



**EUROPE
MUST
ACT.**

Education

A Basic Right



**Topic of the
Month Europe
Must Act
2024**

Index

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<i>Current Policy and Statutory Guidance in the European Context</i>	3
<i>Recent Research: Bordered Trajectories</i>	8
<i>General Barriers to Education Across Europe</i>	11
<i>Positive Initiatives Across Europe</i>	13
<i>Good Practice and Final Recommendations</i>	15

An Introduction to Education and People on the Move

On a global scale, just over half of all refugee children – 51 per cent – remain out of school. Education is a basic right, enshrined in both Article 28 of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Refugee Convention. Access to schooling is not only a universal right of all children but also fundamental to human development, socialisation and psychosocial well-being throughout a person's lifespan.

Education serves a plethora of functions for refugees and asylum seekers beyond childhood:



Image sourced from [Unsplash](#)

- It empowers people with knowledge and skills to live productive, fulfilling, independent lives.
- It protects them from forced recruitment and exploitation, providing opportunities for future employment and livelihood.
- It also bolsters the integration of newcomers in the host community through language skills and access to official qualifications.
- And finally, it helps to preserve identity as well as cultural and linguistic heritage

Yet many refugees and asylum seekers face significant barriers to accessing quality education. Although all children and young people have a fundamental right to basic education, in practice, the type, quality and duration of schooling offered to children and adults on the move depends more on where they are in the migrant/asylum process than on their educational needs and varies widely across Europe.

Current Policy and Statutory Guidance in the European Context

The fundamental right to basic education is recognised under internal and regional human rights law, yet in practice barriers remain in place. Migrant children who have not applied for asylum or lack legal documents are the most at risk of being excluded from school.

A mere seven EU member states explicitly recognise undocumented children's entitlement to education: Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Conversely, three member states explicitly exclude or limit their right to schooling: Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania. Even where the right to education is provided to all children in the country, hence implicitly also to children staying irregularly, this right is not systematically guaranteed or facilitated.

According to Article 14 of the Reception Conditions Directive, member states of the EU must grant child applicants access to education and ensure such access is accorded within three months of the date on which the application for international protection was lodged. Also, member states are obliged not to withdraw secondary education if the age of majority is reached.

Yet, according to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) policy note on the Right to Education for Asylum Seekers in the EU,

"Lengthy asylum processes have a direct impact on access to education. Unaccompanied children are often unable to access education due to delays in the registration of their asylum applications. Others may not be granted access if they are not engaged in an asylum procedure (such as in Hungary). In some member states, Bulgaria and Greece for example, asylum-seeking children in detention centres have no access to formal education. In Poland, classes organised for detained children do not cover the minimal scope of a compulsory curriculum."

Education as Part of Integration and the Role of the EU

Education policies are often considered an integral part of the integration and inclusion process undertaken by people on the move as they settle in Europe. As such, education forms a key part of the EU's Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.

As touched upon, education provides a path towards employment and integration into the labour market as well as structure, normalcy[1] and essential language skills needed to form friendships and social inclusion[2]. However, this focus on integration also begs the question of:

"[w]hy the EU involves itself in immigrant integration policies. Are not these primarily local and national issues where the principle of subsidiarity - decisions made at the lowest possible level - should apply?"[3]

This illustrates the first thing that should be kept in mind when considering EU-level policy and guidance on the education of refugees and asylum seekers: there are numerous approaches to this process as well as a large amount of influence from national and local actors.

In this context, the EU define their role as the following:

"the EU may establish measures to provide incentives and support for Member States in promoting integration of third country nationals residing legally in their territories and has an important role in supporting, stimulating and coordinating Member States' actions and policies in this area. In the current context, many EU Member States are facing similar challenges, and the EU level can add value through the structural support it provides."

[1] O'Higgins, A. (2018). Analysis of care and education pathways of refugee and asylum-seeking children in care in England: Implications for social work. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 28(1), 53-62.

[2] Madziva, R., & Thondhlana, J. (2017). Provision of quality education in the context of Syrian refugee children in the UK: opportunities and challenges. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(6), 942-961.

[3] Andrew Geddes, Leila Hadj-Abdou & Leiza Brumat, *Migration and Mobility in the European Union*, 2nd Edition, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p154

A few points to consider when it comes to education and integration:

Schools and educational projects play an important role in facilitating social integration. It can, therefore, be interesting to look critically at how education is implemented, for example, by asking:

What is the purpose of an educational system, particularly in the context of refugees and asylum seekers?

How should language learning be approached in education? Do we take a multi-lingual or mono-lingual approach?

Should it serve as an equaliser that provides students with the knowledge and skills they need to construct their future?

How do you balance wanting to ensure 'proper' teaching of the recognised language and ensuring the preservation and respect of accents, dialects and other languages that make up everyday life?

Should it serve as a way to prepare students for the labour market, responding to the needs of industries and the economy?

The consideration of which languages are valued as vehicular or target languages for the educational system vs. which languages are taken for granted or considered secondary.

Should it also provide opportunities for preserving the language, culture and values of the original homeland and participating in them?

These decisions and policies also have to accommodate respect for different local languages and cultures in bilingual European territories, vis-a-vis the linguistic and cultural rights of newcomers.

Finally, education's deep connection to questions of integration means it's also useful to consider:

- Who is seen as needing to integrate?[4] And what does this highlight about inequalities and discrimination in the integration process?
- What are the different integration expectations for different types of migration, such as refugees and asylum seekers, undocumented migrants, EU migrants, "high" and "low" skilled labour migration, golden-visa migration, etc.?

Unsurprisingly, none of the questions posed above have a simple answer. However, they demonstrate various approaches to education and the difficulties in balancing education, cultural diversity and self-determination with the practical benefits of integration and economic and social inclusion.

[4] For a take on integration in connection with education in Europe, see for example: Osler, A. (2020). Education, migration and citizenship in Europe: untangling policy initiatives for human rights and racial justice. *Intercultural Education*, 31(5), 562-577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2020.1794231>

Changing Approaches to Education:

The approach to education and integration has evolved over time. Here, we've compiled a summary of a selection of documents to demonstrate the development of this evolution up to the most recent outlook.

1948 - Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, Article 26

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the first of many international conventions and agreements that clearly state the right to education, as it is deemed to be crucial to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It states that:

"(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit."

1999 - The Good Practice Guide on Education for Refugees in the European Union, EU

Created by members of the ECRE Task Force on Integration, this document is a reflection of the research they conducted in 1998. Their research involved initial regional meetings with experts from the public, private or voluntary sectors, followed by a final meeting which included a refugee panel made up of 18 refugees representing the 15 member states of the time.

They produced a three-part document containing recommendations on 1. Educational provision for refugee children and young people, 2. language courses for adults and 3. The processes and procedures required for the recognition of foreign qualifications.

While parts of this document have dated, much of it is still relevant today, particularly regarding barriers to education and the recognition of qualifications. For example:

"Most experts in the three regional expert meetings stressed their serious concerns with regard to the lack of recognition being given to previous qualifications, both for the purposes of education or training and for the purpose of getting a job. Most practitioners share a common feeling of frustration and powerlessness over the decision-making process on their client's case."

2004 - The Establishment of the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU

As the EU Commission was working to develop a common immigration policy, they developed this document in 2004. Here, 11 integration principles were formulated, providing, for the first time, a strong framework and basis for EU states to consider and create their own policies in the area of education, refugees and asylum seekers.

The emphasis was on a holistic approach to educating refugees and asylum seekers. It also stresses the importance of providing non-discriminate access to education services and of the need for a two-way interaction, where the welcoming population also learns about the people and cultures they're receiving.

Interestingly, and in stark contrast to more recent documents, this publication also dedicates significant sections to other unrelated issues, such as drug policy and ship source pollution.

2016 - Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals

This more recent document provides a common policy framework to help EU Member States improve, construct and develop their individual integration policies for third-country nationals. When it comes to education, the focus is largely on upskilling, supporting collaboration for researchers and transnational programmes and facilitating welcoming and inclusive educational projects.

It stresses the importance of education as part of the integration process. Compared to the previous documents, here there is a greater emphasis placed on informal education and the need for third-country nationals to understand the laws, values and cultures of the receiving society to "understand the responsibilities linked with their new life in the receiving society and actively participate in it." (4.1.2 Education).

Again, it is useful to consider 'Are these integration expectations the same for all those who move country?' and 'To what extent is an individual required to understand laws and actively participate for them to be sufficiently integrated?'

Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

This latest document follows the EU Commission's recent new Pact on Migration and Asylum (read our explainer document [here](#)). Similar to the previous action plan, the objective is to provide support for EU Member states and their approach to integration. However, where it differs is that this latest action plan is not only aimed at third-country nationals but also EU citizens with a migrant background.

When it comes to education, there are a few different points of emphasis:

- **Educating the host society:** Aimed at tackling racism and misinformation concerning asylum and migration, this objective also acknowledges how the host society is crucial to the integration process.
- **Increased guidance and training for teachers and youth workers:** Aimed at improving participation and achievement in the education of third-country national students.
- **Improved recognition of existing qualifications:** Emphasising that these procedures need to be transparent, fair and affordable.
- **Further development of language courses**
- **Improving the accessibility and affordability of after-school leisure activities and sports.**

Response to the 2021-2027 Action Plan

This document was welcomed for a few reasons:

- The recognition of gender disparity and the difficulties that migrant women face in accessing education and employment.
- Increased opportunities for EU funding, in particular support for easier recognition of previous qualifications and language learning courses.
- Increased involvement of national and local programmes.

However, these positives don't erase some important criticisms:

- ECRE point out that by also directing the latest action plan at citizens with a migrant background it "risks perpetuating racism and discrimination against people of colour and people of foreign origin, who are already far too often treated as 'foreigners' in their countries, with a consequent negative impact on their self-perception"

A paper published in 2022[5] also described how this action plan is underpinned by securitisation narratives. The researchers criticise the education plan in particular as failing to align with the understanding that integration is a two-way process and, instead, it reflects an assimilationist approach.

Recent Research: Bordered Trajectories

Bordered Trajectories: The Impact of Institutional Bordering Practices on Young Refugees' (Re-)Engagement with Post-15 Education in Greece[6]

Summary and objective:

The research was focused on investigating how Greek state responses to migration flows impacted young refugees, aged between 15-25, (re)engagement with learning opportunities.



Image sourced from [Unsplash](#)

Hunt points out a wide variety of educational options for young refugees, either through state education programmes or non-formal education offers. However, despite this, participation rates have remained low. Previous research that has sought to explain the low rates of attendance has described reasons such as:

- complicated admissions processes;
- delays in implementing classes and a lack of capacity;
- and, finally, loud objections from local parents to young refugee participation, creating feelings of mistrust and fear amongst refugees.

[5] Berry, S. E., & Taban McQuade, I. (2022). The EU Migration Pact and Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion: A Progressive Step or Half Measure? In *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (1 ed., Vol. 19, pp. 5-26). (European Yearbook of Minority Issues). https://doi.org/10.1163/22116117_002

[6] Hunt, Lucy. 2021. *Bordered Trajectories: The Impact of Institutional Bordering Practices on Young Refugees' (Re-)Engagement with Post-15 Education in Greece*. *Social Sciences* 10: 421. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10110421>

[7] Here, and throughout the article, the term 'refugee' is used to refer to both those who have been granted protection and those who have applied for protection (i.e., asylum seekers).

But...

"Few studies have drawn a line between practices such as encampment... and legal uncertainty and young refugees' education, especially at the post-compulsory (15+) level. Even less research has explored the 'non-typical' educational routes refugee youth may choose to take instead, such as in non-formal settings... from the perspective of youth themselves." [8]

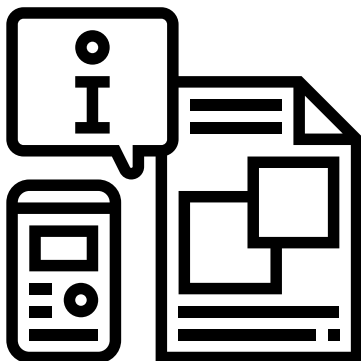
Therefore, based on 15 semi-structured interviews with young refugees living in Thessaloniki, this research explores how institutional bordering practices have played a role in disrupting these people on the move's (re)engagement with education and how they can navigate and find sources of support within this process. Ultimately, with the hope of understanding more about why young people on the move disengage with education and better identify ways of supporting their continued learning.

Key findings:



Image sourced from Europe Must Act

Unconducive learning environments and uncertainty: As new arrivals in Greece are placed in camps described as "overcrowded, noisy and tense spaces", many described how this made it difficult to focus on education. On top of this, the inherent instability of the camps and knowledge that they could be moved at short notice meant many weren't sure whether they should enrol in local schools or programmes or wait until they were more settled—with their state of legal limbo making it difficult to know not only how long they would be in a camp but also whether they would move to another part of the European Union.



Access to information and word of mouth: Access to information in the participant's preferred language was limited, and, as such, many described how they or others followed the advice of others around them. Some would say that Greek education wasn't very good and put people off from trying. Others would stress that it was better to focus on learning English than Greek, as a more international language, again discouraging engagement in learning Greek or participating in Greek school when they ultimately found out they would be staying in Greece.

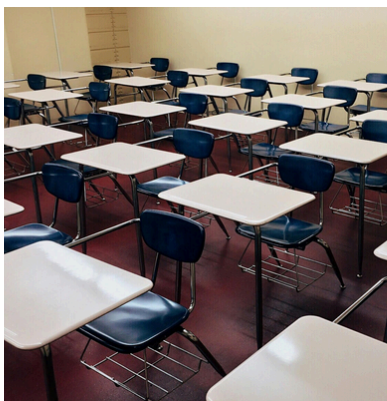


Image sourced from Pexels

Administrative and language barriers to education: Participants described how their previous education had been disrupted or that they struggled to prove their completed education. As such, they were often told to repeat the education they had already completed. Moreover, those who were over 18 found great difficulty in being able to return to high school to recuperate the education that they'd lost. Finally, many described that despite speaking multiple other languages, including English, their lack of Greek was a significant barrier to accessing education as little support was provided, and access to Greek language classes was difficult.

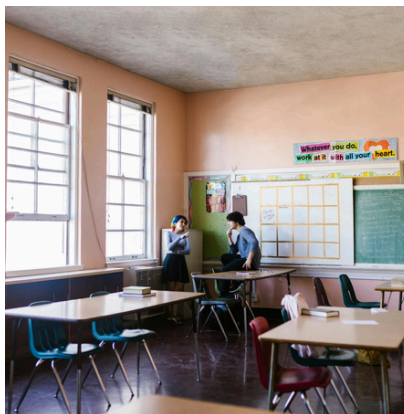


Image sourced from Pexels



Covering various bases and turning to the more “practical” route: Living in uncertainty meant that some participants also described how they sought to accumulate various skills because they didn’t know what their future held and wanted to prepare themselves as best they could. On top of this, some participants described how learning helped them not feel like they were wasting time and how they could make a positive out of their migration experience. However, this didn’t necessarily mean following a formal education route. Instead, some described how they had come to realise that they needed to adjust their educational aspirations to take a more practical route that was more likely to lead to an income.

Drawing on what was available: As formal and non-formal opportunities were not always available, particularly in the wake of the pandemic, the participants describe how they built up their language skills themselves by talking and learning English with volunteers and humanitarian staff and using friendships with Greek students and teachers to improve their Greek.

“The youth in the study had persisted in this manner, and at the time of the study, Marwa had sufficient skills to pursue a degree taught in English at a private university in Thessaloniki; Hasan had secured a paid role as a translator; and Karvan had passed the notorious Panhellenic exams at the end of general senior high school. All of the others were engaged in high school, NFE and/or other work or voluntary activities, with most still engaging in more than one form of learning concurrently.”[9]

In closing, although refugee youths may not take particularly linear paths, many sought out learning vocational skills and new language skills at the same time as high school; highlighting how the participants actively respond to their situation and work to reconstruct their education.

Final reflections:

The research calls for increased investigation into the emotional impacts of the Greek state’s response on young refugees and their access to education. It also argues that with a clearer, better-communicated policy framework, youth refugees’ education will not be so dependent on social factors. Finally, it urges the importance of the continuation and protection of non-formal education as it serves a vital role as a welcoming in-between offer.

The research also highlights a blindspot in the most recent EU Action Plan, its siloed approach to integration and education, and, therefore, what considerations are needed in the future. The Action Plan fails to mention the harm that deficient reception systems are having on people’s ability to access education and join their new communities. Ultimately, it demonstrates its failure to take a holistic approach towards education that incorporates people’s entire experiences in the EU and how wait times and status uncertainty are intrinsically linked to barriers to education for refugees and asylum seekers.

[9] Hunt, Lucy. 2021. Bordered Trajectories: The Impact of Institutional Bordering Practices on Young Refugees’ (Re-)Engagement with Post-15 Education in Greece. *Social Sciences* 10: 421. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10110421>. p13

General Barriers to Education across Europe

A joint UNHCR and UNICEF report identified the following barriers to access to education for refugee and migrant children across Europe.

- **Legal barriers**
 - This can include a lack of clear provisions on compulsory education for children with an irregular or precarious status or a lack of legal provisions for compulsory education. Moreover, there are often no legal provisions on how children's education level should be assessed and assigned to school grades.
 - In larger federal European states, such as Germany, there can be a great disparity in legal provisions between states or regions, which can be difficult to navigate.
- **Administrative barriers**
 - Distance and transportation to schools, cost of school materials, insufficient information provision to children and their families about procedures and services available, etc., can all seriously impact school enrolment and attendance.
 - Furthermore, deadlines and personal and bureaucratic documentation requirements can impact access to school.
- **Insufficient human and financial resources**
 - Education authorities often have limited places in schools, lack of resources for catch-up classes, lack of budgets and insufficient guidance for teachers and practitioners.
- **Psychological support**
 - Often, children have accumulated a great deal of stress and psychological trauma in their countries of origin, in transit, or at their destination, after which no psychological support is available at school.
- **Additional language and cultural mediation support**
 - Refugee and migrant children frequently lack sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction and may have a low interest in learning it – such is the case in Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria.
- **Stereotypes and judgement**
 - This may lead to discrimination, and teachers may be unprepared or equipped to promote multiculturalism and openness to diversity.

Barriers to Education Produced by the Covid-19-Pandemic

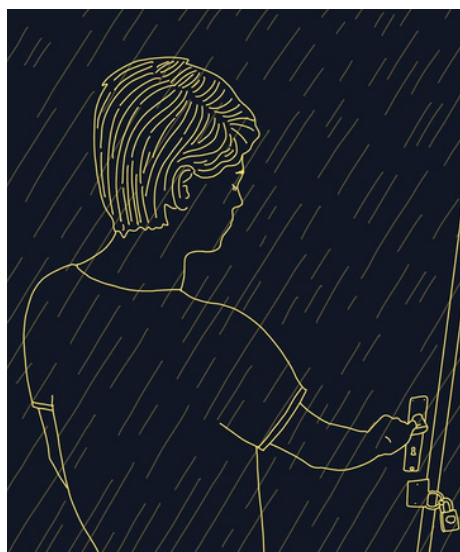


Image sourced from Europe Must Act

COVID-19 has profoundly influenced refugee education, pushing the reliance on digital tools to the forefront whilst traditional schooling environments remain largely inaccessible or under-resourced. This shift to online learning, while offering certain advantages, continues to underscore ongoing challenges, such as the limited availability of technology and reliable internet access, which further intensify educational inequalities[10].

As a result, these developments have exacerbated existing gaps, leaving many refugee students increasingly disadvantaged in their educational progress. The pandemic has not only widened educational divides but has also reinforced the barriers to learning faced by marginalised communities, deepening the inequities that persist in refugee education[11].

[10] Samsari E, Palaiologou N, Nikolaou G. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Inclusion of Refugee Students in Greek Schools: Pre-Service Teachers' Views about Distance Learning. *Societies*. 2024; 14(5):60. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc14050060>

[11] Papageorgiou A. A Fractured Education: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Educational Opportunities in Greece. *The National High School Journal of Science*. 2023 1 1

Barriers to Higher Education

Over-emphasis on education documentation, through qualifications or other written evidence, can lead to the actual levels of learning and knowledge of refugees being disregarded even in the most liberal education systems.

Some support for higher education is offered in Europe through various initiatives. However, issues remain. Below, we can look at one of the many initiatives in more detail.

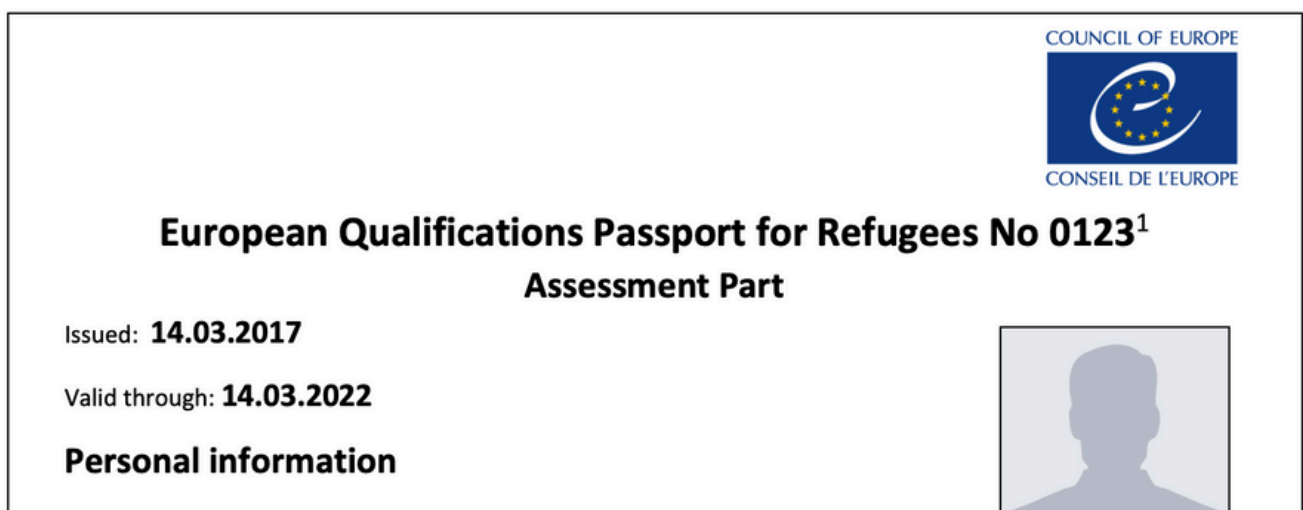
The European Qualifications Passport (EQP)

The EQP is an ambitious attempt to codify and standardise the education qualifications that refugees and asylum seekers hold. The EQP uses and draws from the 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (generally known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention) to provide a standardised means of assessing the equivalency of qualifications to European ones. This enables a way of framing existing qualifications in a meaningful way in the context of European higher education.

There are limitations to recognising the qualifications outlined by EQP. As the initiative is voluntary, it is hampered in utility when there is a lack of political will. However, there has been significant interest as well as innovative methods for figuring out how to deal with qualifications recognition where there are none.

According to the UNHCR, in the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, like in Hungary, degrees are only recognised after a very arduous process, which discourages many refugees who lack the time, language skills and social capital to engage in this, or they are under-recognised (i.e. considered the equivalent of a high school diploma).

Another shortcoming of the EQP is that it does not directly address instances in which refugees have informal learning or have begun but not completed university studies. The emphasis is on recognising existing qualifications, which essentially means giving a foundation for understanding how refugees and their qualifications relate to the status quo. As a result, there have been calls for a more holistic approach to recognising existing qualifications.[12]



Screenshot taken from [Council of Europe Sample](#)

[12] Rajaram PK. Providing Access to Higher Education for Refugees in Europe: An Opportunity to Rethink the University and Its Role in the Public Sphere. In: Bhabha J, Giles W, Mahomed F, eds. *A Better Future: The Role of Higher Education for Displaced and Marginalised People*. Cambridge University Press; 2020:177-196.

Positive Initiatives across Europe

Exercise for Refugees - Thessaly University - Greece

Physical education (PE) is an integral part of any curriculum. More than this, PE provides a particularly adept space for welcoming and including new arrivals, as cross-cultural sports dilute the need for language whilst simultaneously giving a spike in endorphins.

Over the years, Thessaly University has run a variety of programmes dedicated to exercise for refugees. From the academic side, where they recently published a research paper that discusses the barriers to including refugees in PE, to the practical side, where they've developed football and hip-hop dance programmes promoting local and refugee participation.

To read more about their work and programmes, take a look at:

- [Exercise for Refugees Website](#)
- [University of Thessaly, Quality of life lab poster](#)
- [Research paper - A needs assessment study on refugees' inclusion through physical education and sport. Are we ready for this challenge?](#)
- [The "Kallipateira" project - This provides educational material, including innovative sports activities \(available in Greek to download for free\).](#)



Image sourced from [Pexels](#)

Newman Catholic College - UK

Newman Catholic College (NCC) in North West London is a UNICEF Rights Respecting secondary school and sixth form (16-18-year-old education) that takes a broad approach to welcoming refugee and asylum-seeking students and providing them with a relevant, appropriate and quality education.

The school has designed a curriculum with 'project streams' for students not ready to undertake meaningful study at the level appropriate to their age. The streamed classes are not based on age but on English language competency and level of previous education. Students are tested on arrival and will be put immediately into the school's relevant 'project stream' if required. The classes provided in 'project streams' are designed to improve English and Maths skills alongside a variety of other subjects. English language support is fully integrated into the classes.

In addition to their innovative approach to curriculum, NCC engages as fully as possible with entire families, running English classes for parents and organising regular 'Arabic tea' sessions (the majority of families linked to the school are from Syria) where parents can meet other parents, bring along younger children, share food and socialise informally within the school setting. This allows the parents to integrate into the school community and participate in their child's learning. This bespoke model for asylum seekers and refugees allows a supportive environment tailored to previously disrupted education.

For more information, visit the [school website here](#).

The University of Barcelona Support Programme for Refugees and People from Conflict Zones - Spain

The Solidarity Foundation of the University of Barcelona developed a support programme for refugees and people from conflict zones. The programme aims to facilitate refugees' initial access or return to higher education. More than 100 refugees have benefited from agreements covering accommodation, language courses, legal advice, and so on.



Image sourced from [Unsplash](#)

In terms of academic assistance, the programme includes:

- **Support for transition-to-university courses:** Language training (in Spanish and Catalan) and human rights courses, jointly organised by the University of Barcelona and the Barcelona City Council
- **Protocol of Recognition of Prior Learning:** A protocol which was approved in May 2018 by the University of Barcelona and which allows the recognition of prior learning for refugee students without documents or with incomplete documents
- **Tutorial Action Plan:** Once the students have initiated their studies, the Tutorial Action Plan is activated using regular appointments with teachers and mentors.
- **Spanish for foreign learners:** Hispanic Studies offers four places for study throughout the entire academic year.

Other aspects of the programme include:

- **Psychosocial support:** Final-year students from the Faculty of Psychology at the University of Barcelona provide psychological support to refugees.
- **Accommodation:** The scholarship offered to the participants includes full board accommodation at the residences on the university campus to promote participants' social integration.
- **Legal advice:** Students receive comprehensive legal assistance for free.
- **Awareness-raising campaigns and participation in discussion forums:** The programme focuses on good practices at the local level and on participation in local, Catalan and State forums.

For more information, visit:

- [The University of Barcelona's dedicated site](#)
- [This UNESCO report discussing this and similar programmes](#)

Parental Engagement Programmes - Germany and France

Various parental engagement schemes throughout Europe seek to encourage and break down barriers to accessing and remaining in education. One of these programmes is 'Neighborhood Mothers', which started in Berlin and was replicated nationwide. Through the programme, women, with their own history of migration and integration, are trained to act as contact and resource persons for families and particularly other women in the neighbourhood (for instance, by working in schools or by visiting families in their homes).

Denmark and the Netherlands have also implemented similar programmes. The French government has been undertaking a national programme called 'Opening School to Parents for Successful Integration' since 2009, with the goal of engaging parents of migrant and refugee children.

Around 300 schools participated in 2017, delivering free French language and training courses for parents, boosting their understanding of the French education system and providing practical guidance on how to better assist their children's learning.

For more information, visit:

- [This chapter on Neighbourhood Mothers](#), from Social Innovations For Social Cohesion
- [This summary of the Danish project and its results](#)

Bulgarian as a Foreign Language Programmes - Bulgaria

To facilitate the capacity of teachers to integrate refugee and migrant children into public schools in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, with the support of the UNHCR and UNICEF, has supported the development of official programmes teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language to refugees by providing additional funding for Bulgarian classes. In addition, funding has been provided to build capacity for teachers in public schools.

For more information, visit [the IOM page here](#)

Good Practice and Final Recommendations

There is awareness within the EU of the necessity to find good practices in the education of refugees. In this sense, the EU sees itself as supporting member states in their endeavour to educate people for their 'integration'. In their recent Action Plan, they recognise the importance of childhood education, fast recognition of existing qualifications, language support, and supporting these practices with adequate funding. However, as we have pointed out before, there is also criticism regarding the effectiveness and effects of the plan.

A report from UNHCR (2019) highlights a few recommendations for the education of refugee children. The focus is on better access to education and, importantly, also taking into consideration the specific situation. Thus, it's centered on the needs of refugee children as well as creating an inclusive school environment for them. It also calls attention to the need to collect more data on the topic so that more adequate responses can be found.

Based on the findings we have presented so far, the following points can be highlighted:

- **Create uncomplicated admission schemes** to formal educational programmes.
- **Give adequate resources and funding** to formal and also informal educational institutions and organisations – as well as to teachers, including training for them on how to work with students from diverse backgrounds and access to resources such as textbooks, materials, and technology. [13]
- **Ensure collaboration between government, NGOs, and private organisations:** Improving education for refugees and asylum seekers requires a collaborative effort between the government, NGOs, and private organisations. By working together, these organisations can provide more comprehensive and effective support and resources for these individuals.

[13] Ball A., and Ladson-Billings G. (2020): Educating Teachers for the 21st Century. Culture, Reflection, and Learning. In: Handbook of the Cultural Foundations of Learning, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203774977-27>



Image sourced from Europe Must Act

- **Create stability** by improving the legal and material situation for refugees – learning is inhibited by uncertainty or disruptions, which can be very discouraging over time.
- **Tackle racism and other prejudices in society**, e.g. by supporting anti-racist projects and by putting a focus on it in general education.
- **Provide a greater focus on young people 16 years and over.** This group tends to be overlooked by many institutions; there should be ways to also give them easy access to education.
- **Recognise qualifications** that have been obtained before arriving in Europe and find easier ways for informal knowledge to be recognised as well (e.g., when someone learned a language outside of language classes – although, of course, this shouldn't replace access to such education).
- **Give access to health and psychological support:** This helps to acknowledge that not everyone has the mental or physical resources to go through exhausting knowledge-gaining processes.

- **Consider education as a vehicle for the idea of 'two-way integration'**[14]: In this sense, it is not only the people who arrive in Europe as refugees but everyone who should be targeted by adequate education to further solidarity among the people.
- **Provide civic education for mainstream populations:** According to Audrey Osler, professor of Human Rights Education and Citizenship, Europe's education systems must teach all people – crucially not only asylum seekers who are supposed to be 'integrated' – about its histories of colonisation and racialisation as well as the current racist realities that people of colour face.

"Within education systems, relatively little attention is given to the education of mainstream populations, or to education for inclusive citizenship and the everyday microaggressions that newly-arrived students face. [...] I argue that policies that do not adequately acknowledge experiences of racialisation and prepare mainstream populations to recognise experiences by students of colour (whether migrant or non-migrant) are unlikely to be effective." [15]

[14] Klarenbeek, L. (2019): Reconceptualising 'integration as a two-way process', *Migration Studies*, doi:10.1093/migration/mnz033

[15] Osler, A. (2020). Education, migration and citizenship in Europe: untangling policy initiatives for human rights and racial justice. *Intercultural Education*, 31(5), 562-577. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2020.1794231>

- **Give language support:** One of the most significant impediments to education for refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. It is critical that individuals have access to language classes that will help them enhance their language skills and raise their prospects of academic achievement.
- **Increase school places** and implement temporary and mobile schools that can provide education services in a more flexible and accessible manner.
- **Create flexible admission policies:** Refugee and asylum-seeking children often experience interruptions in their education and have gaps in their learning histories. To address this challenge, schools should have flexible admission policies that consider these children's unique needs and circumstances.
- **Support refugee families** in navigating the admissions process and providing materials in their mother tongue on entitlements to education where possible.

Final thoughts:

Throughout this report, we've explored the importance of education and demonstrated the need to ratify international conventions and treaties that enshrine refugees' right to education.

How do **we** do this?

- By continuing to educate ourselves,
- By putting pressure on politicians to tackle racism and discrimination,
- And, by fighting for concrete measures to be put in place at national and local levels, to guarantee access to education for all.





**EUROPE
MUST
ACT.**

***We're volunteers and asylum and migration is a complex topic. This means we try to include a variety of opinions and approaches to a topic. We do our best to research and use our expertise accurately however, we also believe it's vital to encourage healthy discussion and stop misinformation. Therefore we encourage any feedback or constructive criticism of our work.**

SUPPORT OUR WORK
[WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG/MORE-](http://WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG/MORE-ACTION)
[ACTION](http://WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG/MORE-ACTION)

FOR MORE, VISIT:
WWW.EUPEMUSTACT.ORG

Europe Must Act (EMA) is a growing grassroots movement, bringing together volunteers and NGOs to campaign for the humane and dignified reception of refugees in Europe.



**Europe Must Act
2024**