

All united for refugees

A Guideline for Inclusive Refugee Support in Europe



Stepping
Beyond Tents



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ABOUT GUIDE

This guide is the main output of the Stepping Beyond Tents project a 16-month Erasmus+ partnership led by CIFIR (France), with partners in Spain and Türkiye.

It provides practical, youth-focused strategies for integrating young refugees into education, employment, and society. Based on real experiences, research, and expert dialogue, the guide offers:

- Key challenges and solutions
- Best practices from across Europe
- Tools for inclusive youth work
- Policy recommendations

Designed for municipalities, schools, NGOs and youth workers, this guide is a flexible tool to support local action and inspire future EU policies.

It's a step toward building inclusive communities beyond tents, into shared futures.



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"Integration is not just a policy – it is a promise. When we listen to the voices of refugee youth, we don't just hear their needs; we unlock the future of Europe."

— *Stepping Beyond Tents*

Introduction – Toward a Common European Playbook for Integrating Young Refugees

Conflict and forced displacement have brought a growing number of teenagers and young adults to Europe's classrooms, youth centres and labour markets. Their energy, talents and aspirations can enrich host societies, yet only if we remove the structural and social barriers that keep them on the margins. Stepping Beyond Tents is a 16-month partnership co-funded by the European Commission through the Erasmus+ programme led by CIFIR (France) with Backslash (Spain) and Geleneksel Yeşil Çevre Demeği - Old Green School (Türkiye) and it was launched to meet that challenge. This guideline will translate research and field experience into safe and inclusive European policies for refugee youth integration.

A generation on the move. Since 2011 more than 5.8 million Syrians have sought safety outside their country, half of them under twenty-five (UNHCR, Syria Refugee Response Fact Sheet, 2024). When Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, Europe absorbed another rapid wave: by mid-2024 over 4 million displaced Ukrainians—again, largely women, teenagers and young adults—had registered for temporary protection in EU states (European Union Agency for Asylum, Ukraine Situation Update, April 2024). These two crises alone have placed hundreds of thousands of young people in European classrooms, training centres and neighbourhoods. They arrive with resilience and skills, yet face unfamiliar languages, interrupted schooling, legal uncertainty and the emotional after-shocks of war.

Why youth-centred integration matters. If young refugees spend their formative years on the margins, Europe and the European Union risk a "lost generation", one that is excluded from education, decent work and civic life and that is prone to believe fake news and misinformation. Conversely, when countries invest early in language, qualifications and social connections, refugee youth can become students, professionals and community leaders who strengthen European Union's society. Recognising this double-sided reality, the EU's 2021-2027 Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion calls on Member States to weave inclusive education, employment and participation measures into mainstream systems, with special attention to children and young people (European Commission, Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027). At the same time, the Erasmus+ programme has named "supporting the youth field's response to the war in Ukraine" and "inclusion and diversity" as top-tier priorities, urging projects to connect policy, research and practice.





Stepping Beyond Tents is an Erasmus+ Small-Scale Youth Partnership (KA210-YOU) that turns these EU ambitions into a concrete, practitioner-friendly output. Led by CIFIR (France) with Backslash (Spain) and Geleneksel Yeşil Çevre Derneği (Türkiye), the 16-month project had one flagship goal: to co-create a guideline for “safe and inclusive” European policies that enable the effective integration of refugee youth.

The Project Methodology

Stepping Beyond Tents begins not with prescribing solutions but with systematic listening and mapping:

1. Online surveys and focus groups with at front-line professionals (teachers, youth workers, social services) and refugee youths in France, Spain and Turkey gauge lived challenges and local innovations.
2. Desk research collects national laws, EU directives, municipal strategies and grassroots initiatives to build a baseline picture of who does what, where.
3. Transnational peer review – a virtual series where partner teams exchange findings, refine research tools and identify common policy levers.
4. Guideline drafting – validated at a six-day seminar with youth and practitioners from the three countries.

This brochure inaugurates that journey. It frames the urgency, scope and guiding principles of the guideline before later sections unpack specific models and case studies.



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A LANDSCAPE SHAPED BY SYRIA AND UKRAINE

*Stepping Beyond Tents
therefore aims to
synthesise what disparate
actors have already
learned into a coherent,
youth-friendly policy guide
that can be picked up by
municipalities, NGOs,
ministries or school
networks and adapted with
minimal resources.*

The Syrian displacement has confronted European systems with the long-term tasks of language immersion and school continuity for children who may never return “home”. Turkey’s response by integrating Syrian pupils into regular schools, training 30 000 teachers in inclusive pedagogy and embedding counsellors through PIKTES—offers lessons on scale, localisation and EU-partner cooperation.



The Ukrainian crisis, by contrast, mobilised the Temporary Protection Directive overnight: EU states issued residence permits, immediate school access and labour-market rights. The speed of policy activation shows what is possible when political will aligns with EU mechanisms—yet sustaining that momentum for longer-standing groups (Afghans, Eritreans, Syrians) remains a test of consistency. In the Erasmus+ domain, the priority “supporting the youth field’s response to the war in Ukraine” has catalysed new youth exchanges, solidarity corps placements and emergency language and psycho-social projects.



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Integration is not a side project; it is a collective investment in Europe's social, cultural and economic future. Whether you are a policy-maker drafting a municipal youth plan, a teacher welcoming new pupils from Kyiv or Aleppo, or a refugee-led association seeking EU funding, we invite you to explore the pages that follow, test the approaches in your own setting, and feed back your experience. Only through shared learning and genuine co-creation can Europe move, together with its young refugees, beyond tents, and into a common home built on dignity, opportunity and participation for all.

EUROPEAN UNION FRAMEWORKS



The EU has adopted several strategic frameworks to foster social inclusion of all young people, implicitly covering refugee youth. The EU Youth Strategy 2019–2027 (Council Resolution 2018) is a cooperation framework to improve young people's situation. It emphasizes youth participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement, and "ensuring that all young people have the necessary resources to take part in society" [Youth Europa](#)

The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021–2027 (part of the EU's New Pact on Migration) sets out concrete actions to support migrant integration in all member states. It covers barriers in key sectors – housing, education, employment, health – and seeks to improve inclusion for migrants "and EU citizens with a migrant background" [Affairs Europa](#)

In education it calls for "inclusive education and training from early childhood to higher education, focusing on faster recognition of qualifications and language learning" (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu). In employment it promotes skills recognition and entrepreneurship, especially for migrant women. For health it stresses equal access; for housing it urges EU funds (ESF+, ERDF, AMIF) to fund accommodation and fight segregation.



Key EU-level points:

EU Youth Strategy (2019–27) encourages engaging and empowering all young people (including migrants) and set “Inclusive Societies” as a Youth Goals

The 2021–27 Integration Action Plan tackles migrant inclusion in education, work, health, housing; it prescribes concrete actions like language/civic courses and workers’ training Migration and Home Affairs

Erasmus+ youth programmes fund mobility and projects targeting disadvantaged youth; they emphasize youth participation “from all backgrounds” Erasmus+

Together, these EU frameworks provide a broad structure (strategy, funding, networks) that EU countries adapt in national policies.

In short, the Action Plan envisions a holistic support system, from language courses and civic orientation for new arrivals, to bridging programs and career guidance for migrant youth. Its implementation depends on EU funding (Erasmus+, ESF+, AMIF, etc.) and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

National Policies & Initiatives by Country

FRANCE

TURKEY

SPAIN



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OBSTACLES TO INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES AND PUBLIC POLICY RESPONSES

1. Psychosocial Challenges

Young refugees arriving in Europe often carry severe emotional scars from conflict, violence, and dangerous journeys. Studies find very high rates of trauma-related disorders: one review reports that PTSD, depression and anxiety are “the most prevalent problems” among unaccompanied refugee youth (*PubMed, Mental health of unaccompanied refugee minors in Europe: A systematic review, 2022*). These mental health issues are compounded by social stressors – language barriers, poverty, or hostility – that impede a sense of belonging. Factors like unprocessed trauma, loss of family, fear of an uncertain future, create a heavy psychological burden that undermines self-confidence and learning. Without strong support networks, young refugees are at risk of withdrawal, depression, substance misuse to cope with their fears.



Therefore, early intervention is crucial. Schools and youth centers can serve as “safe havens” that promote a sense of stability and belonging. The European Commission notes that with “the right support” most young refugees can recover, emphasizing the role of youth-centred, whole-school approaches to psychosocial Support Euro Child. Programs such as peer mentoring, school counselors, and intercultural youth clubs can mitigate isolation. For example, Eurochild’s research highlights positive practices like in-school psychosocial workshops and community cultural events that help young asylum seekers feel included EuroChild

OBSTACLES TO INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES AND PUBLIC POLICY RESPONSES

2. Legal and Protection Challenges

Legal status uncertainty and complex asylum procedures create major hurdles. Delays in asylum claims or temporary reception schemes mean young refugees may wait months with no clear status; this limbo blocks access to education, work permits, and social benefits, and prevents forming social ties. Uncertainty can trigger chronic stress. Bureaucratic obstacles – frequent requests for documents, shifting rules, and lack of information further confuse youth. Those who apply for asylum must often navigate an opaque process without adequate guidance.

EU-wide, the law requires that minors be kept in “appropriate child-friendly accommodation” and “as a rule” not be detained FEANTSA. But implementation gaps are noted across Europe. Often countries lack enough trained guardians or judges specialize in minors, leading to long waits for decisions on protection needs. Spain’s own authorities reported chronic delays in age assessment procedures for children arriving in the Canary Islands AIDA.



In Turkey – which hosts over 3 million refugees (mainly Syrians), the legal situation is different but also challenging. Syrians are under “temporary protection” rather than asylum status, granting them residency and services but not a clear path to long-term settlement or citizenship. Legally, all children (Turkish or refugees) must attend school under Turkish law, but practical enforcement is uneven. Refugee families often lack residence registration (“ikamet”) documents, which can bar children from enrollment.

OBSTACLES TO INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES AND PUBLIC POLICY RESPONSES

3. Educational Challenges

Language barriers and interrupted schooling severely hamper young refugees. Entering a foreign school system with little or no host-country language puts refugee children at risk of falling behind. Many arrive with gaps in their education from years spent in displacement or conflict. In France, for example, schools offer “allophone integration classes”, but places are limited. Strict administrative requirements also block access: in France, parents often need a rental contract or “quittance de loyer” to register a child in school, leaving undocumented families out [Asylum Europe](#)

Similarly in Spain, legally all minors can attend school, but regionally the implementation varies. Some Autonomous Communities (e.g. Catalonia) have extra tutorial programs, whereas others rely on NGO courses. Language support classes exist but are often oversubscribed, and students may be placed directly into mainstream classes where they struggle to keep up.

In Turkey, the educational gap was massive but improving. At the height of the influx, an estimated only ~60% of Syrian school-age children were in formal [Acces to Education](#) The government took measures: all registered Syrian children can attend Turkish public schools free of charge, and starting in 2014 special “adaptation classes” were set up to teach Turkish language to refugee pupils before joining regular classes. However, initial capacity was low. Over time, the Ministry of Education—with vast EU and UNICEF support—dramatically expanded access.



Common issues in all countries include non-recognition of prior learning: refugees’ diplomas and skills often go unacknowledged. This limits access to higher education or vocational programs. In the EU, some Member States (like France, Spain) have started “Validation des acquis” processes or special quotas to allow refugee high-school graduates into universities. For younger children, many educators highlight the lack of intercultural training for teachers: too often teachers are unprepared to handle trauma or bilingual needs, leaving refugee pupils with little classroom [Support Child](#)

OBSTACLES TO INTEGRATION OF YOUNG REFUGEES AND PUBLIC POLICY RESPONSES

4. Unaccompanied Minors: Special Vulnerabilities

Children who arrive alone face the most severe obstacles. With no parent or caregiver, unaccompanied minors lack a built-in support network. They endure the same war traumas plus the traumatic separation from family. EU law (Reception Conditions Directive) requires States to protect the “best interests” of such children – appointing a guardian, placing them in child-appropriate housing, prioritizing their asylum claims.

Yet practice often falls short. France’s child welfare agency (ASE) is overloaded: thousands of new UAMs arrive yearly and some face long waiting periods without placement. Psychologically, UAMs must cope with unimaginable isolation. They often feel “nowhere to belong” – not only have they lost their country, but they are denied a family in their new home. A study of Middle Eastern refugee teens notes how perceived discrimination (or simply feeling foreign) significantly correlates with depression and poor social adaptation. Many develop behavioural problems or chronic anxiety.



Human rights advocates warn that without proper guardianship, UAMs can be preyed upon by traffickers or forced into labor. Guardianship programs exist (e.g. France and Spain assign social workers as legal guardians), but there are often too few qualified staff. In Spain, the Ombudsman has repeatedly highlighted severe delays in assigning cases and in conducting age-assessment. During such delays, minors may live in substandard conditions or on the street – all of which damages both their mental health and educational prospects.

CASE STUDIES

FRANCE

France has a long-standing state tradition of “integration à la française” for newcomers, which has been updated in recent years. The 2016 Immigration Law (integrated into the CESEDA code) reformed reception and created the Contrat d’Intégration Républicaine (CIR) (home-affairs.ec.europa.eu). The CIR is mandatory for any foreigner with the right to settle. Under it, a newcomer receives a one-year program that begins with a personal interview (assessment of skills, needs) and then includes: compulsory French language training and civic education, as well as career guidance. In practice this means each refugee or migrant signs a “contract” with the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), which refers them to local services for up to 200+ hours of language classes and 12+ hours of civic instruction. Crucially, career guidance was added: newly-arrived refugees are sent from OFII to the public employment service (Pôle Emploi) for tailored job counseling. This aligns with the EU emphasis on skills and employment.



Beyond the CIR, France launched specific integration initiatives for refugees. A 2021–2023 National Plan for Asylum and Refugee Reception/Integration was prepared in consultation with stakeholders, aiming to *“improve refugee reception and integration conditions by adapting to territories and mobilising all resources”*. In 2021 France also started the AGIR (Accompagnement Global et Individualisé des Réfugiés) programme. AGIR is available to any newly-statused refugee (asylum granted within 2 years) and provides intensive support for housing and job search. It *“re-affirmed that language is seen as an integration priority, along with employment”*. For example, AGIR offers extra language classes and engages local authorities and NGOs to match refugees with apprenticeships or rentals. Taken together, France’s national schemes mirror the EU Action Plan priorities: they ensure access to language learning and schooling, civic orientation, skills recognition, and employment support for newcomers.

Youth-specific measures: France has also rolled out youth inclusion instruments that apply to refugee youngsters. The EU’s Youth Guarantee and related schemes operate here (France committed to the Guarantee in 2014). In 2021 France launched the Contrat d’Engagement Jeune (CEJ), a personalized support contract for unemployed or out-of-school youth (16–25 years old). Importantly, the CEJ is open to young people with refugee status or protection. French guidance sites note that refugee or subsidiary-protected youth (16–25) can sign a CEJ to receive 6–18 months of intensive coaching (job search, training, French classes) [Refugies Info](#)



CASE STUDIES

FRANCE

Under CEJ, young refugees work with local mission offices, attend workshops (language, CV writing, internships) and may even receive a small allowance. This mirrors the EU's reinforced focus on youth employment for vulnerable groups (eur-lex.europa.eu). Additionally, vulnerable under-25 refugees benefit from national welfare and the extended care of social services: a 2022 law extended child protection support up to age 21, ensuring continued educational and social assistance for unaccompanied minors reaching adulthood [National Policies Platform](#)

At the national level, France also promotes youth civic engagement. For example, Service Civique (a national voluntary service) has special tracks for refugees and host-community youth to work together. The government funds accredited youth associations (via the Youth and Sports Ministry) to run projects "accessible to all... strengthening social links"; this has included intercultural youth workshops and sports/arts programs in sensitive neighborhoods. French public funding ([FDVA](#), [Compte d'Engagement Citoyen](#)) supports training of youth volunteers, indirectly benefiting refugees engaged through NGOs.

Local/NGO initiatives in France: On the ground, many non-profit and local programs advance refugee inclusion among youth. For instance, the Council of Europe's "Youth.Together" project – hosted at the European Youth Centre – supports social inclusion of young refugees through youth work. It explicitly aims to "reduce the risks of social exclusion and violence that young refugees, especially minors in transition to adulthood, are exposed to", by providing access to education, self-development and autonomy via non-formal learning. Similarly, French NGOs like [Emmaüs](#), [Croix-Rouge](#), and [Secours Catholique](#) run multi-ethnic youth clubs, language cafés and mentoring schemes in cities. Major cities have established local integration contracts: for example, Paris and some urban areas sign "Territorial Reception and Integration Contracts (CIR-Terr)" which coordinate state, city and association efforts (language courses, cultural orientation, school support) for refugees in that locality.



CASE STUDIES

SPAIN

National integration framework: Spain has recently updated its national strategy for migrant inclusion. In 2023 the government approved a new Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion, against Racism and Xenophobia (2023–2027). This is the first comprehensive integration strategy since 2015 (the earlier PEI plan). The new framework has two main goals: to advance migrant integration/inclusion and to combat xenophobia. It was developed through broad consultation (central/regional/local governments, social partners, NGOs and migrant associations) . It outlines cross-cutting actions across six lines (such as education, employment, anti-discrimination) with indicators to monitor progress. In practical terms, this framework encourages Spain’s ministries to weave inclusion into all policies (education, health, housing) and empowers local authorities and NGOs to innovate.



Several specific programs illustrate Spain’s approach. For example, the Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration launched a Host Families program to support Ukrainian refugees (as Spain did for Syria earlier). Under this, volunteer Spanish families can host refugee children or mothers, easing access to education and social services. Spain also enacted protocols against gender-based violence in reception centres (with [UNHCR](#)) and funds interfaith “Municipalities for Tolerance” initiatives to help towns manage diversity inclusively. Anti-racism measures include a national hate-speech task force and a victims’ support service. While not youth-specific, these create a more welcoming climate for young refugees in schools and communities.

Spain emphasizes integrating refugee children into schools, in line with UNICEF recommendations. All foreign children (regardless of status) have the right to free education in Spain, and the government funds intercultural schools (Comedores sociales, Aula de Enlace) to help newcomers adapt. Ministry of Education data show high enrollment of refugee minors, and NGOs run language/cultural bridging classes. Moreover, Spain’s Youth Guarantee ([Garantía Juvenil](#)) scheme provides education and job offers to all unemployed under-30s; refugees meeting residency criteria can benefit. Spain’s National Youth Institute ([INJUVE](#)) oversees youth policy: it administers the Erasmus+ youth budget (through its [National Agency](#)) and supports youth centers. INJUVE also funds NGO youth projects. At the local level, many Spanish cities (e.g. Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia) have municipal youth plans that include migrant youngsters, offering counseling and vocational training.



CASE STUDIES



SPAIN

The Spanish Erasmus+ Agency (Servicio Español para la Internacionalización de la Educación, SEPIE) runs education/training actions, while ANE – INJUVE manages youth stream. Spanish youth organizations frequently include refugee themes in exchanges and volunteering. For example, a Spanish youth center in Navarra led an EU-funded sports-inclusion project called “Playing for Refuge”. This two-year pilot (Erasmus+ Youth Cooperation Partnership) used baseball and softball to bring refugees and locals together. It aimed to support “more than 300 refugees or asylum seekers to live a more active life and integrate into local communities, while sharing knowledge from their home countries”. Baseball was chosen because many Navarra refugees came from baseball-playing countries. The project included training refugees as club referees, intercultural workshops, and a mixed-team baseball festival. Such grassroots projects echo EU goals by fostering social coexistence through youth participation.

Numerous NGOs (e.g. ACCEM, CEAR, Cruz Roja Española, Cáritas) run youth integration programs: tutoring for refugee students, mentorship schemes and language cafes. At the municipal level, Madrid’s “Ciudad Diversa” program or Barcelona’s inter-cultural youth hubs create safe spaces for youth of diverse backgrounds. Autonomous communities also fund youth intercultural initiatives (e.g. Galicia’s youth info centers now provide Spanish courses for refugee teenagers). Sport is a popular tool: aside from “Playing for Refuge” in Navarra, there are local football and basketball inclusion clubs in Valencia and Andalusia that mix refugee children with locals.

The Strategic Framework for Citizenship and Inclusion (2023–27) is Spain’s new national policy document committing all levels of government to integration and anti-discrimination. Education-focused actions (e.g. enrolling refugee minors in regular schools) are implicit priorities. Youth projects like “Playing for Refuge” in Navarra demonstrate Erasmus+ at work: an inclusive sports festival deliberately mixed refugee and Spanish youthmigrant-integration.ec.europa.eu. Spain’s Erasmus+ youth agency (INJUVE) encourages similar civic-engagement projects. Municipal programs such as the “Host Family” initiative for refugee children or local sports programs also concretely involve youth.



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CASE STUDIES

TURKIYE

Turkey hosts the world's largest refugee population (over 3.7 million Syrians under "Temporary Protection" plus others). While not an EU member, Turkey's policies on refugees intersect with EU concerns. Turkey's Law on Foreigners and International Protection (No. 6458, 2013) provides the legal framework; Syrians mainly benefit from temporary protection, which grants access to education, healthcare and work permits. In line with the EU's integration goals, the Turkish government has largely integrated refugees into national systems. Notably, since 2017 Turkey committed "to integrating all school-aged Syrian refugees into the national public school system". In practice this means Syrian children attend Turkish public schools alongside host-community children (with Turkish language support). [UNICEF](https://www.unicef.org/turkey) reports that as of mid-2021 over 1.7 million Syrian children were in Turkish schools [unicef.org](https://www.unicef.org/turkey). Turkey also runs specialized "Accelerated Learning Programmes" and Turkish language courses for older youths who missed school. This echoes the EU's action plan focus on inclusive education and language learning for migrants



Social cohesion measures: Turkey has taken steps to build inclusion at the municipal level, similar to EU local-support ideas. For example, Istanbul's municipality (IMM) launched a "Migration and Social Cohesion Action Plan" (2020–24), developed with UNHCR. This city-wide plan created a Migration Unit and advisory board to improve refugees' access to municipal services, and emphasize coexistence. Evaluators note that the strategy "offers to the refugees as well as [the] host community better municipal services and promotes social cohesion and co-existence practices". In short, it aligns with EU calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships and engaging local actors.

Similarly, other city governments (e.g. Gaziantep, Ankara) run municipal programs in vocational training and sports for refugee youth. For instance, the Turkish Olympic Committee's "Active Kids Sports Schools" project (launched 2017) created mixed sports classes for Turkish and Syrian children in Gaziantep. Olympic athletes and coaches teach sports and healthy living; the goal is "to unite and empower young people through sport" and foster integration. Such initiatives reflect the Council of Europe's emphasis on grassroots and cultural activities for inclusion.



CASE STUDIES

TURKIYE

A number of NGOs and UN agencies work on youth inclusion in Turkey. RET International, for example, operates Youth Centres in southeastern Turkey (Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mardin) offering safe spaces for both Syrian and Turkish youth. RET's 2016–2019 program aimed “to improve the life prospects and increase the resilience of refugee and host community children, adolescents and youth” through psychosocial support, life-skills training and social cohesion projects. In practice, RET Centre activities include recreational workshops, Turkish and English classes, and youth-led social action projects. The approach – training youth facilitators, involving them in awareness campaigns – has empowered many refugee teenagers and built bridges with local peers. Similarly, UNHCR and UNICEF support Youth Empowerment and Education initiatives: for example, UNICEF funds training of Syrian volunteer teaching staff and school infrastructure, while IOM and local NGOs provide intercultural mediation in classrooms.



Alignment with EU frameworks: Though Turkey is not in the EU, its refugee inclusion policies align in spirit with EU strategies. Both emphasize schooling and language, Turkey's law explicitly provides education to refugees, and EU's Action Plan demands it. Both recognize the need to involve civil society and local actors (Turkey's municipal cohesion plans mirror the EU's call for local partnerships. In the youth domain, Turkey often cooperates with EU programs as a partner country. Turkish youth organizations and municipalities can participate in Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps. For instance, the Erasmus+ “Otlas” project mentioned above brought Turkish youth together with peers from France and other EU countries. Turkish NGOs and universities also act as Erasmus+ partners or host exchanges.

The integration of refugee children into national schools is a flagship policy: “the Turkish Government has committed to integrating all school-aged Syrian refugees into the national public school system”. At the city level, Istanbul's Migration and Social Cohesion Action Plan (2020–24), institutionalized services for refugees and promoted coexistence globalcompactrefugees.org. NGOs like RET run dedicated youth centers that foster resilience and social skills among refugee youth. Sports-for-integration projects (e.g. Active Kids) bring together refugee and host-community children in mixed classes sportanddev.org. These examples show how Turkey's grassroots and policy measures resonate with EU-led integration and youth-inclusion objectives.



CASE STUDIES



Across the EU, France, Spain and Turkey, there is a converging emphasis on inclusive education, language training, youth work and local partnerships to integrate young refugees. EU frameworks ([Youth Strategy](#), [Integration Action Plan](#), [Erasmus+](#)) set the scene, and each country adapts these into national laws (e.g. France's CIR and CEJ, Spain's 2023 Integration Strategy, Turkey's schooling and Municipal Plans) as well as local programs and NGO initiatives. In all cases, the goal is to ensure refugee youth gain access to schooling, skills development, and active citizenship, turning European policy goals into concrete opportunities on the ground.

In conclusion, young refugees in Europe face intertwined psychosocial, legal, and educational barriers. Addressing them requires coordinated policy: adequate legal status and guardianship, accessible schooling with language support, and robust mental-health services. EU-wide frameworks now explicitly call for these measures but their success hinges on effective national implementation.

France, Spain and Turkey each illustrate different parts of the puzzle

France highlights the need to close protection gaps for minors, Spain shows the power of community programs under decentralized governance, and Turkey demonstrates how massive investment in education infrastructure can dramatically raise integration prospects.

Policy makers should draw on these examples – expanding integrated child protection systems, funding school-based support, and engaging refugee families from day one – to ensure that no young person is left isolated. Only with such comprehensive, child-centred strategies will Europe fulfil its commitments to these vulnerable youth.

[EU Migration Pact: How a Common European Migration and Asylum System Works](#)

Ever wondered how the EU plans to manage migration more fairly and efficiently?

Produced by the European Commission, this official video is a reliable and clear introduction to the key mechanisms shaping Europe's refugee and migration policy landscape.



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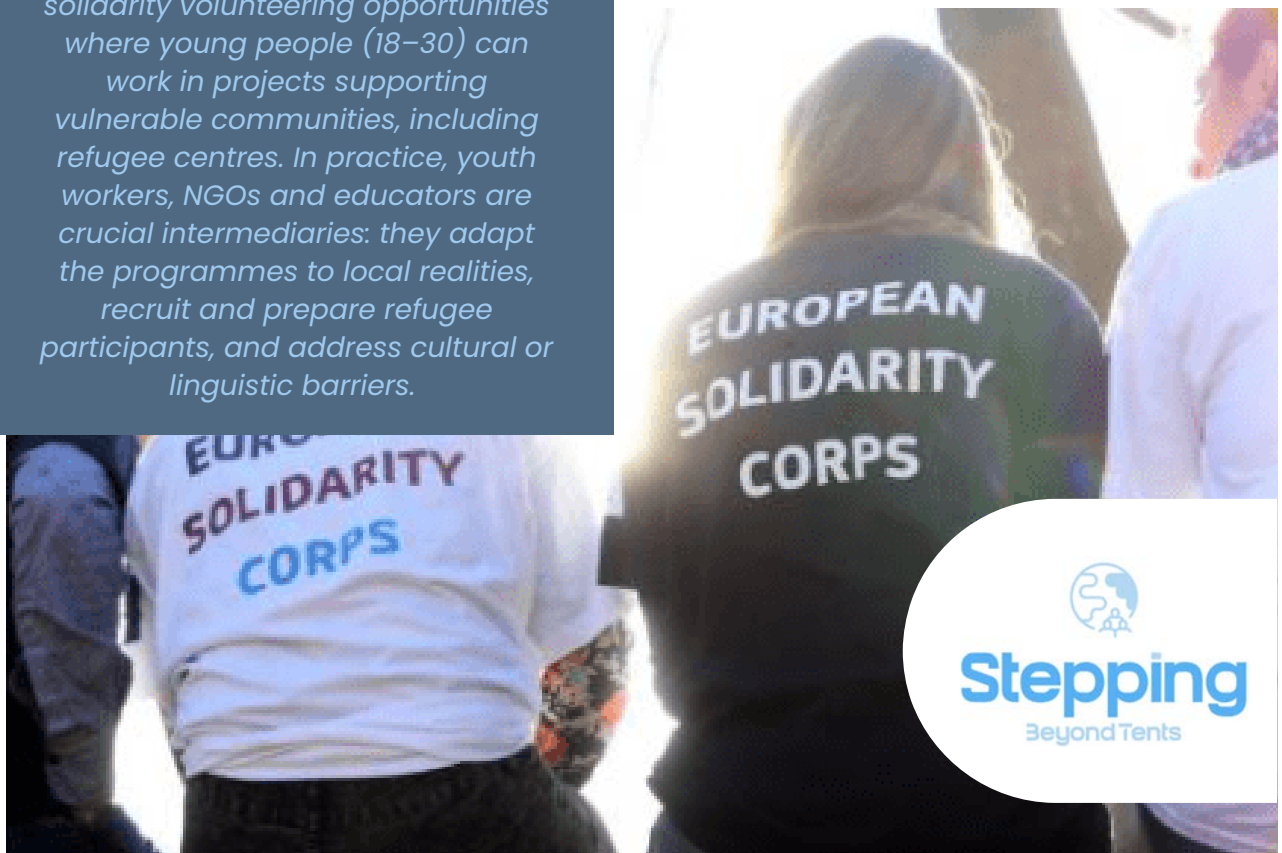
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INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN EU YOUTH PROGRAMMES:

ROLES OF YOUTH WORKERS, NGOS, AND EDUCATORS

The EU Youth Strategy (2019–2027) explicitly prioritises social inclusion of all young people, including migrants and refugees (youth.europa.eu). EU funding instruments like Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps (ESC) have built-in inclusion measures to ensure refugees can participate on an equal footing. For example, Erasmus+ supports strategic partnerships to innovate refugee integration, and offers grants for youth exchanges involving.

The ESC provides 2–12 month solidarity volunteering opportunities where young people (18–30) can work in projects supporting vulnerable communities, including refugee centres. In practice, youth workers, NGOs and educators are crucial intermediaries: they adapt the programmes to local realities, recruit and prepare refugee participants, and address cultural or linguistic barriers.



These actors must tap into EU tools (like the Online Linguistic Support programme, which has enabled 100,000+ refugees to learn host-country languages) and align with policy goals (e.g. integrating migrant children into schools early to prevent drop-out).



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Roles of Key Stakeholders:

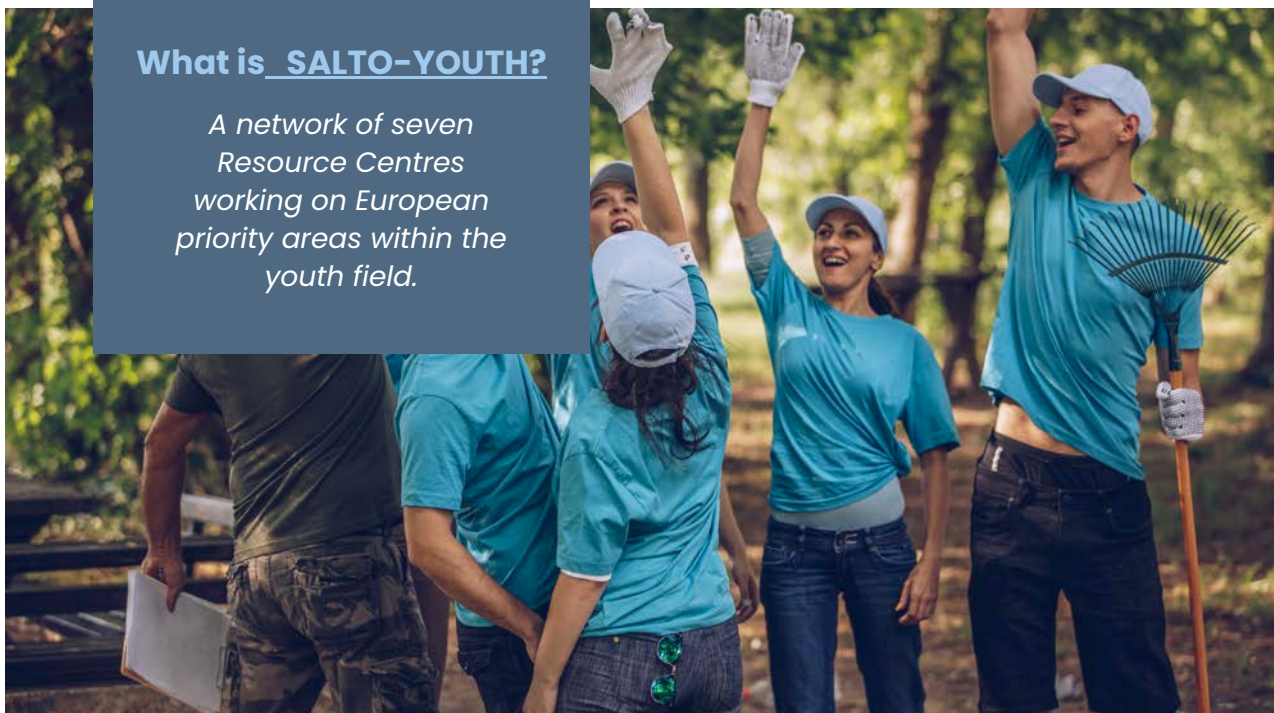
Youth workers (leaders of non-formal education and youth activities) are on the front lines of inclusion. They design intercultural programmes, mediate between refugee youths and local peers, and create “intercultural bridges” that facilitate dialogue and understanding. By focusing on the “humanity” and aspirations of refugee youth rather than only their legal status, they help build trust.

Youth workers also scout for refugees’ specific needs (e.g. trauma, cultural norms, gender concerns) and use proactive outreach: for instance, holding meetings in refugee centres or community hubs to explain opportunities. They identify obstacles (language barriers, family objections, administrative hurdles) and engage support networks (parents, local NGOs, social workers) to address them. Importantly, youth workers often receive EU-funded training on migration issues (through Erasmus+ mobility or ESC training courses) and can draw on toolkits like SALTO’s “How to Talk About War” to sensitize mixed groups to crisis topics.

SALTO

What is SALTO-YOUTH?

A network of seven Resource Centres working on European priority areas within the youth field.



Roles of Key Stakeholders:

NGOs serve as facilitators, project coordinators, and advocacy voices. They propose and manage Erasmus+ projects or ESC activities that include refugees, ensuring these target groups are not overlooked.

For example, As part of Stepping Beyond Tents, the Turkish partner Geleneksel Yeşil Çevre Derneği developed a series of local awareness and training workshops in Antalya, in cooperation with the Antalya Provincial Directorate of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. These sessions focused on intercultural dialogue, environmental mindfulness, and digital storytelling as tools for refugee inclusion. By bringing together local youth workers, refugee young people, and ministry staff, the events created a shared space for empathy-building and collaborative learning.

NGOs also develop resources and toolkits for colleagues: SALTO and similar centres often work with NGOs to compile best practices (e.g. the [REBECO project's toolkit on inclusion and communication](#)) and host training events. Moreover, NGOs mobilise funding (Erasmus+ KA1/KA2, Council of Europe grants, national youth funds) and maintain local networks (with municipalities, UNHCR, community centres) to help refugees access education, training, or entrepreneurship support. By running awareness campaigns (like “No Hate Speech” or local refugee solidarity drives) and influencing policy, NGOs help create a welcoming climate for inclusion.



Roles of Key Stakeholders:

Educators (Schools and Formal Training) and school authorities can act as gateways to EU youth programmes. They identify refugee and migrant students early and integrate them into mainstream classes, as recommended by EU action plans. Schools can collaborate with youth workers and NGOs to host joint activities or info-sessions about Erasmus+/ESC opportunities.

For example, a high school teacher might organise a class visit to a youth exchange or invite refugees to language cafés. Educators also support refugees' learning needs (catch-up courses, bilingual support) so they can fully engage in mobility or volunteering projects. By valorising refugees' prior experiences and encouraging recognition of skills (e.g. through the Erasmus+ Youthpass), educators validate migrants' identities.

Finally, schools and universities often have offices (International Relations, career services) that can channel refugees toward scholarship or mobility programmes – for instance, the inHERE project (partly implemented by Campus France) helps refugees access European higher education under Erasmus+.



METHODS AND TOOLS

FOR INCLUSION

To include refugees effectively, practitioners use a range of concrete methods, tools, and practices:

Outreach & Partnerships: Map the local youth ecosystem: identify refugee support organizations, community centres, religious groups, and local authorities who work with migrants. Build strong partnerships with these stakeholders, by inviting them into planning, co-designing activities, and leveraging their trust networks.

Use multiplier events and info sessions in refugee camps or shelters to raise awareness of Erasmus+/ESC and dispel myths. Employ intercultural media (in native languages, via WhatsApp groups or community radio) to spread the word. Consider family and community dynamics: sometimes elders or parents must be reassured about project goals before youths feel free to participate.

Language and Communication Support: Provide host-country language help from day one. This can be through formal courses, simple one-on-one tutoring by bilingual youth volunteers, or by using Online Linguistic Support (OLS) – an EU platform offering free language courses to refugees involved in Erasmus+ projects.

During project activities, use multilingual materials, visual aids, and translation apps to ensure everyone follows along. Train youth workers in basic intercultural communication and trauma-informed methods. Project coordinators should develop clear communication plans: the REBECO toolkit recommends setting objectives like “giving a voice to beneficiaries”, disseminating human rights information, and proactively addressing stereotypes. In practice, this means recruiting refugee youth as co-presenters, using their stories in awareness events, and translating leaflets.

Non-Formal Educational Methods: Non-formal learning is ideally suited for inclusion. Youth workers can organise arts and sports activities that lower language barriers and build trust. For instance, collaborative theatre or music projects allow refugee youth to express identity and heal trauma.

Projects like MigrArt collect arts-based good practices for refugee inclusion. Similarly, sports tournaments (supported by Erasmus+ Sport grants like the “Sport for Integration” call) bring locals and refugees together in healthy competition and cooperation. Other methods include peer learning (refugee and host-group youths teach each other skills), intercultural dialogue circles (safe spaces to share experiences), and project-based learning where refugees work on community service projects (clean-ups, mentoring younger kids, etc.). Digital and creative tools (video-making, social media campaigns) also engage tech-savvy youth and amplify refugee voices.



METHODS AND TOOLS

FOR INCLUSION

To include refugees effectively, practitioners use a range of concrete methods, tools, and practices:

Toolkits and Resources: Practitioners have at their disposal numerous ready-made toolkits developed by SALTO and NGOs.

For example, SALTO's "How to Talk about War" provides guidelines for facilitators to address conflict and crisis in mixed groups.

Another resource is the BEING YOUR HOST toolbox – it compiles sample non-formal activities (from language cafés to photovoice) specifically for integrating young refugees into host communities salto-youth.net. Embedding these tools, youth workers can structure sessions around refugees' realities.

For communication strategies, SALTO's Youth Life RE.BE.CO. toolkit (targeting both inclusion and NGO outreach) lists best-practice actions: raising volunteers, focusing on human stories, and building a "sense of community".

Youth organisations should also use Youthpass certificates to formally recognise refugees' learning, and digital platforms like EPALE or the European Youth Portal to exchange ideas and find partners.

Accessibility and Anti-Discrimination: Ensure projects have inclusive practices: make application forms available in multiple languages, allow for varying levels of prior experience, and consider mobility issues (transport costs, childcare). Provide childcare or stipends when needed so refugee parents can participate. Adopt anti-discrimination charters in group agreements and directly counter prejudice (for instance by including discussions on xenophobia in workshops).

Align with broader campaigns: support UNHCR's World Refugee Day or the Council of Europe's No Hate Speech initiatives, which promote acceptance of refugees. Finally, continually monitor and evaluate access: collect data on refugee participation rates and satisfaction, and adjust outreach accordingly.



BEST PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES

Key best practices distilled from successful projects include:

Co-Design with Refugees: Involve refugee youth from the outset – as ambassadors, trainers, or advisors – to ensure activities meet their needs. This might mean letting them share their migration story in a workshop, or co-creating a video about their culture. Projects like Spain’s “CHANGING MINDS” youth exchange did this by having refugee participants teach local peers Spanish and share daily life.

Cultural Mentoring / Buddy Systems: Pair refugee participants with empathetic peers or mentors from the host community who accompany them through the project. Such one-on-one support helps overcome isolation and misunderstandings. For instance, refugee-exchange projects often assign a local peer to assist newcomers with social and practical orientation.

Language Integration: Combine project tasks with language practice e.g. group discussions, joint presentations, or local excursions where refugees use the host language in authentic settings. Erasmus+ youth projects can dedicate time for language learning as a core activity.

Safe and Flexible Learning Environments: Create non-threatening spaces where refugees can participate without fear. Use simple, inclusive methods and allow for different ways to contribute (writing, drawing, speaking). Adapt schedules to administrative realities (e.g. asylum interviews).

Holistic Support: Recognise that refugees may need more than “just a project”. Offer or signpost support services – psychological counseling, legal advice, or social assistance – through partner NGOs or local agencies. Co-locate project sessions near such services when possible.

Visibility and Advocacy: Share success stories widely to change public attitudes. For example, winners of the annual “#BeInclusive” sport award (Erasmus+ Sport) often involve refugee teams and get media coverage. Youth organizations should document and disseminate impact (reports, social media, exhibitions).

Continuous Learning and Reflection: Train youth workers and educators in cultural competency and the realities of forced migration. Use feedback from refugee participants to improve methods. Participate in communities of practice (SALTO Inclusion forums, European Youth Information Day, etc.) to learn emerging approaches.



EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

FRANCE

DiverCity (Erasmus+, 2023–25)

Coordinated by the European Youth Parliament – France, DiverCity developed “citizenship education practices” for young refugees and trained youth workers and volunteers in four countries. Recognizing that refugee youth often feel excluded from civic life, the project began by inventoring the situation through exchanges with refugees, youth leaders and policymakers



Partners then co-created modules on human rights, voting rights, and media literacy tailored to refugees. Through international exchanges and teacher trainings, DiverCity equipped educators and youth leaders to better include refugees in democratic processes. This initiative exemplifies how NGOs (the EYP network) can use Erasmus+ to build capacity for inclusion in formal and non-formal education.

FIELD STUDY REPORT



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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

SPAIN

CHANGING MINDS Youth Exchange (Erasmus+ YE, 2023)

The Future in Our Hands Youth NGO (Bulgaria-based) organized a youth exchange in Ciudad Real, Spain, explicitly focused on integrating local refugees with at-risk Spanish youthfioh-ngo.com. 40 participants (including refugees from Syria/Ukraine and local youths in a violence-prevention program) lived together for 10 days.



The programme's activities were co-designed around refugees' needs: it included Spanish language classes led by peers, intercultural workshops, and joint community service. By encouraging refugees to share their daily experiences and local youths to empathize, the project reduced cultural and racial barriers, raised awareness about the refugee crisis, and fostered values of tolerance and freedom.. Follow-up surveys showed increased empathy among local participants and tangible language improvement for the refugees. The key methods were peer teaching, cultural exchange games, and public events where refugees' stories were highlighted.



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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

TURKEY

Social Inclusion of Refugees (Erasmus+ KA1, 2019)

Genç Girişim NGO ran a week-long training in Ankara for 32 youth workers from eight countries (gencgirisimngo.com). The programme used creative non-formal methods: living libraries (refugees as “books” sharing personal stories), photo-voice (refugee youths took photos representing home/hope), and a “public café” discussion. Participants learned about refugees’ cultures and challenges, which “filled them with information” and built empathy.



The inclusion goal was twofold: train the youth workers in working with refugees, and demonstrate Erasmus+ equity principles in action. Afterwards, many participants replicated similar workshops in their home countries, spreading the practice. Genç Girişim credits this project with significantly increasing tolerance and understanding in its network, and it is cited as a model of how NGO-led mobility can build intercultural competences.



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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

FRANCE, BELGIUM, PORTUGAL, AND TURKEY

Pan-European – MIGRANTECH (Erasmus+ KA2, 2022–24)

In this ongoing partnership of France, Belgium, Portugal, and Turkey, NGOs are co-creating a digital toolbox and e-learning modules for educators and youth workers. The focus is on labor-market integration of migrants/refugees: it covers digital literacy, job-search skills, and knowledge of EU rights



By mapping policies and good practices, MIGRANTECH aims to equip practitioners with innovative tools (like gamified language exercises and video case studies) that help refugees gain employment. Early piloting in Turkey involves refugee participants in co-designing the content, ensuring it addresses real needs. This project shows how educators and youth trainers across countries can collaborate under Erasmus+ to scale up successful inclusion methods, and underscores the role of cross-border learning in transferring best practices



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EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

ALL PROJECTS

Each of these examples demonstrates concrete application of the methods and principles outlined above, and highlights collaborative leadership by youth organizations.

In summary, youth workers bring refugees into programmes through outreach, non-formal pedagogy, and intercultural facilitation. NGOs act as enablers and innovators, designing projects, pooling resources, and advocating for inclusion. Educators integrate inclusion into curricula and guide refugees into learning pathways, often linking them to Erasmus+ opportunities. By employing multilingual resources, participatory activities, strong partnerships, and ongoing evaluation (as recommended in EU inclusion frameworks), these actors can ensure that refugees fully participate in and benefit from EU-funded youth programmes.

EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION MODELS FOR YOUNG REFUGEES IN EUROPE

Integrating young refugees (generally aged 13–30) into European societies is a multi-faceted challenge. Effective models must address educational, social, and professional integration in the same time. Recent research and field practices highlight several successful approaches across Europe, from national policies ensuring access to services, to community-led programs fostering inclusion on the ground. This overview presents validated models and examples that have demonstrated strong results in helping refugee youth build a new life.



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1. Educational Integration of Young Refugees

Ensuring access to quality education is a cornerstone of refugee integration. An effective model in education combine language support, inclusive school environments, and targeted academic interventions to help refugee children and youth succeed.

Guaranteed School Access and Preparatory Classes: All European countries must guarantee the right to schooling for refugee and asylum-seeking children from age 3 until 18.

Intensive Language Training: Mastering the host country's language is critical for academic success. Successful programs start language support early and intensively.

Teacher Training for Diverse Classrooms: Empowering teachers with skills to support traumatized or language-learning students has proven effective.

Inclusive and Innovative Pedagogy: Research highlights the success of inclusive educational practices that involve refugee students, their families, and local communities in the learning process.

Bridging to Higher Education: Older refugee youth often aspire to resume or begin college education.

Key Takeaways: Guaranteeing refugees' access to mainstream education from an early stage, supplemented by intensive language instruction and cultural orientation, is the foundation of success. Beyond access, quality matters: training teachers in inclusive methods and implementing innovative, participatory pedagogies help refugee youth thrive academically and socially. Finally, extending support to post-secondary levels (scholarships, bridging courses, mentorship) opens pathways for refugee youth to advance their qualifications and future careers.



2. Social Integration and Community Inclusion

Social integration refers to how well young refugees connect with and participate in their host society outside of formal education or work. Effective models focus on building social bridges (relationships with the wider community), strengthening social bonds (within refugee/migrant communities), and ensuring psychosocial well-being. Both national policies and grassroots initiatives play a role in fostering meaningful inclusion.

Host Society Interaction and Civic Participation: National integration strategies increasingly emphasize direct interaction between refugees and locals. This can translate into programs like volunteer “buddy” schemes and local civic projects. For instance, mentorship programs pairing refugee youths with native-born mentors for language practice and cultural orientation. Such efforts are backed by evidence: frequent interaction and shared community activities help break down prejudices and create mutual understanding. By strengthening “social bridges,” these initiatives combat isolation and encourage refugees’ participation in community life (from sports clubs to youth councils).

Community Sponsorship and Hosting Initiatives: community-led models have proven highly effective in integrating refugees socially. Community sponsorship – where local groups sponsor and support a refugee family or youth – has yielded positive outcomes in countries like the UK and Ireland. Through sponsorship, refugee youths gain an immediate local network and one-on-one support in daily integration (finding friends, navigating services, practicing the language).



2. Social Integration and Community Inclusion

Youth Clubs, Sports, and Cultural Activities: Social integration often happens best in informal settings where youth can bond over common interests. Across Europe, NGOs and local governments organize sports leagues, arts workshops, and youth clubs that intentionally mix refugee and local youth. Sports in particular have been a powerful integration tool – from football teams including refugees, to martial arts or dance classes that waive fees for asylum seekers. Overall, integration models that involve shared activities and youth leadership have proven effective in building genuine social connections.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Young refugees often carry trauma from conflict and displacement, which can hinder integration if unaddressed. Effective integration models integrate psychosocial support to build resilience and well-being. For instance, creating “safe spaces” (e.g. after-school clubs or counseling centers where refugee youth feel secure and heard), providing psychoeducation (teaching youth and families about coping strategies and how to navigate new social systems), and encouraging creative expression (through art, music, storytelling) can be very effective.

For instance, in Sweden and Italy, some schools have “welcome classes” that double as safe spaces – newcomers spend part of the day in a smaller group with a counselor or cultural mediator doing integration activities and trauma-informed exercises, before joining the larger class. Evaluations show that youth in such programs report higher feelings of belonging and lower anxiety.



2. Social Integration and Community Inclusion

Key Takeaways: Effective social integration requires intentional facilitation of contact and understanding between refugee youth and the host community. Mentorship and sponsorship emerge as particularly powerful: by giving each refugee youth a personal connection to a local individual or group, these models provide social capital (networks, friendships) that formal services alone cannot offer. Moreover, social integration efforts must address the emotional needs of refugee youth by creating environments where they feel safe, valued, and confident to participate. Programs that couple integration activities with psychosocial support (counseling, safe spaces, creative outlets) have shown improved outcomes in confidence and community belonging. In summary, successful social integration models treat young refugees not as passive recipients of aid but as active members of the community – supporting them to heal from trauma, express their identity, and contribute their talents to society.



3. Professional and Economic Integration

Achieving self-reliance through employment or entrepreneurship is often the ultimate goal of integration efforts for young adult refugees. Effective models in this domain provide a pathway to jobs by combining language training, skills development, credential recognition, and direct links to employers. Recent successful practices range from national labor market programs to NGO mentorship initiatives.

3. Professional and Economic Integration

Fast-Track Vocational Training Programs

Employment Mentoring and Networking: Young refugees often lack the professional networks that help in job searches.

Entrepreneurship and Apprenticeships: Many young refugees are eager to start businesses or enter skilled trades. Effective integration models create pathways for these ambitions.

The key is **providing bridges – bridging courses** to quickly learn technical terms, bridging support like subsidized wages or trainers who speak the refugee's language, and recognition of prior skills. By integrating refugees into mainstream training pathways (rather than keeping them in parallel programs), these models ensure credentials are recognized and valued by employers.

Credential Recognition and Skill Assessment: A common barrier for young refugees entering skilled employment is proving their qualifications or experience from abroad. Effective integration frameworks address this through streamlined credential recognition and skill assessment services.

Key Takeaways: The most successful employment integration models for young refugees are comprehensive and collaborative. They often bundle multiple supports – language, training, work experience, and social support (like housing or mentoring) – into a coherent pathway toward a job. Involving employers from the outset (through apprenticeships, internships or mentorship by industry professionals) is critical for success, as it builds networks and trust that lead to hiring. Additionally, mentorship and networking initiatives demonstrate that improving “soft” integration (confidence, local contacts) can significantly boost “hard” outcomes like getting a stable job. Finally, integration does not end at getting a first job – effective models ensure refugees can advance: recognizing qualifications, providing ongoing language or vocational classes at work, and encouraging entrepreneurship all help young refugees move from precarious jobs into sustainable careers.



In conclusion, The integration of young refugees in Europe requires a holistic approach. The models highlighted above – from inclusive education and psychosocial support in schools, to community mentorship for social inclusion, to targeted vocational pathways – all demonstrate that when given the right support, refugee youth thrive in their new communities. Moreover, successful integration is a two-way street: many of these initiatives involve not only adapting refugees to host societies, but also positively transforming host communities (schools, employers, neighbors) to be more open, understanding, and engaged.



Early and Intensive Support – Intervene early with language and education support to set refugee youth on a positive trajectory globalcompactrefugees.org ismu.org. Don't let bureaucratic delays keep young people idle; get them in school or training as soon as possible.

Individualized Pathways – There is no one-size-fits-all. Effective models assess each young person's age, prior education, skills, and aspirations, then tailor a pathway (be it academic tutoring, a vocational track, or trauma counseling) to fit their needs. Case management and one-on-one mentorship greatly enhance this personalization.

Whole-of-Society Engagement – Integration works best when multiple stakeholders collaborate. Schools, local authorities, employers, NGOs, and volunteers each have roles: e.g., municipalities facilitating language classes and housing, companies offering apprenticeships, and community members volunteering as mentors or hosts fmreview.org ismu.org. Multi-stakeholder partnerships (often with government funding and NGO implementation) underpin many successful initiatives.

Strengthen Social Connections – Programs must deliberately create opportunities for refugees and locals to mix as peers. Whether through team sports, school projects, or workplace mentoring, these interactions build the social capital that young refugees critically need to integrate globalcompactrefugees.org. They also help host communities appreciate the strengths and contributions of refugee youth, fostering social cohesion.

Evidence-Based Adaptation – The models presented are validated by research and practice. Continuing to evaluate outcomes (school performance, employment rates, well-being indicators) is vital.

For instance, Turkey adjusted its education programs after impact analysis of early childhood interventions, and France increased language training hours upon finding previous limits insufficient ismu.org. A culture of monitoring and sharing “what works” will ensure integration programs remain effective and responsive to new refugee cohorts.

Even though the challenges are considerable, from language barriers to trauma to discrimination, the experiences across Europe prove that young refugees can integrate successfully if they are given comprehensive support. Educational inclusion gives them knowledge and confidence; social inclusion makes them feel at home and valued; professional inclusion grants them independence and purpose. By building on the best practices outlined here, they can provide a strong foundation for policies and programs that enable young refugees not just to survive, but to truly belong and thrive in Europe.



INTEGRATING YOUNG REFUGEES:

INCLUSIVE & SAFE POLICY GUIDE

A successful integration strategy rests on clear principles, strong EU frameworks, flexible national implementation, and targeted sectoral measures.

Key Principles of Inclusive Policymaking

Mutual, multi-dimensional integration: Policies must enable young refugees' participation in all dimensions of society (education, employment, culture, civic life) and respect their own identity.

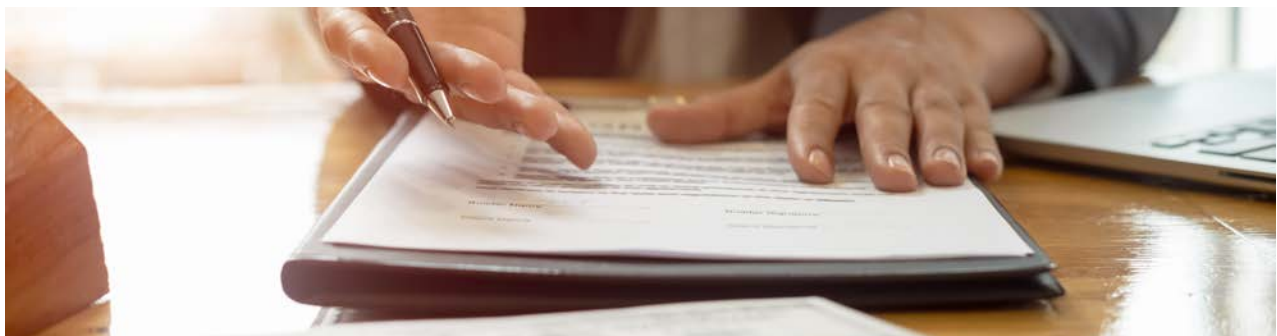
Equality and non-discrimination: All integration efforts must guarantee equal rights and freedom from discrimination. This includes enforcing anti-xenophobia laws and promoting gender and intersectional equality.

Refugee-centred and rights-based: Policies must treat each young refugee as an individual with rights and potential. Refugees bring skills and experience that enrich society, so integration programs should build on these assets. Crucially, policies must address refugees' fundamental needs: safety, dignity, family unity and belonging.

Participation and voice: Young refugees should have a say in the policies that affect them. Involvement of refugee-led groups and youth representatives ensures programs meet real needs. Integration plans should encourage refugee leadership and support community-based initiatives.

Whole-of-society approach: Integration is a shared responsibility. Good practice is to involve all levels of government and civil society (employers, schools, NGOs, local authorities and volunteers) in planning and delivering services. Education, health and employment systems must adapt, not only migrants.

Evidence-based, flexible, and sustainable: Policies should be based on data and good research and designed to adjust as situations change. Long-term support (beyond emergency aid) and sustained financing (e.g. via EU funds) make integration durable.



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Flexible Implementation in Member States (and Turkey)

Integration policy is primarily a national/regional responsibility, but EU frameworks provide guidance and support. Flexibility is essential, since contexts differ widely (e.g. existing welfare systems, labour markets, legal traditions). Effective mechanisms include:

Multilevel governance: National strategies should engage regional and local governments. Local authorities are often best placed to identify needs.

Local integration councils: Many countries set up advisory bodies that bring migrants into planning

Funding and capacity-building: Flexibility also means diversifying funding channels. Member States should leverage the EU's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and Structural Funds (ESF+, ERDF) to co-fund local projects (language training, job counseling, community centers)

Adaptation to special contexts: Associated countries like Turkey are not EU members, but EU policy still influences them. Turkey's Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) offers Syrians legal status and many rights (work permit after 6 months, education and health access, described below). The EU supports Turkey with infrastructure projects and technical advice. In applying EU guidelines in Turkey, flexibility meant aligning EU funding to Turkish laws



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Sectoral Recommendations

Education

Guarantee access for all ages: All refugee children (0–18) must have unobstructed access to the public education system. At school age, children should be enrolled promptly (ideally within weeks) in mainstream classes with any needed support, not held indefinitely in isolated reception centers. Young adults (18–25) should have pathways to vocational training or higher education.

Language and preparatory courses: Intensive language classes are essential. Many countries offer “welcome classes” or classes d’accueil in France and Spain, to bring newcomers up to speed.

Recognition of prior learning: Refugee diplomas and skills should be quickly evaluated and recognised. Fast-track assessment centers and certification programs (e.g. language diplomas, vocational qualifications) remove barriers.

Inclusive school environments: Train teachers in trauma awareness and intercultural methods. Provide psychosocial support (counselors, social workers) in schools. Peer mentoring and extracurricular activities (sports, arts) help social integration.

Employment

Right to work and fair access: Grant young refugees legal permission to work as soon as feasible. Remove bureaucratic hurdles for work permits.

Skills assessment and training: Quickly assess vocational skills and qualifications. Provide targeted job training (trade school, apprenticeships) aligned with labor market needs.

Recognition and entrepreneurship: Facilitate foreign diploma recognition. For those whose credentials don’t transfer, provide alternatives: modular courses, on-the-job skill certification, micro-credentials. Support refugee entrepreneurship via microloans and business incubators.



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A successful integration strategy rests on clear principles, strong EU frameworks, flexible national implementation, and targeted sectoral measures.

Sectoral Recommendations

Civic Participation

Inclusive institutions: Promote refugees' engagement in community life. Where possible, include migrants in youth councils, advisory committees or integration councils.

Awareness and empowerment: Provide accessible information on rights and civic duties. Workshops on civic education (local governance, anti-discrimination) help young refugees feel included.

Partnerships with civil society: Fund local youth and refugee organizations that foster interaction.

Housing

Access to decent, affordable housing: Prevent homelessness by giving young refugees priority access to social housing or housing allowances.

Avoid segregation: Encourage dispersed housing. This "mixed housing" model promotes contact with locals and language practice.

Legal and social support: Provide refugees with information about renters' rights and anti-eviction assistance.

Healthcare

Equal access to health services: Enroll young refugees into national health systems quickly. Provide health cards/insurance so they can see doctors, get prescriptions, and use preventive services. Interpret services must be available to overcome language barriers.

Youth-specific care: Offer mental health screening and counselling (many young refugees have trauma or stress). Train psychologists in intercultural issues.

Integration of health and integration teams: Embed health liaisons in reception centers and schools. Coordinate with education and social services to identify youth at risk.



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Sectoral Recommendations

Legal Protection

Right to protection: Ensure all refugee youth have access to a fair asylum procedure, legal aid, and information in their language. Unaccompanied minors must be referred to child protection (guardianship) immediately on arrival. States should avoid detaining minors (in or out of family units).

Guardianship and legal support: Each unaccompanied child should have a trained guardian or state-appointed caregiver.

Fight exploitation and discrimination: Enforce labor laws to prevent child labor. Strengthen anti-trafficking measures (with special attention to refugee minors).

Family reunification: Facilitate refugee family reunification as permitted by EU law (e.g. EU Family Reunification Directive). Prioritize bringing together immediate family members, which greatly aids integration



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TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES

FOR EVALUATING REFUGEE INTEGRATION PROGRAMS

Evaluating refugee integration requires a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative metrics and qualitative insights. Quantitative indicators (e.g. employment rate, education level, language proficiency) can be tracked through surveys and administrative data, while qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, storytelling, arts-based methods) capture personal experiences and social changes.

In practice, programs often define a Theory of Change or logical model up front – mapping inputs→activities→outputs→outcomes – and then select specific indicators for each. This clarifies how project actions are expected to lead to integration outcomes and guides what to measure.

Quantitatively, common indicators include work and education outcomes (e.g. percentage in stable jobs, school enrollment rates, exam pass rates) and service access metrics (e.g. number in language or skills trainings). Simple pre/post surveys or knowledge tests can quantify gains in skills or confidence. Refugee integration indexes compile such metrics across domains (education, work, housing, health, social contacts). Regular monitoring surveys (even short “pulse” or micro-surveys) can track these metrics over time.

Qualitative and participatory methods are equally important. These include focus groups, in-depth interviews, observation and creative tools. For instance, evaluators often conduct focus groups with refugee youth to explore their sense of belonging, social contacts, or mental health impacts – topics hard to capture in numbers.

Good practices in refugee program evaluation include:

Participatory M&E: Involve refugees and local stakeholders in defining success, collecting data and interpreting results

Iterative monitoring: Rather than a single endline survey, collect data at multiple points. Use tools like micro-surveys or digital feedback platforms to monitor changes and catch issues.

Cultural sensitivity: Use translators, match interviewer and participant backgrounds when possible, and pilot test questionnaires. Ensure ethical practices

Use of mixed indicators: Combine objective metrics (e.g. % completing vocational training) with subjective ones (e.g. self-reported sense of belonging, measured via validated questionnaires)



POLICY PROPOSALS

ACTION PLAN CREATED DURING THE SEMINAR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

1. Housing and Employment Support

Housing is the foundation for successful integration. Without stable accommodation, access to education, healthcare, and employment becomes almost impossible. During the seminar, participants highlighted the dual challenge refugees face: navigating a complex bureaucratic system and encountering mistrust or reluctance from landlords and employers. This action plan addresses these issues through institutional support, partnerships, and policy guarantees.

Proposed Actions:

Creation of a Dedicated NGO: Establish an independent, non-governmental body specializing in refugee housing and employment support. The NGO would operate as a “one-stop shop” where refugees can receive guidance on how to rent an apartment, sign an employment contract, and register with local authorities. It would provide multilingual staff and legal advisors to ensure refugees understand their rights and responsibilities.

Bureaucratic Navigation Assistance: Develop mentorship programs pairing refugees with trained volunteers who accompany them to housing visits, municipal offices, and job interviews. These “integration navigators” would simplify administrative processes and build confidence.

Trade Union Involvement: Forge formal partnerships with trade unions, ensuring refugees are educated about workers’ rights, minimum wage standards, and collective bargaining processes. Trade unions could also act as mediators in cases of workplace discrimination.

Government Guarantee Scheme: Advocate for policies where national or local governments guarantee rent and utility payments for refugees during their first year. This reduces the perceived financial risk for landlords and fosters greater access to housing markets. Integration into Employment: Expand vocational training programs linked directly with housing support e.g., landlords offering reduced rents in exchange for tenants contributing to community work or skills-based volunteering.

Expected Impact:

Increased refugee access to safe and affordable housing.

Reduced exploitation in the housing and labor market.

Greater landlord trust due to state-backed guarantees.

Stronger economic participation by refugees, accelerating self-sufficiency.



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POLICY PROPOSALS

ACTION PLAN CREATED DURING THE SEMINAR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

2.Civic Participation

Active civic engagement is essential for building inclusive societies. Refugees are often portrayed as recipients of aid rather than as community actors. The Spanish seminar participants emphasized that creating channels for refugee voices and participation fosters empowerment, belonging, and mutual understanding.

Proposed Actions:

Inclusive Institutions: Establish refugee youth councils, municipal refugee integration boards, and worker-led associations. These bodies would provide structured platforms for refugees to share perspectives, influence policy, and engage directly with local decision-making.

Awareness Campaigns: Launch national and municipal public awareness initiatives (billboards, radio campaigns, social media content) to challenge stereotypes and promote stories of successful refugee integration. These campaigns should highlight refugees' contributions in culture, entrepreneurship, and community development.

Community Events: Municipalities, in collaboration with NGOs, should organize cultural exchanges, language cafés, sports tournaments, and arts festivals where refugees and locals interact as equals.

Family Hosting Schemes: Encourage local families to “adopt” refugee families or individuals for cultural exchange dinners, holiday hosting, or mentorship. This builds trust and dismantles barriers between communities.

Promotion of Erasmus+ and Volunteering: Municipalities should provide tailored information sessions for refugees about Erasmus+ opportunities, volunteering programs, and European youth networks, ensuring they have equal access to mobility and leadership development.

Expected Impact:

Greater inclusion of refugee perspectives in local and national policy.

Stronger social cohesion through interpersonal relationships between refugees and host communities.

Empowered refugee youth who see themselves as agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

Long-term reduction of xenophobia through awareness and contact.



POLICY PROPOSALS

ACTION PLAN CREATED DURING THE SEMINAR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

3. Legal Protection and Aid

Refugees often arrive with limited knowledge of their rights, facing legal systems that are complicated even for native citizens. The brainstorming session emphasized the need for strong institutional frameworks combined with accessible, practical tools for legal protection.

Proposed Actions:

Ministries of Inclusion: Advocate for the creation of specialized Ministries of Inclusion in every EU member state to centralize refugee rights enforcement, provide oversight, and guarantee consistent policy standards across regions.

Guardianship for Minors: Implement mandatory assignment of trained guardians to every unaccompanied minor upon arrival. Guardians would ensure children's immediate legal, psychological, and educational needs are addressed.

Legal Aid Clinics at Entry Points: Establish free clinics at key refugee entry hubs (ports, airports, train stations, reception centers), staffed by pro bono lawyers and law students under supervision. Services would include asylum procedure guidance, document preparation, and appeals support.

Family Reunification Task Forces: Form joint EU task forces composed of immigration officers, lawyers, and NGOs to expedite family reunification cases. These teams would prioritize children and vulnerable family members, reducing the current long delays.

Translation of Legal Frameworks: Produce multilingual guides (print and digital) explaining asylum rights, employment law, housing rights, and access to education. These should be available in the top 10–15 refugee languages and distributed in reception centers.

Expected Impact:

Refugees equipped with clear, accessible knowledge of their rights.

Faster family reunifications, reducing trauma and vulnerability.

Stronger protection for unaccompanied minors, reducing risks of trafficking or exploitation.

Improved trust in legal systems and state institutions among refugee communities.



POLICY PROPOSALS

ACTION PLAN CREATED DURING THE SEMINAR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS

4. Healthcare

Health is a critical aspect of integration, yet refugees often face barriers in access, from language and cultural misunderstandings to lack of insurance. A holistic health strategy must address both physical and psychological wellbeing while reducing systemic barriers.

Proposed Actions:

Universal Healthcare Access: Guarantee that all refugees, regardless of legal status, can register with local healthcare systems immediately upon arrival. Refugees should be entitled to free or subsidized care at the primary level, including preventive care and vaccinations.

Mental Health Services: Create specialized trauma care centers with psychologists trained in conflict-related trauma, PTSD, and intercultural therapy. Schools should also provide counseling services for refugee children.

Cultural Mediators and Interpreters: Employ healthcare cultural mediators to assist during medical consultations, bridging communication and cultural gaps between doctors and patients.

Mobile Health Units: Deploy mobile clinics in refugee camps, rural areas, and border entry points, offering services like maternal care, pediatric care, vaccinations, and psychological first aid.

Health Education Workshops: Offer workshops for refugees covering topics such as navigating healthcare systems, sexual and reproductive health, mental wellbeing, and preventive care.

Expected Impact:

Increased refugee access to healthcare, reducing inequalities.
Improved mental health and resilience through trauma support.
Better trust between refugee communities and health providers.
Stronger long-term public health outcomes, benefiting both refugees and host communities.



POLICY PROPOSALS

ACTION PLAN CREATED DURING THE SEMINAR A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS



5. Education

Education is both a human right and a pathway to empowerment. Refugees often encounter barriers such as language, lack of recognition of prior learning, and trauma-related challenges. Participants in Spain highlighted these obstacles and stressed the need for inclusive, flexible systems.

Proposed Actions:

Language Integration Programs: Develop intensive language courses with both academic and practical tracks (e.g., workplace-focused language training). Incorporate language learning into community settings, such as local clubs or volunteer projects, for faster immersion.

School Counseling Services: Deploy specialized counselors in schools to support refugee children facing trauma, loss, and adjustment difficulties. Teachers should also be trained to recognize trauma symptoms and provide inclusive classrooms.

Recognition of Diplomas: Simplify diploma recognition through EU-wide agreements that standardize procedures. Create digital platforms where refugees can upload diplomas and skills certificates for fast-tracked evaluation.

Bridging and Catch-Up Courses: Introduce tailored bridging programs to help refugee children and youth integrate into local curricula, covering missing subjects, digital skills, and civic education.

Higher Education Access: Provide scholarships and mentoring programs for refugee youth seeking to enter universities or vocational training, ensuring financial barriers are reduced.

Expected Impact:

Refugees gain language and academic skills necessary for participation.
Recognition of prior learning speeds up integration into labor markets.
Schools become inclusive spaces that support resilience and growth.
Long-term socioeconomic contributions by educated refugee youth.



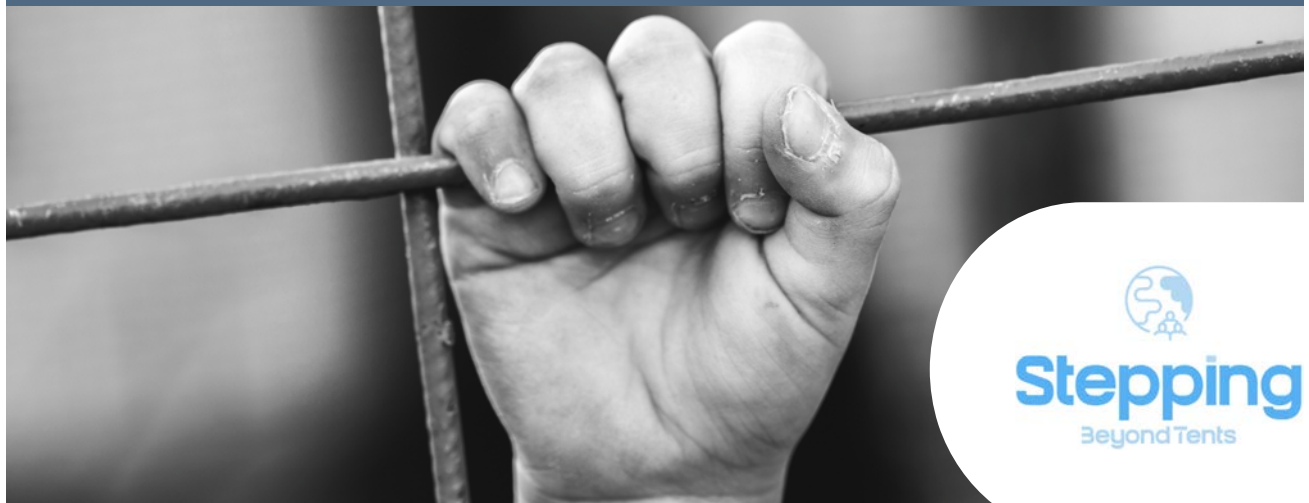
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CONCLUSION

The creation of this guideline marks a step forward in building a Europe that is both inclusive and resilient. It responds to the urgent need to move beyond fragmented or short-term approaches to refugee support and instead establish a framework that can inspire sustainable European and national policies. By focusing on five main pillars, this document offers not only practical tools for organizations on the ground but also strategic direction for policymakers who shape the future of humanitarian action and integration in Europe.

The evidence collected across the three partner countries, together with the voices of practitioners, educators, and young refugees themselves, demonstrates that integration is most successful when it is holistic: when education, social support, mental health, community engagement, and empowerment are addressed together. This multi-dimensional approach ensures that young refugees are not perceived as passive recipients of aid, but as active contributors to their host societies. Policies and practices that recognize this potential are key to strengthening social cohesion and preventing exclusion, marginalization, or radicalization.



This guideline therefore has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it is a working tool for NGOs, schools, youth organizations, and municipalities providing them with concrete, adaptable strategies to improve their daily work with young refugees. On the other hand, it is a policy-oriented reference that can serve as a foundation for the development of new European frameworks in humanitarian aid, migration, and youth inclusion. Its recommendations align with broader EU priorities: ensuring social inclusion, protecting human rights, and promoting equality and non-discrimination.

We also emphasize that integration is not the sole responsibility of host institutions or aid providers. It must be anchored in collective responsibility, where local communities, civil society, and political actors all play their part. For this reason, the guideline calls for cross-sectoral cooperation, greater investment in training for youth workers and educators, and systematic channels for refugee participation in decision-making processes. By embedding these measures into policy and practice, Europe can move toward a model of integration that is sustainable, just, and inclusive.



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CONCLUSION

The challenges ahead are undeniable. Conflicts and crises will continue to displace millions, and Europe will remain a place of refuge. But these challenges must be seen as opportunities to strengthen solidarity and to reaffirm the values of dignity, equality, and human rights that lie at the heart of the European project.



This guideline is not an end point but a beginning. It is an invitation to policymakers, institutions, and organizations to adopt its principles, test its recommendations, and scale up its strategies. Only through such collaborative and forward-looking action can we ensure that humanitarian aid in Europe moves beyond emergency responses and truly becomes a long-term investment in people, communities, and a common future.

This guideline was never meant to be just another policy paper. It is the voice of young refugees, educators, youth workers, and communities across Europe who believe that integration is not only possible but necessary for a shared future.

All united for refugees means all united for Europe.



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