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It is a challenge to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the labor market. The process of integration is often slow and difficult, especially for those who have spent a long time in camps or detention centers. This is due to a variety of factors, including language barriers, lack of education and skills, and social isolation. The process of integration is often a long and difficult one, and it is important to provide support and assistance to those who are struggling. This includes providing language classes, job training, and social support. It is also important to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for refugees and asylum seekers. This can be done by providing information and resources, and by encouraging community members to reach out and help. The process of integration is a complex one, and it requires the cooperation of many different groups and organizations. It is important to work together to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

The recent challenges in the labor market have led to a significant increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers. This is due to a variety of factors, including conflict, persecution, and climate change. The process of integration is often slow and difficult, and it is important to provide support and assistance to those who are struggling. This includes providing language classes, job training, and social support. It is also important to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for refugees and asylum seekers. This can be done by providing information and resources, and by encouraging community members to reach out and help. The process of integration is a complex one, and it requires the cooperation of many different groups and organizations. It is important to work together to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

The positive effect of employment on social inclusion and personal well-being is undeniable and needs to be recognized. However, the labor market is often not welcoming to refugees and asylum seekers, and this can lead to social exclusion and mental health problems. It is important to create a more inclusive labor market that provides opportunities for refugees and asylum seekers. This can be done by providing job training, language classes, and social support. It is also important to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all. This can be done by providing information and resources, and by encouraging community members to reach out and help. The process of integration is a complex one, and it requires the cooperation of many different groups and organizations. It is important to work together to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all.

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In Greece, the right to work is granted to refugees and asylum-seekers by law.⁸ However, the populations are at a disadvantage in navigating the labour market.

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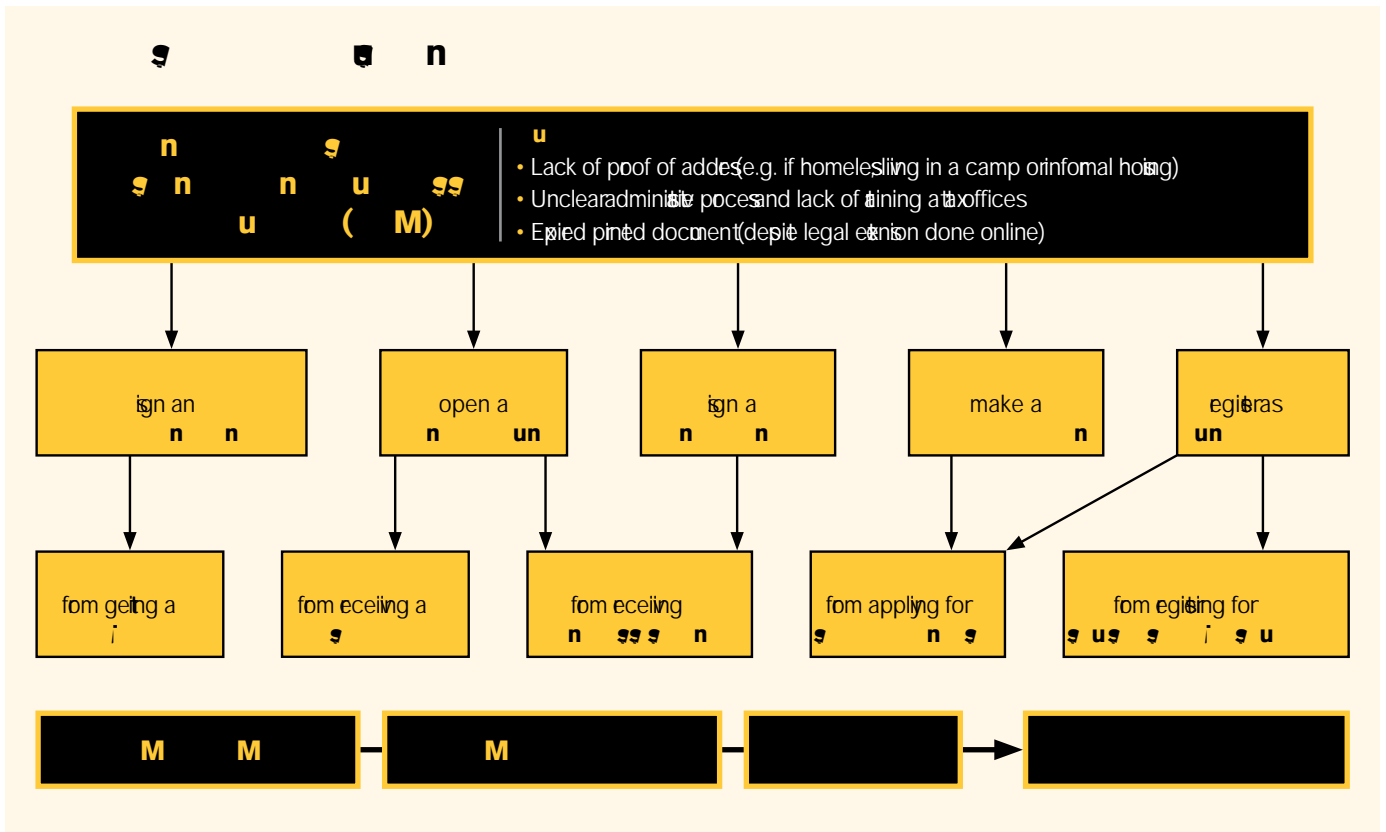
Additional barriers as difficulty in having their previous knowledge and skills recognised and obtaining new qualifications in Greece, are coupled with a poverty of skills through prolonged displacement and life in refugee camps.



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Still, integration spots remain especially on the islands where voluntary initiatives for language courses and non-formal education. On the mainland, the situation is slightly better. In some municipalities NGOs and grassroot organisations provide language courses and non-formal vocational training in the camps and bantings as well as the HELIOS programme by IOM.



Recent legislation (L. 4674/2020 of 11.3.2020) has reduced the time a person can stay in the reception system and receive cash assistance from 6 months to one month after recognition of their refugee status. At the end of May 2020, about 9,000 recognised refugees were asked to leave state-provided accommodation and their cash assistance ceased.²⁰ Following pressure from NGOs including the IRC²¹, International Organisations and municipalities no forced evictions took place. Still, hundreds of refugees ended up staying in Athens squares²² following the evictions as they had no better information, language skills or a job.

According to the Greek asylum size, over 50,000 people have been granted international protection or subsidiary protection since January 2015 and there are 97,023 asylum applications pending.²³ At a recognition rate of over 55% in 2019, this means that at least 50,000 asylum seekers in Greece will be recognised as refugees and will stay in the country.

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Integration Strategy for Refugees in Greece

The Greek National Strategy for Integration (NSI) published in July 2019, a crucial step to define Greece's objectives and related actions to achieve them. By recognising the importance of supporting the integration of, not only refugees but also asylum-seekers, the NSI highlights the need for education, training and adjustment to employment conditions and work culture to hold the reception age. Unfortunately for the NSI has remained underfunded and integration support has been fragmented.

The NSI outlines a multi-sectoral approach to integration, involving the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Economic Development and Tourism, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Digital Governance and the Ministry of the Interior.

In the framework of the new EU Multi-Annual Financial Framework 2021-2027, member states need an Action Plan or Strategy for the integration of third country nationals. This offers an excellent opportunity for Greece to update and present a coherent and realistic national strategy for the integration of migrants and refugees staying at the reception age. This should not be viewed as a box-ticking exercise to access EU funds but as a real opportunity for the reforms.²⁵

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Integration and Social Inclusion

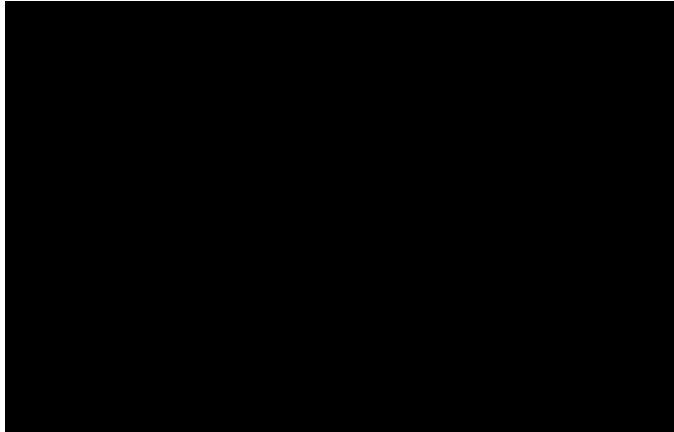
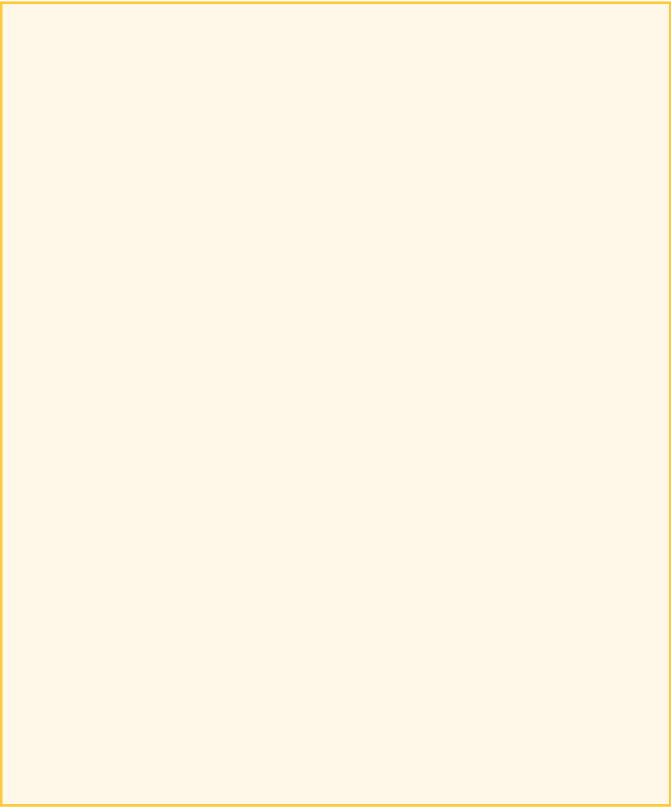
Integration and social inclusion are key concepts in the context of migration and asylum. They refer to the process of individuals and groups becoming part of the host society and participating in its social, economic, and cultural life. This involves not only legal and administrative aspects but also social and psychological dimensions.

The benefits of even temporary engagement in the receiving society including its labour market are multiple. Even if the asylum applications of some people are rejected, early support for their integration would be considered valuable on both an individual and a societal level. Early interventions such as teaching how to use the receiving society, learning a new language or acquiring digital skills have knock-on effects and can even be public spending on mental health care. Indeed, it has been proven that such integration policies are linked to improved mental health outcomes in high-income countries.²⁸ Moreover, gaining transferable skills can be of benefit if people eventually move to another country or to their home country.

Equally, the negative effects of aid-dependence, social exclusion and marginalisation during this initial period, should not be overlooked.²⁹ Social exclusion, whereby individuals or groups are unable to participate fully in society as a result of unemployment, low skill levels, ill-health or other factors can have long-term consequences for the well-being, safety and economic stability of societies.³⁰ Inaction risks a long generation of socially excluded populations and a further increase in anti-migrant sentiment.

In any case, the demographics of arrivals and recognition rates in Greece indicate the likelihood that more than half of all asylum-seekers will ultimately be entitled to refugee status and a life in the country more than half of refugees and asylum-seekers arriving in Greece from 2015 onward come from fragile, conflict-affected states such as Syria (25%), Afghanistan (19.8%), and Iraq (9.9%) with recognition rates of 98.5%, 69.1% and 68% respectively. The overall recognition rate at first instance in 2019 was 55.9%.³² Finally, it is becoming more politicised, particularly in the countries of origin, the likelihood not just of obtaining status but also of being eligible for the long-term increase in calling once again for integration support at the asylum application stage.

³¹



Integration

Offering opportunities such as training and language courses can help refugees gain the skills and knowledge needed to become employed and active in the labour market. Indeed, in Greece, by the time one signed an employment contract, precious time has been lost and the ability to adapt to a new life, and a job, might have been damaged permanently.

Similarly, the mental health benefits of being active and employed should not be overlooked. A World Health Organisation report identified unemployment as one of the main factors associated with poor mental health outcomes for refugees³⁴ which can readily lead to depression and disappointment.

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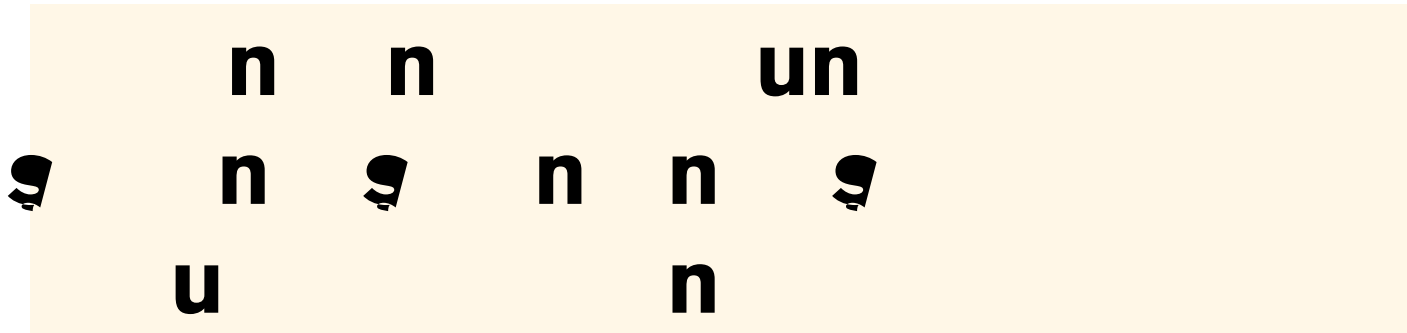
“...unemployment, ...”

Negin Khosjedi, 32, refugee from Iran, who participated in the IRC-Ciit Foundation programme Resilient Futures

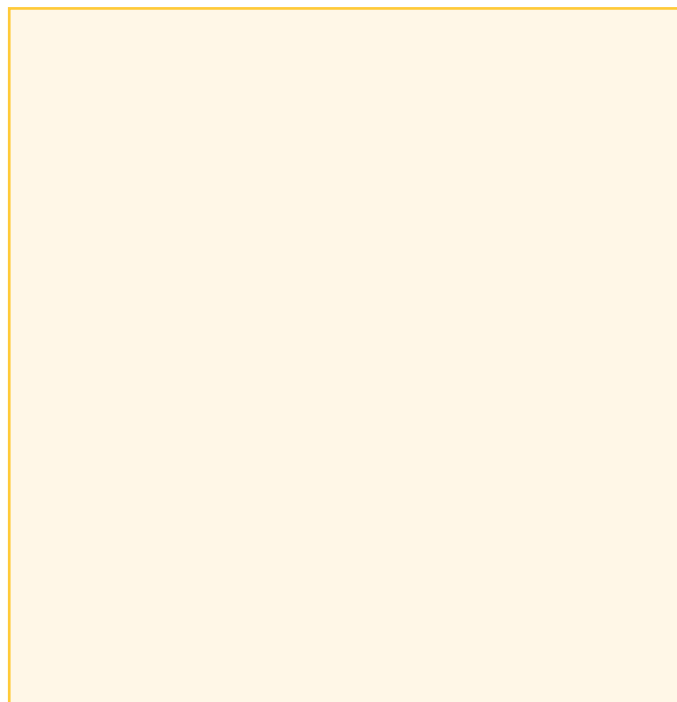
Amadeus Canals/IRC

Job-seekers and refugees may find themselves in challenging circumstances, often dealing with the consequences of long and perilous journeys, complex healthcare needs, lower educational levels³⁵ and skills³⁶ acquired through prolonged displacement and a limited repertoire of social interaction mechanisms for labour market integration as implemented, and take into account individual needs. While employment is typically the most effective way to foster both social and economic integration, it may not be equally attainable for all.³⁷ People-centred and rights-based case management approaches can support more vulnerable individuals to navigate and participate in their new societies. Participating in language and cultural orientation classes and vocational training as a possible option, is beneficial in itself. Meaningful access to benefits can be life-saving, so an investment in the provision of trained interpreters is needed to bridge the initial language gap while job-seekers are learning the local language.





Recent OECD evidence shows that women take longer to gain a foothold in the labour market compared to men. They also have lower levels of ceiling-competence skills compared to men in the first five years after graduation, related to the fact that they frequently receive less negative feedback than men, both in terms of language training and active labour market measures.



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