



This study aims to analyze and enhance refugee integration strategies through an evidence-based approach. The research includes a comprehensive literature review on refugee issues, focusing on integration, mental health, legal status, and employment challenges. Emphasis is placed on the Syrian crisis (2015) and the Ukrainian crisis (2022) and their impact on

Stepping Beyond Tents



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Introduction

The aim of this research is to analyse refugee issues such as integration, mental health, legal status, and settlement issues. This paper will be structured in the following chapters - literature review, divided into the refugee situation in France, Turkey and Spain, the refugee crisis in Syria and the refugee crisis in Ukraine. Subsequently, the answers to a questionnaire on the challenges faced in the integration of refugees will be analysed from 50 people working with refugees, such as social workers, humanitarians, lawyers, medical professionals. In order to obtain the most authentic possible outcome of the participants' experience, the responses of at least 40 refugees will be analysed.

Following these steps, a short guide will be drafted in order to determine the easiest and most efficient integration process for refugees. To this end, guidelines developed by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, will also be cited. Finally, the study will present conclusions and propose directions for future research in this field.



(FPG/Getty)

A large group of refugees fleeing Paris in anticipation of the German invasion, 1940

The integration of refugees into host societies is a pressing global issue that requires comprehensive research and innovative solutions. As migration continues to shape social, economic, and political landscapes, understanding the challenges faced by refugees and the mechanisms that facilitate their successful integration is crucial. The insights gained from this research will contribute to the development of policies and strategies that ensure a more inclusive, sustainable, and effective approach to refugee integration. By identifying key obstacles and potential solutions, this study will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and stakeholders invested in supporting refugees.

Beyond the literature review, the study includes direct engagement with stakeholders through surveys and focus groups. This involves gathering perspectives from professionals working with refugees—such as humanitarian workers, social workers, and legal experts—as well as from the refugees themselves. The findings will contribute to a broader understanding of refugee experiences and inform the development of more effective integration policies within the European context.

Ultimately, this research aims to create guidelines for harmonizing refugee integration policies and humanitarian aid strategies within the EU. By leveraging data from literature reviews, surveys, and focus groups, this initiative seeks to provide valuable insights that can shape inclusive and sustainable refugee policies, ensuring better support for displaced populations and host communities.

integration is crucial. This research project, *Stepping Beyond Tents*, aims to analyze the effectiveness of existing integration models and identify best practices that can be applied within the European Union, as well as by professionals working with refugees and researchers in the field.

The Purpose of This Research

To ensure a comprehensive review, the study will focus on identifying key themes and topics related to refugee issues, including:

Mental Health: Forced displacement exposes refugees to a range of psychological stressors, including violence, persecution, loss of family and community networks, and prolonged uncertainty. These experiences contribute to high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and other mental health conditions. This section examines the prevalence of such disorders, the factors that exacerbate psychological distress, and the accessibility of mental health services in host countries. Additionally, it evaluates the effectiveness of existing mental health interventions, the role of cultural and linguistic barriers in service provision, and the importance of trauma-informed care in addressing the psychological well-being of displaced populations.

Legal Status: The legal recognition and protection of refugees are governed by international treaties, national asylum policies, and regional legal instruments. This section critically assesses the implementation of key legal frameworks, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as regional agreements like the Common European Asylum System. It also explores the

challenges associated with asylum application processes, including prolonged adjudication periods, detention practices, and inconsistencies in refugee status determination. Furthermore, the analysis considers the implications of restrictive immigration policies, border controls, and the securitization of asylum for refugee rights and access to protection.

Employment Challenges: Economic self-sufficiency is a critical factor in refugee integration; however, numerous obstacles hinder labor market participation. This section explores the structural and institutional barriers that refugees face, including legal work restrictions, non-recognition of foreign credentials, language proficiency requirements, and discrimination in hiring practices. Additionally, it examines labor market segmentation, the prevalence of underemployment, and the economic consequences of informal work. Policies and programs aimed at facilitating workforce integration—such as skills accreditation initiatives, vocational training, and employer engagement strategies—are also analyzed to determine their effectiveness in promoting long-term economic stability for refugees.

Integration: The process of refugee integration is multidimensional, encompassing social, economic, cultural, and political aspects. This section evaluates the policies and programs designed to promote the inclusion of refugees in host societies, focusing on housing, education, healthcare, and civic participation. It explores the role of language acquisition, social networks, and community engagement in fostering social cohesion while addressing challenges such as

xenophobia, discrimination, and social exclusion. Additionally, the analysis considers best practices in integration strategies across different national contexts, highlighting the role of both government initiatives and civil society organizations in creating inclusive environments for displaced populations.



(ekvidi/Flickr)

The research will establish specific time frames, geographic focus, and populations of interest to narrow down the literature search—focusing on the Syrian and Ukrainian crises of 2015 and 2022 and their implications for Europe. The research process includes defining the scope, sourcing relevant literature from academic databases and reputable organizations, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and critically analyzing and synthesizing findings. The decision to concentrate on the Syrian and Ukrainian crises of 2015 and 2022, respectively, is based on the following reasons:

1. Historical and Social Impact: These crises have significantly impacted the social, economic, and political dynamics of Europe, offering rich case studies for understanding refugee integration challenges.

2. Targeted Insights: By narrowing the scope to these specific events, the research can generate more focused and practical recommendations that address the unique needs of displaced populations and host communities.

3. Data Availability: A broad range of literature and empirical data are obtainable from academic databases and reputable organizations, allowing for thorough analysis and synthesis.

4. Policy Implications: The findings will directly inform European Union policies and humanitarian strategies, contributing to more inclusive and sustainable refugee integration practices.



France – The Integration of Migrants and Refugees: Challenges and Opportunities



According to official statistics released in October 2022, as of 2021, there were seven million immigrants living in France, encompassing 10.3% of the country's total population. Of these, 2.5 million immigrants (36.0%) had already obtained French nationality since arriving in the country. Therefore, as of 2021, the foreign population in France amounted to 5.2 million people (7.7% of the population): 4.5 million are migrants who have not acquired French nationality, and 0.8 million people were born in France of foreign nationality. Most immigrants living in France that year came from either Africa (47.5%) or Europe (33.1%). Their main countries of origin were Algeria (12.7%), Morocco (12%), Portugal (8.6%), Tunisia (4.5%), Italy (4.1%), Turkey (3.6%), and Spain (3.5%).

Migrants in France primarily work in low-skilled, physically demanding jobs in the industry, catering, and construction sectors, despite government efforts to attract foreign high-skilled profiles such as cultural and scientific professionals. As of 2021, many immigrants were employed as domestic workers (38.8% of migrants), security guards (28.4%), unskilled laborers and skilled laborers (27% and 24.8% of migrants, respectively), and hotel employees (22%). Foreigners were also more affected by unemployment than the native-born French (15.3% compared to 8.3% of nationals); they were more likely to be self-employed and also at a higher risk of facing job precariousness. (Integral Human Development)

Migration plays a significant role in France's demographic and economic structure but also presents social and economic challenges. Therefore, the following conclusions are drawn from the data cited above:

1. Partial integration of immigrants – While 36% of immigrants have obtained French citizenship, a large proportion still lives as foreigners, which may affect social cohesion and civic participation.
2. Concentration in low-skilled sectors – Immigrants are overrepresented in physically demanding jobs with high economic instability, suggesting barriers to education or recognition of their qualifications.
3. High unemployment and economic insecurity – The unemployment rate among immigrants is nearly double that of the native-born population, indicating difficulties in accessing stable jobs.
4. Dominance of African and European migration – The largest immigrant communities come from Algeria, Morocco, and Portugal, which may influence integration policies tailored to these groups.



(Laudet/TNH 29)

After analyzing the problems described by the cited data, some possible solutions have been elaborated as follows:

1. Reskilling programs and diploma recognition – Implementing more efficient mechanisms to integrate immigrants into high-demand skilled professions.
2. Reducing job precarity – Introducing stronger regulations to better protect foreign workers and prevent exploitation.
3. Encouraging immigrant entrepreneurship – Providing financial and educational support for those seeking to start businesses, which could reduce unemployment.
4. Social inclusion policies – Expanding access to education, housing, and French language courses to accelerate integration.
5. Attracting skilled labor – Improving recruitment strategies for professionals in fields such as technology and research to balance the migration profile.

By implementing well-targeted measures, France can transform migration challenges into opportunities for economic and social development.

Ukrainian refugees in France

When it comes to taking in refugees from Ukraine, France is lagging far behind the rest of the European Union. An estimated 4.3 million Ukrainian refugees have made the bloc their temporary home since Russia's full-scale invasion. (Politico)

France has taken in significantly fewer Ukrainian refugees compared to other European countries, despite the EU hosting approximately 4.3 million displaced Ukrainians since Russia's full-scale invasion. This lower intake can be attributed to factors such as geographic distance and language barriers, which make France a less immediate or convenient destination. Neighboring countries like Poland, Germany, and Slovakia have received the bulk of refugees due to their proximity and stronger historical ties with Ukraine. Additionally, many Ukrainians may prefer countries where English or Slavic languages are more widely spoken, further limiting France's appeal as a host nation.

Therefore, perhaps because of criteria related to geographic distance and language, France is not a first choice for Ukrainian refugees.



Save Ukraine. Photo: Facebook / Accueil des réfugiés ukrainiens / прийом українських біженців (FRANCE)

The Presence and Integration of Syrian Refugees in France

In France, there are approximately 45,600 Syrian refugees, which represent 0.07 percent of its total population. Following the collapse of President Bashar al-Assad's regime, many Syrian exiles in France are contemplating a return to their homeland. However, under French asylum laws, refugees risk losing their status if they voluntarily travel back to their country of origin, as their protection is based on the premise that they face danger there. While the Syrian regime no longer poses a direct threat to dissidents, France's Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra) has not yet designated Syria as a "safe country" and is temporarily suspending certain asylum decisions. Legal experts warn that any return to Syria could lead to the revocation of refugee status, as it suggests the individual no longer has a well-founded fear of persecution.. (Boitiaux 2024)

With approximately 45,600 Syrian refugees, representing just 0.07% of France's total population, the country hosts a relatively small number of Syrians compared to other European nations. This is particularly notable given France's historical role as a destination for immigrants and its political influence in the Middle East.



Refugees were pushed back to squalid campsite known as the jungle near mouth of Channel tunnel, Hajer M'tiri |21.09.2015

Factors Influencing the Number of Syrian Refugees in France

Unlike Germany, which has taken in over a million Syrian refugees, France has not been a primary destination for Syrians fleeing the war. This can be attributed to several reasons:

Asylum Policies and Bureaucratic Challenges – France has a reputation for a complex and often slow asylum process. While the country offers international protection, navigating the administrative system can be difficult for refugees. Additionally, family reunification policies are stricter compared to countries like Germany, which has encouraged many Syrians to settle elsewhere.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers – Unlike Germany or Sweden, where strong Syrian communities have formed, France does not have as large a pre-existing Syrian diaspora. Language can also be a major barrier, as many Syrians speak English or German but may not have prior exposure to French, making integration into the job market more difficult.

Economic Considerations – France's labor market presents additional challenges for refugee integration. High unemployment rates, particularly in marginalized communities, make it harder for refugees to find stable employment. While France offers various support programs, accessing long-term job opportunities remains a struggle for many newcomers.

Integration Challenges and Opportunities

Despite these barriers, Syrian refugees in France have shown resilience and an eagerness to integrate into society. However, integration remains a complex process influenced by social, economic, and political factors.

Education and Training – Many refugees, particularly younger generations, enroll in language courses and vocational training programs. However, access to higher education and skill recognition remains a challenge for those with professional qualifications obtained in Syria.

Employment – Refugees often face difficulty securing stable jobs, with many working in informal sectors or low-paid positions. However, industries such as construction, hospitality, and services have provided employment opportunities for some Syrians. The government has launched initiatives to support refugee employment, but gaps in skills recognition and bureaucratic delays persist.

Social Integration – Syrian refugees in France have faced mixed experiences in terms of social acceptance. While many have successfully integrated into local communities, some face discrimination or social isolation. Programs promoting intercultural dialogue and local engagement have been beneficial in fostering inclusion.

Conclusion

The relatively small number of Syrian refugees in France reflects both policy choices and broader integration challenges. While France provides international protection, administrative barriers, linguistic hurdles, and economic constraints have made integration difficult for many. Nevertheless, with targeted policies to improve education access, job placement, and community engagement, France has the potential to better support its refugee population and enhance their long-term contribution to society.



(AFP 2017)

Spain - The Integration of Migrants and Refugees: Challenges and Opportunities



*At the end of 2023, Spain had registered around **163,200** new asylum applications. As in previous years, the top nationalities were asylum-seekers from Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Honduras and Cuba, although it also registered applications from Moroccan and Senegalese persons. Additionally over **194,900** temporary protection requests were lodged before the Spanish authorities since 2022 from people fleeing the war in Ukraine.*

In 2023, approximately 57,500 migrants arrived in Spain via the Western Mediterranean and North/West Africa Atlantic routes, with 70% reaching the Canary Islands. Tragically, over 1,400 lives were lost during these crossings. The UNHCR, active in Spain since the 1960s, supports authorities in asylum procedures through offices in Madrid, Melilla, Málaga, Algeciras (covering Ceuta), and the Canary Islands. Spain, a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention since 1978, has established national asylum laws and a statelessness determination procedure to protect refugees and stateless individuals. (UNHCR)

Spain's role as a migration gateway presents both humanitarian responsibilities and integration challenges. While legal frameworks exist, effective implementation, economic opportunities, and social inclusion remain critical for successful refugee and migrant integration. Strengthening asylum processes, employment access, and community support could lead to a more sustainable and cohesive approach.



If the Syrian refugees do not choose Spain, being present in low proportion, the Ukrainians do.

Three years into the war in Ukraine, Spain has granted temporary protection to 236,570 Ukrainian refugees, accounting for 4.9% of the EU total, making it the fourth-largest host country in the bloc. The Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security, and Migration has highlighted Spain's solidarity and efficiency in providing urgent reception and care for those fleeing the conflict. Minister Elma Saiz reaffirmed the government's commitment to human rights and the continued protection of Ukrainian refugees, emphasizing Spain's role in supporting displaced individuals since the beginning of the war. (La Moncloa 25)

Integration of Ukrainian Refugees in Spain: Key Aspects and Challenges

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, Spain has demonstrated solidarity and efficiency in providing temporary protection to 236,570 Ukrainian refugees. This response includes immediate support, long-term integration measures, and substantial investments to ensure the well-being and integration of displaced individuals. Below, we will analyze the integration process of Ukrainian refugees in Spain through the lenses of Mental Health, Legal Status, Employment Challenges, and Overall Integration.

1. Mental Health

The psychological well-being of refugees is often a crucial yet under-addressed aspect of the integration process. Many Ukrainian refugees have experienced severe trauma from the war, and mental health services are essential to helping them cope. Spain's response includes creating reception centers like CREADE in cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, where displaced persons can receive immediate support, including psychological assistance. The establishment of the Casa de Ucrania in Alicante also serves as a hub for cultural and social activities, promoting a sense of community and emotional healing among refugees. Ongoing mental health support is necessary, given the long-term effects of trauma caused by displacement and war.



Chairwoman of the Friends of Ukraine association Anna Shkalkenko at the celebration of Ukraine's Independence Day last August.

2. Legal Status

Spain swiftly activated the temporary protection mechanism in February 2022, allowing Ukrainian refugees to have their applications processed within 24 hours. As a result, 236,570 individuals received temporary protection status, permitting them to reside and work legally in Spain. This legal framework facilitates their integration into society, as refugees can access essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment without facing legal uncertainty. Spain also expanded reception capacities, offering shelter to 40,597 people through the System for the Reception of International and Temporary Protection (SAPIT). The extension of temporary protection until 2026 ensures that these refugees will continue to receive support as long as the war persists.



A Ukrainian flag is displayed on the Town Hall of Guissona, Spain, on March 17.
Joan Mateu Parra / AP

3. Employment Challenges

Finding stable employment is one of the most pressing challenges for Ukrainian refugees. As of December 2024, 28,197 Ukrainian refugees were registered with Spain's Social Security system, with many working in sectors such as hotels, catering, construction, and commerce. While the availability of jobs in these sectors is a positive sign, the challenge lies in securing stable, well-paid, and long-term employment. Many of the positions occupied by Ukrainian refugees are in low-wage sectors, often offering temporary

contracts. Additionally, the recognition of Ukrainian qualifications and professional experience remains an obstacle for some, making it harder to enter skilled labor markets. However, the integration of 39,741 Ukrainian students into the Spanish education system, including vocational training and language courses, provides hope that future generations of refugees may find greater employment opportunities.

4. Overall Integration

Spain has invested over €1.53 billion in refugee support, with significant co-financing from the EU. This funding covers various aspects of integration, including housing, healthcare, and social services. With over 91,492 displaced persons receiving the Individual Health Card (IHC), Ukrainian refugees have access to Spain's National Health System under the same conditions as Spanish citizens. The integration process also extends to education, where over 39,000 Ukrainian students are enrolled in schools, with thousands also participating in language courses to facilitate smoother integration into Spanish society.



Ukrainian refugees in the home of a resident of Guissona, Spain, on March 17.
Joan Mateu Parra / AP



Carme, a resident of Catalonia, teaches Catalan language to Ukrainian refugees
Joan Mateu Parra / AP

Additionally, the creation of the Casa de Ucrania and other community centers fosters cultural exchange and supports Ukrainian refugees in maintaining ties to their home culture. These centers provide spaces for social interaction, training, and assistance, helping refugees feel connected to their community while integrating into Spanish society.

GUISSONA, Spain — As Ukrainian refugees fleeing bombs and bullets at home fan out across Western Europe, few places they arrive feel as welcoming as a Spanish town known for years as “Little Ukraine.” Even before Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine last month, one in seven residents of Guissona was originally from there. Guissona’s population more than doubled to around 7,500 residents, and drew in a lot of immigrant labor, including the Ukrainians, after a regional supermarket chain opened a distribution center nearby two decades ago. More than 3.5 million people have already fled Russia’s war in Ukraine. The refugees are finding safe havens in small communities on the continent where family and friends who went to find work have put down roots. (NBC News 2022)

Guissona stands out as a model for Ukrainian refugee integration, demonstrating the importance of pre-existing migrant communities in easing transitions for new arrivals. The town's economic infrastructure, social networks, and cultural familiarity make it an attractive destination. To ensure sustainable integration, local authorities should invest in education, healthcare, and job training programs to prevent economic stagnation and ensure a diverse and resilient workforce. Guissona’s experience highlights the power of diaspora-driven migration patterns and the role of small communities in addressing large-scale refugee crises.

Conclusion

Spain’s response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been largely positive, with significant efforts made to ensure both the immediate protection and long-term integration of refugees. The country’s swift activation of temporary protection, large-scale housing and health support, and investment in employment and education initiatives are all essential steps toward integration. However, challenges remain in securing better employment opportunities, addressing mental health needs, and facilitating greater social integration, especially for those facing linguistic and cultural barriers. Continued government support, community engagement, and coordination with European partners will be crucial to the success of these efforts as the conflict persists and more refugees seek sanctuary.

Turkey - The Integration of Migrants and Refugees: Challenges and Opportunities



Initially, Turkey adopted an open-door policy, but as the refugee crisis persisted, attitudes shifted from viewing Syrians as temporary "guests" to recognizing the need for long-term social and economic integration. Successful integration requires a unified approach involving policymakers, civil society, and international cooperation. The study highlights employment struggles, particularly for refugees from Aleppo, who previously worked in the textile industry, and emphasizes the need for structured policies to improve refugee inclusion in Turkish society.

(Akar 2019)

Türkiye is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries worldwide, as the number of people forcibly displaced across the world due to conflict, violence and persecution hit record levels. Türkiye currently hosts some 3.2 million registered Syrian refugees along with close to 222,000 persons of concern from other nationalities.

70 years of UNHCR and Refugee Convention

CONVENTION
AND
PROTOCOL
RELATING TO THE
STATUS OF
REFUGEES



The Republic of Türkiye is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, maintaining the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, thus retaining resettlement to a third country as the most preferred durable solution for refugees arrived due to the events occurred outside of Europe. Türkiye has been undertaking legislative and institutional reforms to build an effective national asylum system in compliance with the international standards. In April 2013, Türkiye's first ever asylum law, the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, was endorsed by the Parliament and entered into force on 11 April 2014. The Law sets out the main pillars of Türkiye's national asylum system and established the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) as the main entity in charge of policy-making and proceedings for all foreigners in Türkiye. Türkiye also adopted Temporary Protection Regulation on 22 October 2014, which sets out the rights and obligations along with procedures for those who are granted temporary protection in Türkiye.

(UNHCR 2024)



1951 Refugee Convention

Key Points and Analysis:

Türkiye's Role as a Refugee-Hosting Country:

Türkiye is one of the largest hosts of forcibly displaced persons, particularly Syrian refugees, with over 3.2 million registered individuals. It also shelters approximately 222,000 individuals from other nationalities under international protection. This underscores Türkiye's strategic geographical position as both a transit and destination country for migration flows.

Legal Framework and International Commitments:

Türkiye is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol but maintains a geographical limitation, meaning it only grants full refugee status to individuals fleeing events in Europe. This restriction results in a resettlement-based approach, where refugees arriving from outside Europe often seek resettlement in third countries rather than receiving long-term protection in Türkiye.

National Asylum and Protection System:

Türkiye has undergone significant legislative and institutional reforms to align its asylum system with international standards. The Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) (2013, enforced in 2014) was a major step in structuring Türkiye's asylum policies. It established the Presidency of Migration Management (PMM) as the central body responsible for managing migration affairs. Additionally, the Temporary Protection Regulation (2014) outlines the rights and responsibilities of those under temporary protection, which mainly applies to Syrian refugees.

Critical Considerations:

Challenges of Integration:

While Türkiye provides temporary protection, the geographical limitation and resettlement focus raise concerns about long-term integration prospects for non-European refugees. Many Syrian refugees have lived in Türkiye for over a decade,

yet the lack of a clear path to permanent residency or citizenship remains a challenge.



Policy Adaptability and Implementation:

The legal framework reflects Türkiye's efforts to manage migration efficiently, but the scale of displacement and evolving global refugee crises continue to test its capacity.

International Cooperation:

Given its role as a key refugee-hosting country, Türkiye has engaged in collaborations with international organizations (such as the UNHCR and the EU) to support its asylum and migration policies. However, political and economic factors influence Türkiye's stance on migration policies, particularly regarding EU-Türkiye migration agreements.

Conclusion:

Türkiye has made significant advancements in its legal and institutional frameworks for migration governance. However, its temporary protection system, geographical limitation, and reliance on resettlement raise concerns about long-term solutions for refugees, particularly Syrians. Future policy directions may require greater focus on integration mechanisms, legal pathways for permanent residence, and enhanced international support to manage ongoing and future migration challenges.

The Syrian refugee crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis, which began in 2011 due to the ongoing civil war in Syria, has become one of the most significant and complex displacement events of the 21st century. Over 13 million people have been forced to flee their homes, with millions seeking refuge in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq, as well as in European nations. The crisis has exposed the vulnerabilities and challenges faced by refugees, including access to basic needs, safety, and the legal and social barriers they encounter in host countries.

The relevance of this crisis for research in the field of refugees and their integration is profound. As one of the largest refugee movements in modern history, it provides a critical case study for examining the mechanisms of refugee protection, policies surrounding asylum, and the complex process of integration into host societies. The Syrian refugee experience offers unique insights into how long-term displacement affects individuals and communities, addressing issues such as social cohesion, access to education and employment, healthcare, and mental health. Research into this crisis can inform the development of more effective integration policies and strategies, promoting better outcomes for refugees and the societies that host them.

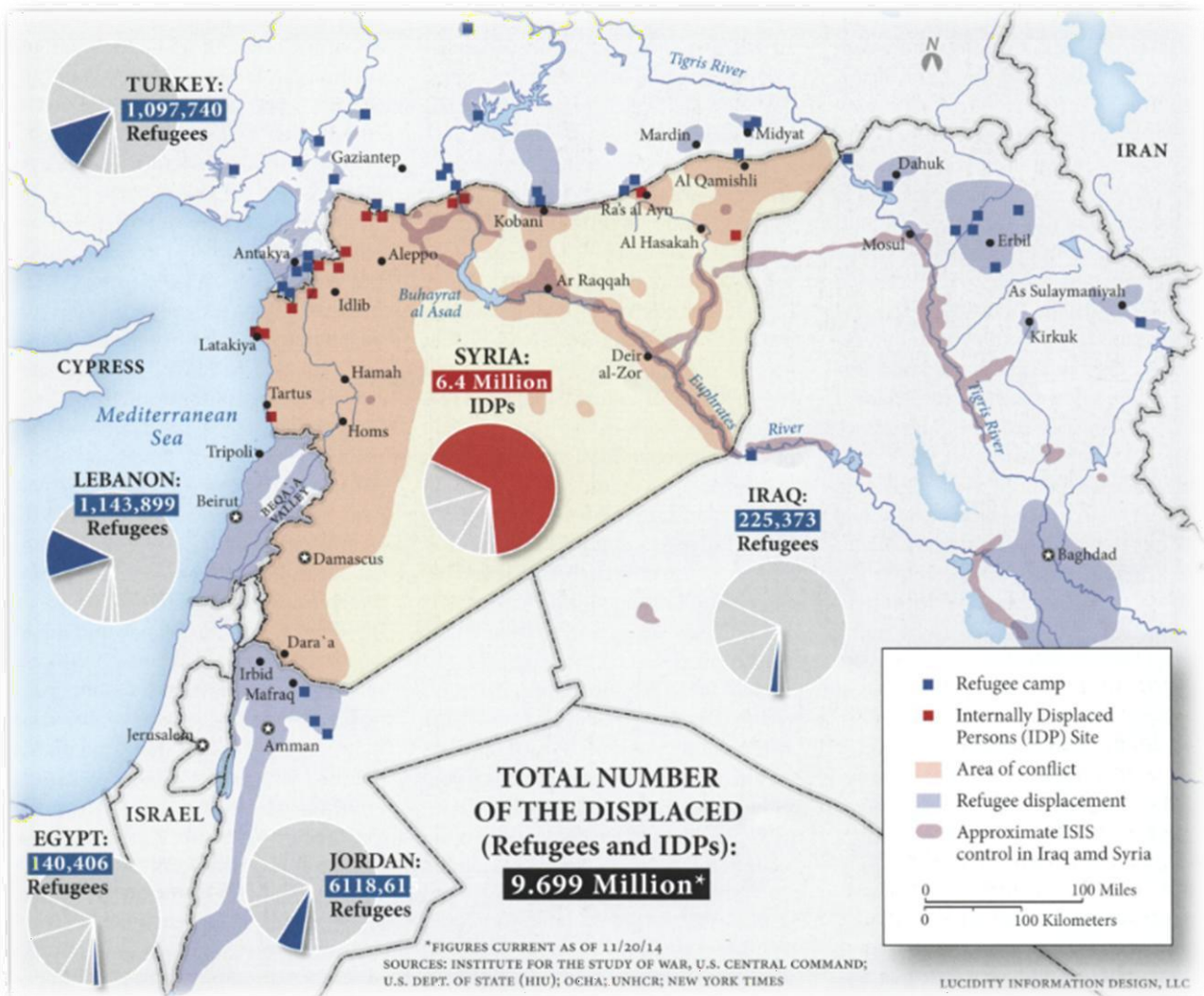
Understanding the dynamics of the Syrian refugee crisis is essential for shaping global responses to forced migration and ensuring that refugees are not only protected but also given the opportunity to rebuild their lives and contribute to their new communities. This research holds crucial implications for improving refugee integration strategies and fostering a more inclusive and compassionate approach to global migration challenges.



Rochelle Davis's study provides an in-depth analysis of the Syrian refugee crisis, detailing its causes, demographic impacts, and the challenges faced by host countries. Key insights include:

1. **Scale of Displacement** – *By August 2014, the number of registered Syrian refugees exceeded 3 million, with an additional 6–9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside Syria, meaning nearly half the country's population had been uprooted, straining local economies, social services, and national security.* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 66) *For example, Jordan's Za'atari camp became the country's fifth-largest city .* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 73)
2. **Host Country Burdens** – *Neighboring countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Turkey absorbed the majority of refugees, straining local economies, social services, and national security.* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 66)
3. **Economic and Political Fallout** – *The Syrian conflict not only devastated infrastructure but also contributed to worsening economic conditions, further increasing refugee outflows. The war created an unstable political landscape, affecting migration patterns and international policies.* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 78)
4. **Challenges for Refugees** – *Many refugees faced severe legal and employment barriers, psychological trauma, and social integration difficulties. While some countries provided limited work permits, others, like Lebanon, imposed high fees for legal residency .* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 71)

5. International Response – *While the United Nations and various NGOs provided aid, funding remained insufficient. The U.S. and European nations faced criticism for their limited acceptance of refugees and failure to create long-term solutions.* (Davis, Syria's refugee crisis 2015, 74)



The Syrian refugee crisis represents one of the most significant humanitarian challenges of the 21st century, with Lebanon emerging as a focal point due to its geographic proximity and initial open-border policy. Lars Erslev Andersen's report, published by the Danish Institute for International Studies, critically examines Lebanon's response to the crisis, emphasizing the intersection of legal ambiguity, economic strain, and socio-political consequences.

Legal Ambiguity and Policy Constraints

One of the central challenges identified in the report is Lebanon's reluctance to recognize Syrians as formal refugees under international law. Unlike Jordan and Turkey, which implemented structured refugee response systems, Lebanon deliberately avoided granting refugee status, fearing long-term integration pressures similar to the Palestinian refugee situation (Andersen 2016, 16). This legal limbo created a paradox where refugees were neither fully protected under

international conventions nor afforded stable residency rights within Lebanon.

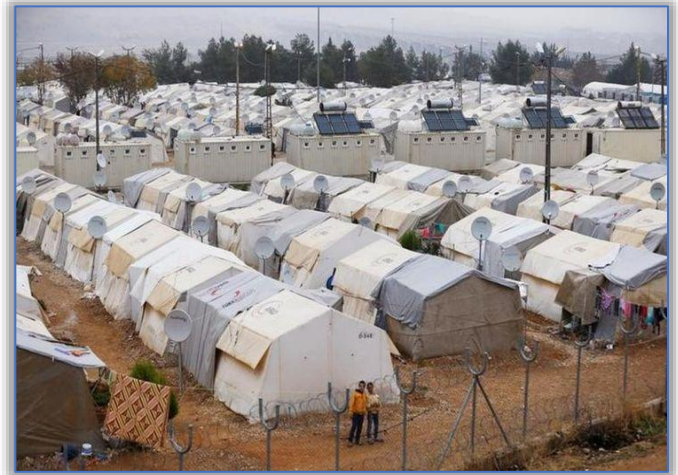
By 2015, the Lebanese government took more restrictive measures, including requesting the UNHCR to halt refugee registrations. This decision exacerbated the precarity of Syrian refugees, as it rendered many of them undocumented and vulnerable to deportation or exploitation (Andersen 2016, 16) Andersen highlights that this legal uncertainty contributed to systemic marginalization, where refugees found themselves in a state of permanent temporariness, lacking access to work permits, stable housing, and basic legal protections.

Economic and Social Ramifications

The large influx of Syrian refugees placed an unprecedented strain on Lebanon's already fragile infrastructure. The report underscores that the sudden demographic shift led to increased demand for housing, water, electricity, and other essential services, further exacerbating socio-economic disparities (p. 17). Notably, rental costs doubled in some areas, making affordable housing scarce for both Lebanese citizens and refugees. This created tensions between host communities and displaced populations, reinforcing anti-refugee sentiments.

Moreover, the informal labor market became oversaturated, leading to economic displacement among vulnerable Lebanese workers. Syrians, often forced to accept low-wage, exploitative employment due to their lack of legal work status, indirectly contributed to wage suppression. Andersen problematizes this phenomenon by illustrating how refugees are simultaneously viewed as economic burdens and essential labor forces—*exploited for cheap labor yet denied basic workers' rights*. (Andersen 2016, 17)

The "No Camp" Policy and Its Implications



Unlike other major host countries, Lebanon refused to establish formal refugee camps, implementing a so-called "no camp policy" that forced Syrians into informal settlements or overcrowded Palestinian refugee camps. (Andersen 2016, 17) This policy, rooted in historical anxieties over long-term refugee integration, resulted in severe humanitarian consequences. Many refugees, unable to secure legal status, lived in precarious, unregulated conditions with limited access to healthcare, education, and sanitation.

The absence of formalized refugee infrastructure increased dependence on international aid organizations such as the UNHCR. However, as Andersen points out, humanitarian efforts were often constrained by political roadblocks and insufficient funding. While programs like *"Reaching All Children with Education in Lebanon" (R.A.C.E.)* enrolled over 470,000 Syrian children in public schools, at least 250,000–300,000 remained excluded, highlighting systemic failures in the education response. (Andersen 2016, 18) This educational gap raises concerns about the emergence of a "lost generation" of Syrian refugees, whose lack of formal education may hinder long-term socio-economic integration and contribute to cycles of poverty and instability.

Critical Reflection and Policy Considerations

Andersen's report invites critical reflection on the broader implications of Lebanon's approach to the refugee crisis. While Lebanon's economic and political constraints are undeniable, the state's restrictive policies arguably deepen vulnerabilities rather than mitigate them. By refusing to grant legal refugee status and imposing stringent entry restrictions, Lebanon has inadvertently fostered conditions of informality and marginalization, making refugees more susceptible to labor exploitation, statelessness, and social alienation.

Moreover, the reliance on international humanitarian aid as a stopgap measure rather than a sustainable solution raises questions about long-term policy failures. As the report suggests, without a structured refugee governance framework, Lebanon risks perpetuating a protracted crisis that undermines both refugee rights and national stability (Andersen 2016, 17)



The fall of the Assad Government in December 2024 has resulted in spontaneous returns to Syria. More than 1 million Syrians have returned home, including some 301,967 Syrians from neighboring countries like Türkiye, Lebanon and Jordan, and 885,294 internally displaced persons (IDPs) since the end of November 2024.

Following recent events in Syria, UNHCR conducted a regional survey to better understand

the views of Syrian refugees on returns to Syria. Overall, more than 80 percent of refugees hope to return to Syria one day, a major shift from the previous survey conducted in April 2024 which indicated only 57 percent expressed hope to return. Similarly, the intention to return in the short-term has also increased significantly—27 percent of Syrian refugees intend to return in the next twelve months compared to 1.7 percent previously. Spontaneous returns are expected to continue throughout 2025. (UNHCR 2025)

Analysis of the Syrian Refugee Crisis

The Syrian refugee crisis remains one of the most complex humanitarian crises in modern history, with millions displaced both internally and across borders. While recent political changes in Syria have sparked increased hope for return, the reality for many refugees remains uncertain and challenging. The following analysis examines the mental health struggles, legal status, employment difficulties, and integration barriers faced by Syrian refugees.

1. Mental Health

The prolonged nature of the Syrian conflict has had severe psychological effects on refugees.

Trauma and PTSD: Many Syrians, especially children, have endured violence, bombings, loss of family members, and forced displacement. This has resulted in high rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Lack of mental health services: In host countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Türkiye, access to psychological care is extremely limited due to strained healthcare systems and a lack of funding.

Children's mental well-being: Syrian children have grown up knowing nothing but war and displacement, leading to emotional distress, behavioral issues, and developmental delays.

Possible Solutions:

- Increased funding for mental health programs targeted at trauma survivors.
- Community-based support networks to provide psychological first aid.
- School-based psychosocial programs to help Syrian children cope with trauma.

2. Legal Status

The legal status of Syrian refugees varies significantly by host country, and many face uncertainty about their rights, residency, and future prospects.

Temporary status with no long-term solutions: Many Syrians in Türkiye, Lebanon, and Jordan have temporary protection but no clear path to citizenship or permanent residency. This leads to instability and a constant fear of deportation.

Difficulties in repatriation: While 1 million refugees have returned to Syria, many are hesitant due to ongoing security concerns, a lack of infrastructure, and economic hardship.

Statelessness and lack of documentation: Some refugees, particularly children born in exile, struggle to obtain legal documentation, limiting their access to education, healthcare, and employment.

Possible Solutions:

- Advocacy for pathways to permanent residency or citizenship in host countries.
- International pressure on Syria to ensure safe, voluntary, and dignified returns.
- Legal assistance for refugees to help them obtain identity documents and legal rights.

3. Employment Challenges

Despite their resilience, many Syrian refugees struggle to find stable employment due to legal restrictions, economic downturns, and discrimination.



Since 2016, refugees in Turkey can obtain a work permit through their employer. Nevertheless, According to the International Labor Organization, out of 2.16 million Syrians of working age in Turkey, only 1 million participate in the labour market, most of them informally in low-skilled and low-paid jobs. (Spark 2022)

High unemployment rates: In Lebanon, Jordan, and Türkiye, 90% of Syrian refugees cannot fully cover their basic needs. Many rely on humanitarian aid to survive.

Work permit restrictions: Many host countries impose strict labor laws that either limit Syrians to specific sectors (agriculture, construction) or require costly work permits.

Exploitation and informal labor: Due to the lack of legal work, many Syrians are forced into informal jobs with low wages, no protection, and high risks of exploitation. Women and children are especially vulnerable to child labor and gender-based violence.

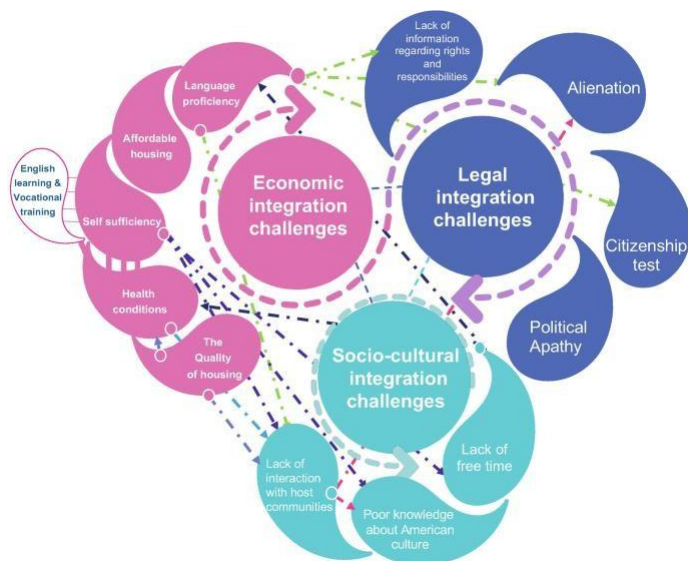
Possible Solutions

Easing work restrictions and allowing Syrian refugees to work legally in a variety of sectors.

Vocational training programs to help Syrians develop skills that match the labor market.

Stronger protections against labor exploitation through government oversight.

6. Integration



(Alshoubaki 2024)

Syrian refugees face significant barriers to social and economic integration in host countries.

Education barriers: More than 2.4 million Syrian children are out of school in Syria, and one-third of refugee children in host countries lack formal education.

Social discrimination: In countries like Lebanon and Türkiye, tensions between local communities and refugees have increased due to economic hardship and competition for resources.

Limited long-term prospects: Without permanent residency, work permits, or quality education, many Syrians remain trapped in cycles of poverty and dependency.

Possible Solutions

Investment in bilingual education programs to integrate Syrian children into local school systems.

Community dialogue initiatives to foster better relations between refugees and host communities.

Economic inclusion policies that provide opportunities for refugees to contribute to their host countries.

Conclusion

The Syrian refugee crisis is far from over, and while some are returning home, millions remain in

precarious situations. The mental health burden, uncertain legal status, employment struggles, and integration challenges all contribute to long-term instability. Sustainable solutions require international cooperation, policy changes in host countries, and increased funding for humanitarian aid and integration programs. Without long-term solutions, Syrian refugees will continue to face significant barriers to rebuilding their lives and contributing to their new communities.

The Ukrainian refugee crisis

The Ukrainian refugee crisis, which erupted in February 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has resulted in one of the largest and fastest-growing displacement situations in recent history. Millions of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, with over 8 million seeking refuge across Europe and beyond, while millions more remain displaced within Ukraine. Neighboring countries like Poland, Romania, and Moldova have taken in the majority of refugees, but countries across the European Union, as well as other parts of the world, have also opened their borders to provide shelter, humanitarian aid, and support.



The relevance of this crisis for research in the field of refugees and their integration is critical. The mass movement of Ukrainians presents an

opportunity to explore the various facets of refugee protection, asylum procedures, and the challenges faced by refugees in Europe, especially in light of the swift and extensive mobilization of international aid. It also provides a timely case for studying the integration of refugees into host societies, with particular attention to access to housing, employment, education, and healthcare. Understanding how Ukrainians adapt to life in new countries and how host nations adapt to large-scale migration can offer valuable insights into the dynamics of integration in times of crisis.

This research is of great importance not only to inform policy decisions and humanitarian responses during the ongoing crisis but also to shape long-term strategies for refugee inclusion and social cohesion. By examining the unique challenges and opportunities of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, researchers can help foster better integration policies, promoting resilience and providing refugees with the means to rebuild their lives while contributing positively to their host communities.

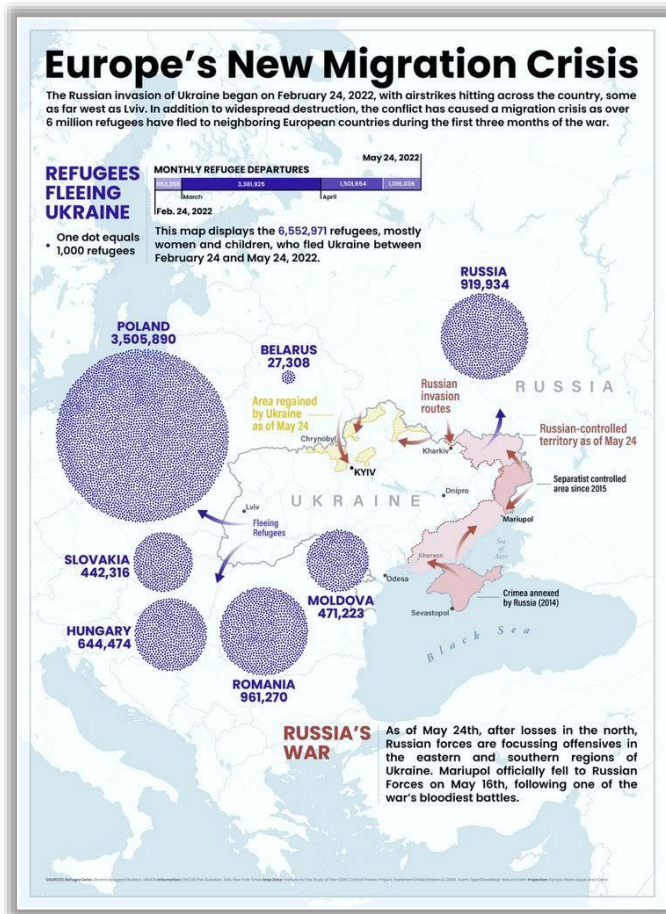
The Ukrainian refugee crisis, which emerged following the Russian invasion in 2022, has led to over 10 million border crossings and millions of internally displaced persons. This crisis has been described as "the biggest humanitarian disaster the world has seen since WWII" (CARE 2022, 1) Neighboring countries, particularly Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, have absorbed the largest influx of refugees, straining resources and social services. (CARE 2022, 6)

Since February 24, 2022, the UNHCR has reported more than 2.5 million Ukrainians fleeing the military invasion by Russian forces" (Ukraine Refugee Crisis, 2022). The majority of refugees are women and children, as men aged 18-60 are mandated to stay and fight. Most refugees have fled to European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. Reports of racial discrimination against non-White refugees have emerged, prompting international calls for humane treatment. "On March 3, 2022, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ukrainian nationals" (Ukraine Refugee Crisis, 2022). Additionally, the

Uniting for Ukraine program permits up to 100,000 Ukrainians to enter the U.S. with a financial sponsor. Resettlement efforts continue, with Ukrainian asylum seekers arriving at the southern U.S. border and in Massachusetts. (CARE 2022)

Conclusions

The crisis reflects the largest mass migration in Europe since World War II. Despite international efforts, challenges such as racial discrimination and limited refugee status benefits persist. U.S. programs like TPS and Uniting for Ukraine provide temporary relief, but long-term solutions are needed for sustainable integration. While the U.S. offers TPS and humanitarian parole, these measures are temporary and lack the stability required for long-term resettlement. The racial discrimination faced by non-White refugees underscores the need for equitable treatment in humanitarian crises. Moreover, the U.S. cap of 10,000 refugees from Europe indicates the limitations of current policies in addressing the scale of displacement. A more comprehensive strategy, including policy reform and international collaboration, is essential for effective refugee support.



Mapped: The Ukraine Refugee Crisis in Europe, Visual Capitalist, Bentley, Elbie. 2022

Analysis of the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

The Ukrainian refugee crisis, ignited by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has created one of the largest displacement situations in recent history, with over 8 million Ukrainians seeking refuge across Europe and beyond. Neighboring countries like Poland, Romania, and Moldova have taken in the majority, and the crisis has generated significant interest in the study of refugee protection, asylum procedures, and the challenges refugees face during their integration into new societies. This analysis explores the situation through four key dimensions: Mental Health, Legal Status, Employment Challenges, and Integration.

1. Mental Health

The emotional and psychological toll on Ukrainian refugees is profound. Having fled the trauma of war, women, children, and elderly refugees have

faced stress, anxiety, and depression as they seek safety away from home. Many have lost family members, homes, and livelihoods, resulting in post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and adjustment disorders. This situation is compounded by the uncertainty of their future in a foreign country.

Psychological Distress: Refugees fleeing war zones often experience acute stress due to displacement and the loss of their homes and communities. The availability of mental health services varies in different host countries, with some providing more comprehensive care and others offering limited access.

Impact on Children: Many children, the largest demographic of refugees, experience trauma that can affect their cognitive and emotional development. They are at higher risk for behavioral problems, anxiety, and learning disabilities.

Policy Solutions:

- Increased funding for mental health services to support both adults and children.
- Community-based psychosocial support programs to promote recovery and resilience.
- Integration of mental health support into public services such as schools and healthcare systems.

2. Legal Status

The legal status of Ukrainian refugees varies significantly depending on the host country. The European Union has activated Temporary Protection status, which provides short-term residency and work rights. However, long-term stability is uncertain, as this protection does not guarantee permanent residency or citizenship.

Temporary Protection and Benefits: Countries like Poland, Romania, and Slovakia have granted temporary protection to millions of Ukrainians, which includes access to social services like housing, healthcare, and education. However, this temporary status leaves refugees in a state of legal limbo with no clear path toward permanent residency.

Racial Discrimination: A significant issue within this crisis is racial discrimination, particularly

towards non-White Ukrainians. Reports have emerged of racial profiling and discriminatory treatment of people from other countries who fled Ukraine, highlighting the need for inclusive asylum policies.

Policy Solutions:

- Clarify pathways to permanent residency and citizenship for Ukrainian refugees.
- Ensure equal treatment for all refugees, regardless of race or ethnicity.
- Streamline asylum processes to provide more stable and predictable legal statuses for refugees.

3. Employment Challenges

Ukrainian refugees face considerable employment challenges as they strive to rebuild their lives in host countries. While temporary protection status grants some refugees access to the labor market, many encounter discrimination, lack of qualifications, and language barriers.

Access to Work: The EU Temporary Protection Directive allows refugees to work, but many Ukrainians still face obstacles such as limited job opportunities or exploitation in informal labor markets.

Gendered Employment: Ukrainian women comprise a significant portion of the refugee population and may face particular challenges in accessing stable, well-paid work. They are often relegated to low-wage, informal jobs, such as cleaning, retail, or caregiving.

Skills Recognition: Many refugees possess qualifications that are not recognized in host countries, limiting their ability to pursue professional or higher-paying jobs.

Policy Solutions:

- Skill-building and vocational training programs to assist refugees in integrating into the workforce.
- Job matching services to connect refugees with employers willing to offer fair, secure employment.
- Workplace protections to safeguard refugees against exploitation, particularly for women and vulnerable groups.

Integration:

The integration of Ukrainian refugees into host societies presents significant challenges. While the EU's Temporary Protection Directive provides a foundation, many refugees still encounter barriers to full societal inclusion. This includes access to housing, education, and cultural adaptation.

Housing: As host countries experience housing shortages, refugees often encounter overcrowded shelters, temporary housing arrangements, or poor living conditions. Moreover, securing affordable housing in cities with large refugee populations can be challenging.

Education: Refugee children face educational disruptions, and the language barrier can serve as a significant obstacle to successful integration into the host country's education system. Some countries are making efforts to integrate refugees into schools, but capacity issues regarding infrastructure and resources persist.

Social Cohesion: Social acceptance and community integration are vital factors in the long-term success of refugee resettlement. Reports of xenophobia and negative perceptions towards refugees can hinder integration.

Policy Solutions:

- Targeted housing programs to ensure refugees have access to safe, affordable housing.
- Language and education support, including language courses and integration programs for children.
- Community engagement initiatives to foster understanding and reduce social tensions between refugees and host populations.

Conclusion:

The Ukrainian refugee crisis has illuminated both the opportunities and challenges associated with large-scale migration. Through the lenses of mental health, legal status, employment, and integration, it is clear that while significant progress has been made in providing immediate protection and humanitarian aid, more comprehensive strategies are needed to ensure long-term stability and successful integration for Ukrainian refugees.

Continued efforts are necessary to address mental health needs, secure legal rights, improve employment opportunities, and foster inclusive integration in host societies. Only with these efforts can Ukraine's displaced citizens find a durable future in their new homes.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results

The final part of the research is based on analyzing the answers to a questionnaire on the challenges faced in the integration of refugees will be analysed from 50 people working with refugees, such as social workers, humanitarians, lawyers, medical professionals. Also, in order to obtain the most authentic possible outcome of the participants' experience, the responses of at least 40 refugees will be analysed.

The survey data provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by both professionals working with refugees and refugees themselves. Below is an in-depth interpretation of the key findings for each group.



1. Professionals Working with Refugees

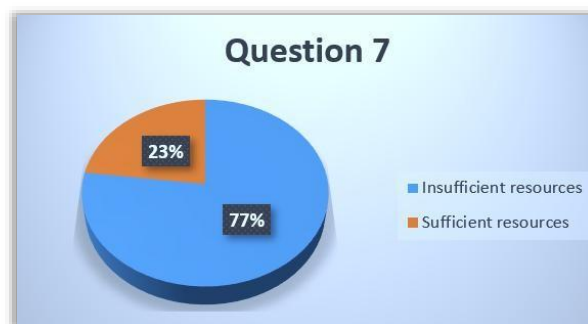
The respondents of include humanitarian workers (37%), youth workers (29%), and social workers, lawyers, and healthcare professionals (34%), indicating a diverse representation of professionals involved in social and humanitarian fields.



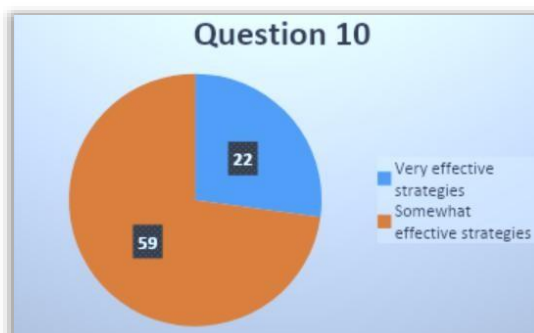
Key Findings:

Employment (66%) and legal status (53%) were the biggest challenges for refugees, as perceived by professionals.

Seventy-seven percent of professionals rated available resources as "insufficient" or "very insufficient."



The effectiveness of support services was mainly rated as "somewhat effective" (59%) rather than "very effective" (22%).



Bureaucracy and poor communication were major barriers to inter-organizational collaboration, despite 80% of professionals working with multiple organizations.

The most needed improvements were increased funding (56%) and better coordination (49%) among support organizations.

Interpretation:

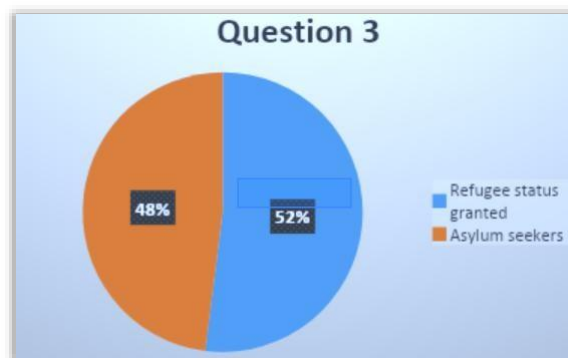
These results indicate systemic inefficiencies in refugee support services. The main gaps exist in funding, legal aid, and employment assistance, which are all interconnected. For example, without legal support, resource constraints make it difficult for organizations to provide comprehensive services, leaving professionals overwhelmed and unable to fully address refugee needs.

The fact that most services are considered only “somewhat effective” suggests that existing interventions might not be tailored to refugees' actual needs. This raises questions about the alignment between policy decisions and on-the-ground realities—a key area for further research.

Additionally, despite widespread collaboration between organizations, bureaucracy and poor communication hinder service delivery. This suggests a need for more structured cooperation models, potentially through centralized coordination platforms or shared databases to streamline service access.

1. Refugees

The respondents came from diverse backgrounds, including the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe. A majority (63%) had been in the host country for over three years, while 37% had arrived within the past year. Refugee status was granted to 52% of participants, whereas 48% remained asylum seekers. Most were young adults aged 18-35 (60%), and 40% had completed secondary or vocational education.



Key Findings:

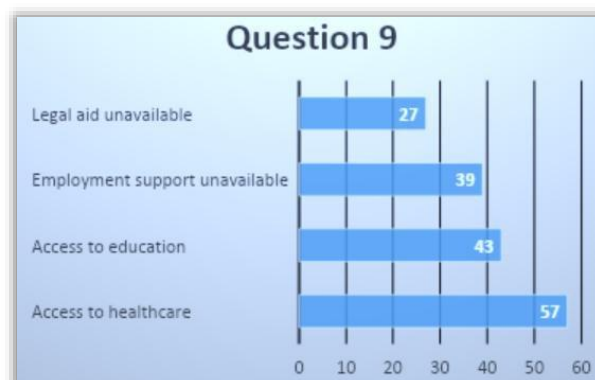
Employment (79%) and language barriers (66%) were the biggest personal struggles.

Legal support (58%) was another major challenge, aligning with the professionals' perspective.

Sixty-five percent experienced discrimination, mainly in employment (49%), housing (32%), and education (30%).

Only 28% felt fully safe and welcomed, while 54% felt "sometimes safe."

The most needed services were employment assistance (61%), language programs (59%), and legal support (46%).



Key interpretations of the results:

The data show that economic and legal barriers are the main obstacles preventing successful refugee integration. The high unemployment rate among refugees suggests that either job opportunities are scarce or employers are reluctant to hire them due to language barriers, legal restrictions, or discrimination.

The fact that 65% of refugees report discrimination—particularly in employment and housing—indicates that even when legal and

employment services are available, social integration remains a challenge. This suggests that beyond economic support, public awareness campaigns and anti-discrimination policies should be prioritized to foster acceptance within host communities.

Moreover, language barriers (66%) significantly impact refugees' access to employment, education, and services. The fact that language programs are among the most requested services (59%) suggests that improving these programs could be a key factor in boosting employment rates and overall integration



Additionally, the low perception of safety and welcome (only 28% feel fully safe) raises concerns about the psychological and social well-being of refugees. This highlights the importance of mental health services and community-building initiatives to foster a sense of belonging and security.

Comparative Analysis and Key Takeaways

Category	Professionals	Refugees
Biggest Challenge	Employment (66%), legal status (53%)	Employment (79%), language barriers (66%)
Service Effectiveness	Mostly "somewhat effective" (59%)	35% rate services as "poor"
Main Barriers	Bureaucracy, lack of resources	Discrimination, language barriers
Most Needed Solutions	Increased funding, better coordination	Employment support, language programs, legal aid

Overall Interpretation

Both groups identify employment and legal barriers as the most pressing issues. However, professionals focus on structural obstacles (funding, bureaucracy, and coordination), while refugees emphasize personal struggles (discrimination, safety, and language barriers).

This suggests a disconnection between available services and refugee needs— even when support exists, it is not always accessible or effective due to bureaucratic hurdles, lack of communication, and social discrimination. Future research should explore how to bridge this gap through targeted interventions, such as:

1. More accessible and flexible language programs integrated with employment training.
2. Stronger anti-discrimination measures to ensure fair hiring practices.
3. Better collaboration models between government agencies and NGOs to streamline services and reduce bureaucratic delays.

By addressing these structural and social issues simultaneously, refugee integration efforts can become more effective and sustainable.

The Guide for Harmonization of Policies: Integration of Refugees and Humanitarian Aid in the EU

At the end of the research, some guiding ideas for the integration of refugees will be outlined. For example, UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, proposes several key recommendations.



Early social support reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of belonging, helping refugees navigate their new environment. Integration caseworkers, volunteers, and diaspora communities play key roles in this process. Key recommendations

include:
Placing refugees near family when possible.

- Encouraging participation in community and cultural activities.
- Supporting refugee-led organizations and volunteer programs.
- Providing professional development for caseworkers and volunteers.
- Exploring community sponsorship programs.

Several factors influence a refugee's access to social support, such as language fluency, psychosocial needs, health conditions, family composition, and the presence of diaspora communities. Personal connections with the broader community enhance mutual understanding and contribute to long-term integration success.

Good Practice Features

Overall, a sound integration program would:

- Engage government and non-government agencies, as well as the refugee and wider communities, in building social connections.
- Develop strategies to enhance the capacity of refugee communities to offer support to newcomers.
- Ensure that social support services provided to nationals are accessible to resettled refugees.

Specific programs established to enhance social connections for resettled refugees would:

- *Provide language assistance.*
- *Engage refugee communities in planning and implementation.*
- *Promote mutual benefits for resettled refugees, the receiving society, and individuals and volunteers providing support.*
- *Facilitate access to support by removing practical barriers (childcare, transport, translation, etc.).*
- *Promote nationals' participation in programs that support social connections.*
- *Provide culturally sensitive and age-appropriate support.*
- *Consider the needs of the whole family as well as individual family members, including refugee children and youth.*
- *Build connections and supportive relationships between resettled refugees and wider local communities.* (UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency 2024)



The integration of refugees into their host communities is a complex and multifaceted process that requires strategic interventions to ensure social cohesion and long-term stability. The recommendations provided by UNHCR emphasize key aspects of integration, particularly the roles of social support, community engagement, and tailored assistance programs.

One of the most critical elements of integration is early social support, which helps reduce anxiety and fosters a sense of belonging. Placing refugees near family members, when possible, significantly enhances emotional well-being and accelerates adaptation to the new environment. Additionally, encouraging

participation in cultural and community activities strengthens social bonds, facilitating smoother integration into society.

Supporting refugee-led organizations and volunteer programs is also essential, as it empowers refugees to take an active role in their own integration while fostering leadership within their communities. Furthermore, professional development programs for caseworkers and volunteers ensure that those providing assistance have the necessary skills and cultural competencies to address refugees' diverse needs. Community sponsorship programs also play a pivotal role by mobilizing local efforts to welcome and support refugees, making integration a shared responsibility.

Several factors influence a refugee's access to social support, including language proficiency, health conditions, and the presence of diaspora communities. Addressing these factors through structured programs—such as language assistance, culturally sensitive services, and removing practical barriers like childcare and transportation—enhances refugees' ability to navigate their new environment. Moreover, ensuring that social services available to nationals are equally accessible to refugees prevents marginalization and promotes equity.

Conclusion

A well-designed refugee integration program should engage multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and the wider community, to build sustainable social connections. Strengthening the capacity of refugee communities to support newcomers benefits not only refugees but also contributes to social cohesion in the host society.

Furthermore, successful integration programs recognize the importance of a holistic approach—considering the needs of individuals and families, fostering positive interactions with the local population, and creating opportunities for mutual benefit. By promoting inclusivity and long-term support structures, host countries can transform refugee integration from a challenge into

an opportunity for cultural enrichment, economic contributions, and stronger community ties.

Key Outcome:

The most significant result of this activity is the creation of a guide for harmonizing refugee integration policies and humanitarian aid within the European Union. This guide includes clear guidelines based on the literature reviewed and the interpretation of the questionnaire responses.

Guide for Solutions Based on Identified Issues

Primary Objective:

The main goal of this project is to understand and describe the available integration models for refugees. It aims to identify various contexts to develop guidelines for safe and inclusive European policies.

1. **Integration Challenges:** Implement community-based cultural exchange programs and mentorship initiatives to ease social integration. Encourage collaboration between local communities and refugee support groups to build trust and mutual understanding. Provide language learning support and cultural orientation to facilitate smoother integration.
2. **Mental Health Support:** Establish accessible mental health services, including trauma counseling and support groups tailored to refugees' experiences. Train mental health professionals to work with culturally diverse populations and create safe spaces for emotional expression and support.
3. **Legal Status Barriers:** Standardize asylum procedures across the EU and provide free legal assistance to help refugees navigate the legal system. Simplify documentation requirements and expedite the processing of asylum applications to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.
4. **Employment Challenges:** Provide targeted job training programs and partnerships with local businesses to enhance employment opportunities for refugees. Develop mentorship programs that connect refugees with industry professionals for networking and guidance.
5. **Resource Insufficiency:** Increase funding for humanitarian aid and create centralized coordination platforms to streamline service delivery. Establish partnerships between governments, NGOs, and private sector actors to pool resources and expertise.
6. **Discrimination and Social Exclusion:** Launch anti-discrimination campaigns and promote diversity awareness within host communities. Implement policies that protect refugees from exploitation and foster inclusive environments in schools and workplaces.

Detailed Interpretation of Results:

- **Professional Perspective:** Surveys indicate that 77% of professionals view resources as insufficient, and 59% rate support services as only "somewhat effective." This highlights the need for better funding allocation and improved coordination among support organizations. By streamlining services and reducing bureaucratic hurdles, professionals can better meet refugees' needs.
- **Refugee Perspective:** The primary struggles reported by refugees are employment (79%) and language barriers (66%). Discrimination in housing, education, and work environments further complicates integration. Addressing these issues through targeted employment programs and anti-discrimination policies will enhance refugees' sense of security and belonging.
- **Collaborative Solutions:** Both groups emphasize the importance of increased funding and better coordination. Establishing a centralized platform for resource management and service tracking can minimize duplication of efforts and ensure equitable access to support services.

Expected Impact:

- Improved coordination among EU countries.
- Enhanced support systems for refugees.
- Reduction in discrimination and social exclusion.

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