TV Show and Festivals - Psychological support)
 - ✓ Creation of a network with NGOs and authorities that have to do with migrants.
 - ✓ Action plan for Entrepreneurship for migrants
 - The Bulgarian Red Cross' objectives are:
 - ✓ To ensure asylum seekers and refugees have access to adequate reception conditions in all accommodation facilities
 - ✓ To ensure asylum seekers and refugees living on external addresses have access to available social services, referral and support
 - ✓ To facilitate the social inclusion and the initial adaptation, as well as the integration of beneficiaries
 - ✓ To raise public awareness of asylum seekers' and refugees' rights and obligations
 - ✓ To promote hygiene and healthy living habits among beneficiaries
 - ✓ To empower refugee and migrant communities through Bulgarian language courses, information sessions and trainings
 - ✓ To build capacity and enhance the co-operation among the relevant stakeholders.
- 4.2 The recognition of youth organisations' role in the reception of refugees
- The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (LSU) will work as a coordinator for youth organisations in the reception of refugees. This work is financed by state aid because it is one of Sweden's political priorities. LSU is right now in the planning phase and will in the future be able to provide more information on best practices for coordination.
 - The Swedish Red Cross Youth is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and exists to prevent and alleviate human suffering. They work with children and young people and have friend groups for young people who have just arrived in Sweden and through breakfast clubs make sure that school children get a good start to the day. In relation to unaccompanied children, they work in order to make sure these children and young people are part of a friend group, which usually makes waiting for the asylum decision a little easier, especially since they are alone in an especially vulnerable situation.
 - Tamam is an NGO that works with children and young people with diversity, anti-racism and young people's social commitment to create new venues, organizing meaningful leisure activities, provide equal opportunities in schools and encourage young people's social commitment. They are working to create new social meeting places on diversity, homework assistance (especially for asylum-seeking young people) and recreational activities for children and young people, to be a platform for young people's social involvement and encourage and support initiatives, as well as with international collaborations and exchanges.
 - Kontrapunkt is both a cultural and a social center. They function as a platform that promotes the free and un-established cultural life, with particular emphasis on being an underground scene with global and local roots. This autumn Kontrapunkt have actively worked to support and improve the situation of home-

less Roma people in Malmö, as well as meeting with refugees as they arrive in Malmö.

- Ensamkommandes förbund is an independent organisation made up of and run by self-organized unaccompanied young people from different countries. One of the organisation's main purposes is to make the voice of unaccompanied children and young people heard, and to actively work to make sure they are met with a dignified treatment in the asylum process and enjoy their human rights in society as a whole. The organisation aims to function as a social network where unaccompanied children and young people can support and empower each other. The social work includes a great variety of activities: anything from sports-, music- and theater projects to the organisation of camps, cultural festivals, workshops and lectures.
- Vård På Centralen is an activity where hundreds of healthcare professionals with the aid of medical and nursing students have gathered daily at Stockholm the past months to provide basic medical care and information about the local healthcare system to refugees coming to Sweden. Medical care at the Central Station – staff with medical competence, assist refugees with over-the-counter medication and simple forms of examination. If needed, we can determine whether or not they need to seek further medical assistance, inform them of their rights, as well as providing them with guidance to the right medical institution.
- International Union of Socialist Youth together with Young European Socialists launched the campaign "Refugees Welcome"²⁷ advocating for safe ways for refugees and common asylum policy far before the dramatic developments we have witnessed.
- Multi Kulti Collective, Bulgaria (MKC) has been working on community development, civic participation, solidarity, integration of migrants

and refugees and human rights since 2011. The organization operates both on grass-root and policy level and develops its social enterprise. It is based in Sofia but in 2015 it grew to a social franchise in the 6 biggest Bulgarian cities. MKC has vast experience in campaigning, raising awareness, using arts and culture for social change, training, research, monitoring, policy analysis, advocacy, working closely with policy makers, NGOs, researchers, migrants, refugees and youth. MKC's projects have been featured as social innovations and best practices on national and EU level. MKC has been the national partner of the EU policy network on migrant education SIRIUS²⁸ since 2014 and in December 2016 became one of the co-founders of the Brussels-based NGO called SIRIUS.

Good practices:

- ✓ Multi Kulti Kitchen²⁹ – Multi Kulti Kitchen started in 2011 in Sofia as the first informal initiative of Multi Kulti Collective. Multi Kulti Kitchen is where Bulgarian taste buds meet the gastronomic delights of the world. Our hosts from Asia, Europe, North and South America and Africa, both refugees and migrants, let you in the lives they left behind and the recipes they took with them.
- ✓ Multi Kulti Map – The Multi Kulti Map³⁰ was launched in Sofia in 2013. It is a natural extension of the work of Multi Kulti Kitchen for bringing together Bulgarians, migrants and refugees – around the table and beyond. The Multi Kulti Map shows you the cultural and culinary diversity of Bulgaria. The owners share a piece of their personal story, tell us about their favourite childhood dish, tell us what they like about Bulgaria and what they miss from their country. The Multi Kulti Map is recognized as best practice and social/cultural innovation at national and EU levels, including by the European Commission.

27. <http://www.youngsocialists.eu/refugees-welcome/>

28. <http://www.sirius-migrationeducation.org>

29. <http://multikulti.bg/project/kitchen>

30. <http://multikulti.bg/map/>

- ✓ Multi Kulti cooking classes - As food is our main medium for presenting unfamiliar cultures, it is only natural to organise a culinary course. And we did. Partnering with Culinary School Amuse Bouche³¹, we are letting the Multi Kulti Kitchen talented hosts teach you a thing or two about cooking traditional meals from lands far, far away. It is also a great way for you to talk and get to know each other better. It is fun, it is delicious, and it is empowering.

4.3 Provision of teaching resources for educators

- Educators play an instrumental role in the provision of quality education and they are affected by the demands placed on them and the resources available to them. Red Cross Red Crescent European Youth Network issued a collection of best practices "Youth and Migration Handbook"³².
- UNABG is a non-governmental organization based in Bulgaria, working mainly with youth on national and international levels. Following the values of the United Nations Charter, their work is focused on peace and freedom, tolerance. They have a couple of initiatives related to refugees. UNABG works closely with UNHCR and initiates different activities and events together with the Agency. They are organizing:
 - ✓ trainings for teachers;
 - ✓ peer to peer education;
 - ✓ lessons for refugee children;
 - ✓ simulation games;

5. Recommendations and proposals

Many initiatives and projects for better inclusion of young refugees, asylum seekers and migrants have been done, but we as a united and diverse European society have still a lot of challenges ahead of us. As a result of conference discussions

and exchanged best practices, the participants have listed recommendations and proposals for making sure that young newcomers have access to a certain set of social rights and services:

5.1 Access to language courses

Many of the youth organisations have been working on providing and developing adequate language skills among the young refugees and migrants. This is one of the most important factors for a successful inclusion. In order to promote integration, tandem language courses could be encouraged both at an institutional and non-institutional level, bringing a mutual enrichment.

5.2 Support in the transition to the education system

It is very important for young refugees and migrants to have access to education and to be able to attend local schools.

5.3 Recognition of prior learning

National authorities and higher education institutions should ensure flexible conditions, procedures and processes for the recognition of degrees and diplomas, periods of study and prior learning of refugees, in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The assessment process should be transparent, equal and completely free of charge. It should also take into account non-formal education learning paths.

5.4. Skills matching

Appropriate measures for preparing young refugees for the labour market can be taken only if their qualifications are assessed comprehensively and as early as possible.

31. <http://amusebouche-bg.com/home.aspx>

32. https://jugendrotkreuz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/EYCC_Youth_Migration_Handbook.pdf

- According to the competence check³³, conducted by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS), 67% of the competence check-participants from Syria, 90% of the participants from Iran and 73% of the participants from Iraq are qualified beyond compulsory education, meaning they have either studied or already finished their A-levels or vocational training. In 2016, the competence check will be extended and 12,000 refugees, residing in Vienna, will have the possibility to participate in the competence check. Furthermore, a counselling facility will be established to support refugees after their competence check.
 - The Swedish Public Employment Service started the so called "fast track"³⁴ to identify forms and measures for making the best use of valuable skills possessed by newly arrived immigrants with education or experience in shortage occupations so that they can be matched more quickly with the needs of industries and enterprises. The purpose of the fast track is to shorten the time from the newcomers' arrival to work. Newcomers will therefore find a workplace that is relevant to the individual's education, experience and interest as soon as possible. Sectors where there are labour shortages will support with talent management. In Sweden social partners, the Employment Service and other relevant authorities have held talks measures within the framework of the establishment of the mission to create the so-called fast track into employment for newcomers who have the training or experience, required in Sweden.
- ✓ Validation and assessment of training and professional skills for sectorial demands
 - ✓ Occupational and educational guidance
 - ✓ Suitable individuals are offered a fast track in the appropriate fields of industry
 - ✓ Support for employers to find suitable participants
 - ✓ Swedish education, relevant to the professional field
 - ✓ Additional training as required
 - ✓ Training in language / complementary courses, combined with internship or work
 - ✓ Language support, tutors and mentors in the workplace

5.5 Vocational training for young migrants and refugees

Pre-VET Training Courses offer a first chance of increasing employability of young migrants and refugees, regardless of their previous formation in their home countries. Don Bosco organizations have included the start of training courses in their T-VET centers with a special mentoring, coming from the social workers in the shelters where they are hosted. This enables them to continue improving the language, initiate interpersonal relationships, and obtain a first recognised certification.

Fast track constituents:

- ✓ Swedish Education will begin already at the asylum accommodation
- ✓ Early assessment of newcomers' experience, skills and motivation

33. http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160112_OTS0118/kompetenzcheck-ergebnisse-personen-aus-syrien-dem-iran-und-irak-sind-am-besten-qualifiziert

34. <http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-employment/>

6. Instead of a Conclusion:

"Every refugee has the right to a safe asylum. Refugees should be granted the same rights and basic help as any other person who is a legal resident, including access to medical care, to education and to work. Also, we have to recognize that, if concrete and positive solutions are implemented, a win-win situation for refugees and host communities can be realized." – Maria Pisani, President of the Italian Youth Council – 3rd of November 2017, Sofia, Bulgaria.

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- ³ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what-we-do/humanitarian-aid/refugees-and-internally-displaced-persons_en
- ⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/09/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers/>
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- ⁶ http://unhcr.org/556725e69.html#_ga=1.180806439.1402508050.143343883
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- ¹³ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>
- ¹⁴ http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2015/12/Resolution_Protection-and-Integration-of-Young-Refugees-in-Europe.pdf
- ¹⁵ According to UNHCR an unaccompanied minor is “a person under 18, unless the law applicable to the child stipulates a younger age of majority, who is separated from both parents and is not under the care of another adult who has such responsibility, whether by law or by custom.” <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf>
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