

ASK THE PEOPLE

A consultation of migrants and refugees

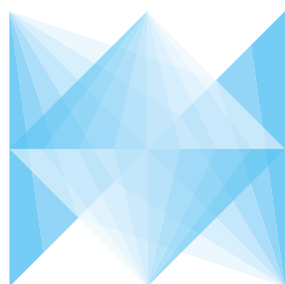
EUROPEAN MIGRANT ADVISORY BOARD

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European Migrant
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ABOUT THE CONSULTATION

Ask the People is a consultation organized by the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB). It involved over 500 migrants and refugees in seven EU countries and was conducted between September and December 2018. The EMAB is a self-led group of advisors with immigrant and refugee backgrounds. It was initiated by the [Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees](#) under the Urban Agenda for the European Union and works to increase the participation of immigrants and refugees in different policy-making processes affecting their fundamental rights.

Since its establishment in March 2018, the EMAB has sought to represent and defend the interests of migrants and refugees in Europe. The members of the EMAB were selected because they each engage with refugee and migrant organisations in the places where they live. The board aims to

amplify the perspectives of refugees and migrants in policy debate and contributes to improving integration policy by providing recommendations from local and grassroots organisations to policymakers on all relevant levels.

The consultation focused on eight areas: integration, access to the labour market, housing, higher education, participation, the situation of unaccompanied minors, microcredit, and the EU Action Plan on Return. Board members chose these topics as key issues based on the members' first-hand experience.

The geographical focus of the consultation reflects the city and country members of the Partnership as well as the places where the EMAB members work and live: Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Ask the People” is a consultation organized by the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB) to gain first-hand insights from migrants and refugees about the impact that migration policies have on them. The survey involved over 500 migrants and refugees across seven EU countries (Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain) and focused on eight areas: integration, labour market access, housing, higher education, participation in decision-making, the situation of unaccompanied minors, access to microcredit, and the EU Action Plan on Return.

EMAB members and migration experts conducted the consultation between September and December 2018. The consultation consisted of 21 focus groups that engaged a total of 260 participants. In addition, the consultation carried out an online survey of 265 respondents.

The results demonstrate that migrants and refugees have the experience and expertise to inform public debates and to ensure better policymaking. Currently, experts who have

“Refugees and migrants get fed up when they are not taken seriously. When we reach out to them and actually listen to them, they get excited and share their inner voice with us. That’s what makes the difference.”

Anila Noor, EMAB member

experience as migrants and refugees are underrepresented in decision-making processes. The practice of tokenism, i.e. making only symbolic efforts to be inclusive to migrants and refugees, is widespread. The EMAB has gained insights into what meaningful participation can look like and provides recommendations about how organisations and policymakers can be more inclusive. The consultation has highlighted the clear need for European institutions and organisations to make greater efforts to consult and involve newcomers through “structured participation” so that their inclusion is truly effective.

HOUSING

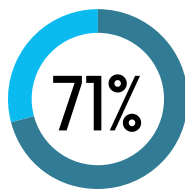
The consultation found that employment opportunities and integration are severely undermined when migrants are allocated housing outside city centres with limited access to essential services and public transport. Participants reported widespread discriminatory attitudes by landlords.

The EMAB recommends that housing should meet minimum standards for dignified living, be close to services and have good transportation links. To avoid stigmatisation, migrants should be housed in mixed neighbourhoods.

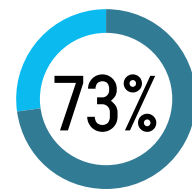
“Lately I’ve seen landlords place ads that say a rental apartment is only available to Spanish people.”

Focus group participant, Spain

INTEGRATION

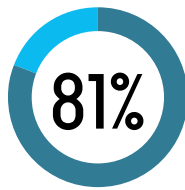


Are very dissatisfied with the integration services provided.

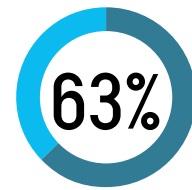


Say the quality of skills assessment services for refugees and migrants is inadequate

MIGRANTS' RESPONSES TO INTEGRATION SURVEY



Want improvements in the quality of language courses that are practical and focus on migrants' needs



Believe that host countries need to improve access to, and quality of, vocational and on-the-job training

Most respondents experienced discrimination, and were very dissatisfied with the integration services provided in their host country. The EMAB recommends that governments prioritise

language learning to facilitate social and economic integration, and that governments provide multi-lingual information to increase access to public services.

“Discrimination is a daily experience for me and for my fellow migrants and refugees whether in schools, hospitals, on the streets, in trains, buses... In my neighbourhood, people will be looking at me and start whispering. Sometimes, they verbally attack me, saying ‘why can’t you remove your headscarf and be part of the human race.’ This makes me feel bad in a way I can’t even express.”

Focus group participant, Italy

EMPLOYMENT

Of online survey participants, 34 percent of respondents were out of work, 65 percent said they were not satisfied with vocational training courses offered to them, while 50 percent found it difficult to find suitable work close to their area of residence. A large number of migrants and refugees identified two main challenges in accessing employment: support for learning the local language and having their qualifications recognized. Other common themes were low wages and unrealistic skills requirements by employers.

The EMAB recommends that employers lower language requirements for labour market entry and make skills recognition processes more accessible, effective and equitable. Employers and government should also give more attention to improving women's access to employment.

“The contact persons at the municipality often do not provide enough information about trainings that help access jobs. Not enough attention is paid to skills, experiences and wishes. Often, it is just about getting people off social benefits. This means talent and skills are lost.”

Focus group participant, Spain

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS

Many respondents said that those who arrived as unaccompanied minors did not feel sufficiently protected and had experienced discrimination or racism when undergoing age assessment.

The EMAB recommends that tutors or guardians should accompany minors during the age assessment in order to avoid abusive situations, and that authorities should avoid potentially subjective age assessments conducted by only one official.

“When I arrived at the hospital, the doctor told the interpreter to stay outside and then did the exam on my wrist and later told me to undress. I took my shirt off, but he told me to take off everything, even my underwear, and started touching my private parts. I felt terrible.”

Focus group participant, Italy

MICROCREDIT

The survey revealed that very few newcomers are aware of the possibility of getting a loan to start a new business. Migrants and refugees also noted that when this information was available, it was often difficult to understand.

The EMAB recommends that authorities and agencies provide better information on microcredit opportunities and simplify the processes and requirements for obtaining loans.

HIGHER EDUCATION

The online survey revealed that host countries only fully recognized a minority of participants' university degrees.

The EMAB recommends that information about studies is provided in multiple languages and that migrants' academic qualifications are recognized. In addition, more programmes for short trainings should be developed to support people who just need a "refresher course" in a desired field.

PARTICIPATION

Participation of refugees and migrants in political decision-making and policy formulation is generally quite low. The consultation found that the tone of political discussion about migration and integration in host countries was quite negative.

The EMAB recommends that governments and local authorities carry out regular consultations with migrants and refugees and community organisations, especially prior to amending policies affecting their legal status or well-being, and that they develop strategies and platforms to engage host communities and refugee groups to promote social cohesion and diversity. To avoid tokenism, "structured participation" models should be adopted by EU, national and regional institutions, which provide the necessary means, space, opportunity, and support. NGOs that represent refugees and migrants should also lead by example in their own recruitment and promotion.

"Political parties are only interested in migrants when the party believes they can get votes."

Focus group participant in Helsinki, Finland

EU ACTION PLAN ON RETURN

The consultation found that forced return is a pressing anxiety for many respondents, and a challenge to their ability to integrate. More than half the participants said they were not considering returning to their country of origin and would not consider moving voluntarily to a third country. Many participants said they would prefer more investment in integration efforts than forced return policies.

As seeking asylum is not a crime but a human right, the EMAB recommends that detention centres be closed. Financial resources should instead be dedicated to support the social inclusion of migrants and refugees.

"We always feel bad about it whenever the topic is discussed... You can't just pick up someone and throw him or her back to her country just like that."

Focus group participant

Conclusions

The consultation demonstrates that a vast reservoir of expertise exists among migrant and refugee representatives. Currently, experts with migrant and minority backgrounds are severely underrepresented in EU institutions and decision-making.

In order for EU and member state authorities to implement these recommendations, the European Union should involve them in “structured participation,” meaning that participation is not an add-on but rather a planned process from design to evaluation within existing structures and processes.

The Urban Agenda Partnership on the Integration of Refugees and Migrants was a useful initiative that should be continued beyond 2019. The European Union’s Migration Forum is a welcome process, but participation needs to move beyond annual events. From the EMAB experience, governments and organisations need to regard participation as a right rather than a gift. To be meaningful, these efforts must include resources for participation, including for self-led refugee and migrant groups, so that newcomers can contribute to effective and sustainable policymaking.

In addition, migrant and refugee leaders should be involved in consultation processes for the following:

- ☆ Updating the EU Integration Action Plan
- ☆ Reforming and implementing a Common European Asylum System
- ☆ Developing EU budget and relevant funding program design, monitoring, and evaluation
- ☆ Expanding EU networks on migrant integration, education, employment, and entrepreneurship
- ☆ Engaging with European membership organisations that work with migrant students, migrant women, minority groups, refugees, undocumented migrants, etc.

“The European Migrant Advisory Board taught us that it’s not enough to design good programmes, we can learn from refugees and migrants, and do a better job of informing them.”

Ayten Dogan, Office of the Commissioner of the Senate of Berlin for Integration and Migration

Methodology

The consultation consisted of an online survey of 265 respondents and of 21 focus groups involving a total of 260 participants. A group of EMAB members designed each set of questions for the survey and the focus groups. Members developed the questions, based on their respective area of expertise as well as their own experiences as refugees or migrants. All board members implemented the same methodological approach in their local communities, trying to reduce or eliminate any potential bias.

Board members shared the online survey through their networks and their respective organisations. Members also conducted the focus groups in the locations where they currently live. For technical reasons, only returns in English were included in this survey.

Two hundred and sixty five respondents participated in the online survey: 27 percent were from Germany (mostly from Berlin), 24 percent from Finland (mostly Helsinki), 15 percent from the Netherlands, 11 percent from Greece (mostly

Athens), 11 percent from Italy, 5 percent from Spain, 2 percent from Portugal (mostly Lisbon) with the remainder based in other EU countries. From this sample, more than half (53 percent) had lived in their current location for less than three years. The respondents' came from more than 50 countries of origin including Somali (17 percent), Syria (15 percent), Afghanistan (8 percent), Iraq (5 percent), Iran (4 percent), Egypt (4 percent) and Sudan (4 percent).

In addition to the online survey, EMAB members conducted 21 different focus groups that involved 260 participants, mostly between the ages of 20 and 45 years old who had a migrant or refugee background and lived in one of the seven focus cities and countries. Board members were trained to facilitate focus group meetings. Facilitators tried to get a gender and nationality balance wherever possible, and while most discussions were in English, there was some scope for translation and indigenous language contributions.

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RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

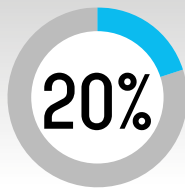
1. Housing



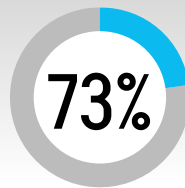
The consultation found that employment opportunities and integration are severely undermined when migrants are allocated housing outside city centres with limited access to essential services and public transport. Participants reported widespread discriminatory attitudes by landlords.

There are very different housing conditions in the survey cities, though in all cities housing has wider ramifications on newcomers' lives in terms of employment, mental health and livelihoods.

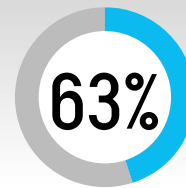
Online survey



of respondents said they didn't feel comfortable in their place of residence



said that they were living too far away from employment opportunities and essential services



expressed having no fear of discrimination or racism in their place of residence



Focus groups

FINLAND: Participants expressed satisfaction with their living conditions, but all were concerned with the high cost of rent, which limits their ability to relocate and is a drain on family savings. Respondents said landlords could be reluctant to accept migrants and refugees as tenants as they fear complaints from neighbours or a failure by tenants to pay rent. Some landlords were concerned about a potentially negative impact on integration prospects of being housed in a neighbourhood with other migrants and refugees (which reduced prospects for learning Finnish, interacting with locals), though others felt that it was helpful to be near people that speak the same language in order to help them integrate and get vital information that would otherwise be hard to get in such neighbourhoods.

GERMANY: The general housing situation has a particular impact on the integration of refugees and migrants as they are often allocated lodgings located outside city centres and are farther away from essential services. Most of the migrants who participated in the focus groups said they had faced discrimination and/or racism since their arrival in Germany.

GREECE: Migrants' levels of dissatisfaction have been high here. Respondents noted that it took up to six months before local authorities allocated them any housing. Refugee and migrant housing is often far away from services. The Survey participants had a very high perception of discrimination when it came to provision of public services.

“There are thousands of people living on the streets or in squats in inhumane conditions as asylum services are very hard to reach.”

Focus group participant, Greece

Italy: The focus group in Italy explained that their options were staying with a family or going to a reception centre. Recent newcomers said that their current house was very far away from services, which created considerable difficulties in their daily lives. Focus group participants said they did receive support from social housing projects and volunteers, but faced difficult financial conditions limited options. Affordable houses tended to be a long distance away from services, which created barriers to education and health services and limited social interaction to close neighbours.

THE NETHERLANDS: Focus group participants said finding a house can take many months in the Netherlands due to the limited supply of affordable housing. Housing is arranged by the government, and respondents felt that their opinions and interests were not taken into consideration. There are more favourable allocations for certain categories such as students and people with serious health problems. The allocation system means that many migrants and refugees are housed in neighbourhoods where few Dutch families live, confining newcomers to socializing only with other migrants and refugees and limiting the possibility of integration into society. This can lead to feelings of segregation and isolation, reinforced by association with neighbourhoods that have pre-existing negative stereotypes.

Respondents noted that they received discriminatory comments, particularly with respect to symbols of religious difference. This had an impact on their ability to seek or accept certain jobs given the constraints of distance and the cost of public transport. Housing segregation also hindered respondents' ability to integrate because they had few opportunities to learn Dutch.

PORTUGAL: Agencies and officials in Portugal allocated free housing for 18 months to refugees. However, many respondents said basic conditions were often lacking, including electricity and water supply, and housing was often located in areas with poor transport links and far away from the places to work. There are also problems with social integration and security in areas where migrants and refugees are housed. After 18 months, refugees have to find another house and cover all costs themselves, which is extremely challenging, particularly as refugees are faced with considerable hurdles to secure employment and social integration.

Spain: Focus group participants said finding housing was difficult in Spain because of discriminatory attitudes and high prices. The cheapest flats are outside city centres, which has created immigration zones where integration of newcomers is difficult. Participants felt it was important to have a network of contacts from

their home country to secure at least a flat share. Housing location also plays a role in finding a job, not only because of the distance but also because of a widespread bias in job interviews against applicants from neighbourhoods with many migrants and refugees.

“If you don’t have a good place to live and you have to move out of an apartment, it is always to an area where there are a lot of immigrants. When you have a job interview, they ask you where you live”

Focus group participant, Spain.

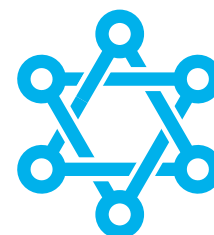
General recommendations

- ★ Housing should meet minimum standards required for dignified living, be close to services, and have good transportation links.
 - ★ Housing allocation should contribute to the social integration of refugees and migrants, which includes mixed neighbourhoods, not segregated migrant and refugee communities.
 - ★ Governments should consider providing direct financial support for housing to families rather than allocating housing. Direct financial support can foster dignity, initiative, and autonomy.
-

Recommendations for local governments

- ★ Provide additional financial support for migrants and refugees for housing because the cycle of segregation is exacerbated when migrants and refugees group are subject to isolation and distanced from jobs and other services.
- ★ Provide mobility support, including access to affordable public transport, if housing is only available in areas outside of cities and towns.
- ★ Address the stigmatization of neighbourhoods with social, cultural and educational activities that can create positive perceptions of the neighbourhood, such as inclusion activities, social marketing campaigns, activities that counter stereotyping of refugees and migrants.
- ★ Expand the criteria considered in house allocation systems to include access to services and transportation, the needs of vulnerable groups, and opportunities for migrant to interact with host communities.

2. Integration

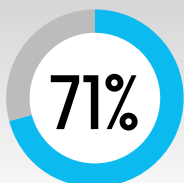


Most respondents had experienced discrimination, and were very dissatisfied with the integration services provided in their host country. Particular challenges noted were language courses, skills assessments undertaken by authorities, and vocational and on-the-job training.

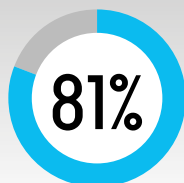
While all of the issues considered in this consultation relate to integration, participants were asked specific questions about their ability to integrate in society, including experiences

of discrimination. Migrants' answers to these questions made it evident that learning the local language, job integration, and housing are key conditions for successful integration.

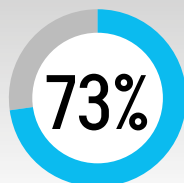
Online survey results



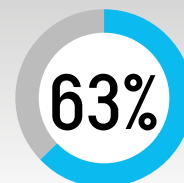
of the respondents are very dissatisfied with the integration services provided



want to see improvements in the quality of language courses, with instruction that is designed to meet their particular needs



say the quality of skills assessment services for refugees and migrants is inadequate



believe improvements are needed in access to, and quality of, vocational and on-the-job training

Focus group results

FINLAND: The majority of focus group participants in Finland felt supported and given a chance to explain what they wanted. However, some said that they felt they could not change their individual integration plan or complained about the lack of flexibility in the government's integration policies, or that they were afraid to question the policies. The requirement of having a high level of Finnish language competency made it almost impossible for many migrants to apply for work upon arrival in the country, or to access education. Almost all participants highlighted the importance of receiving clear information about the integration system from government officials and lamented misinformation given to them by fellow refugees and migrants. Despite these criticisms, participants seemed to be relatively satisfied with Helsinki's integration services.

GERMANY: Focus group respondents in Germany (Berlin), said access to information was scarce and only provided to people who had lived in the country for some time. Moreover, information is provided in only a few languages. The possibility of choosing language courses and choosing one's own housing location contributed directly to the integration process. The exchange between migrants, refugees, and locals is greater when living in the same neighbourhood, allowing both communities to understand each other and for newcomers to more easily integrate.

GREECE: Focus group respondents expressed feelings of neglect and discrimination in Greece with respect to the job market, social integration, and political participation. Almost all participants said there were no or very few integration courses available, and all respondents said the first two or three years of support in terms of housing, language courses, vocational training, and political rights and participation were necessary conditions for the integration of migrants and refugees.

ITALY: Focus group participants living in Italy raised concerns about the promotion of assimilation as a form of integration. Most participants said they did not feel integrated and found it hard to imagine such a scenario because they faced discrimination frequently, making it difficult to feel respected and part of society. Access to information and support with integration services was evaluated as being very poor. Participants said that employment integration was a key factor in providing migrants and refugees with financial autonomy could lead to better recognition, less dependency, and fewer sources of conflict. Respondents expressed very strong feelings of sadness, humiliation, and dissatisfaction when asked about discrimination:

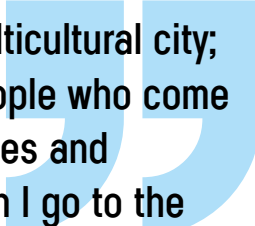
THE NETHERLANDS: According to migrants and refugees living in the Netherlands, their integration experiences varied depending on the service in question and their location and age. People aged between 18 and 27 years old benefit from direct assistance by the municipality, and can ask questions about study, work, and language centres. For those who are older than 27, getting information or access to services is much harder as municipalities tend to provide fewer services to older migrants. All participants agreed that their municipality should provide information in their native language, especially in the first year of their arrival. At the moment, newcomers in the Netherlands receive official letters from the municipality about integration only in Dutch. Participants pointed out that integration was not only about learning language or adopting Dutch culture but also about access to good employment.

PORTUGAL: For the focus group in Portugal, most of the participants shared the opinion that integration services for migrants and refugees were not satisfactory.

Participants had problems with the bureaucracy and delays in acquiring legal documents like residency cards and a social security number. Most refugees in the focus group did not have access to Portuguese language classes. Similarly, respondents described problems with accessing health care centres and hospitals.

SPAIN: All participants in Spain said they felt integrated but expressed frustration when people in schools and neighbourhoods asked them uncomfortable questions about their origin. Participants noted that differences exist between the integration of people who have documentation and those who do not. Integration in the labour market is considered challenging and respondents felt that immigrants were always given the same (menial) jobs. Members of the group consulted in Catalonia said their integration was easy because many of them

had come to Barcelona as students so they had to learn Catalan, and there were centres for immigrants to learn the language. Several respondents noted their inability to find work appropriate to their level of qualification and experience.



“Barcelona is a multicultural city; there are many people who come from different places and countries. But when I go to the bank, I do not see any women with hijabs. I only see them cleaning stairs or in the kitchen in Arab restaurants. That is not an inclusive city.”

Focus group participant, Spain

Recommendations for local governments

- ★ Bolster programmes that improve the interaction between the host community and newcomers.
 - ★ Prioritise language learning to facilitate social and economic integration and reduce misunderstandings with host communities.
 - ★ Combat discrimination, including simpler mechanisms to report racist and discriminatory incidents.
 - ★ Reduce language barriers to accessing public services by providing information in different languages for newcomers.
 - ★ Improve monitoring of private sector service providers that run training courses, language classes, and other pro-integration services. Service providers should only work with those businesses that respect labour rights and do not exploit cheap or free labour of refugees and migrants.
-

Recommendations for the European Union and national governments

- ★ Prioritise assistance to vulnerable refugees and migrants, particularly those who are living on the streets (in Greece and Italy, particularly).
- ★ Establish clear benchmarks that comply with EU and national and local standards for integration and basic human rights protections.
- ★ Improve access to asylum application services, including more accessible locations.

3. Employment

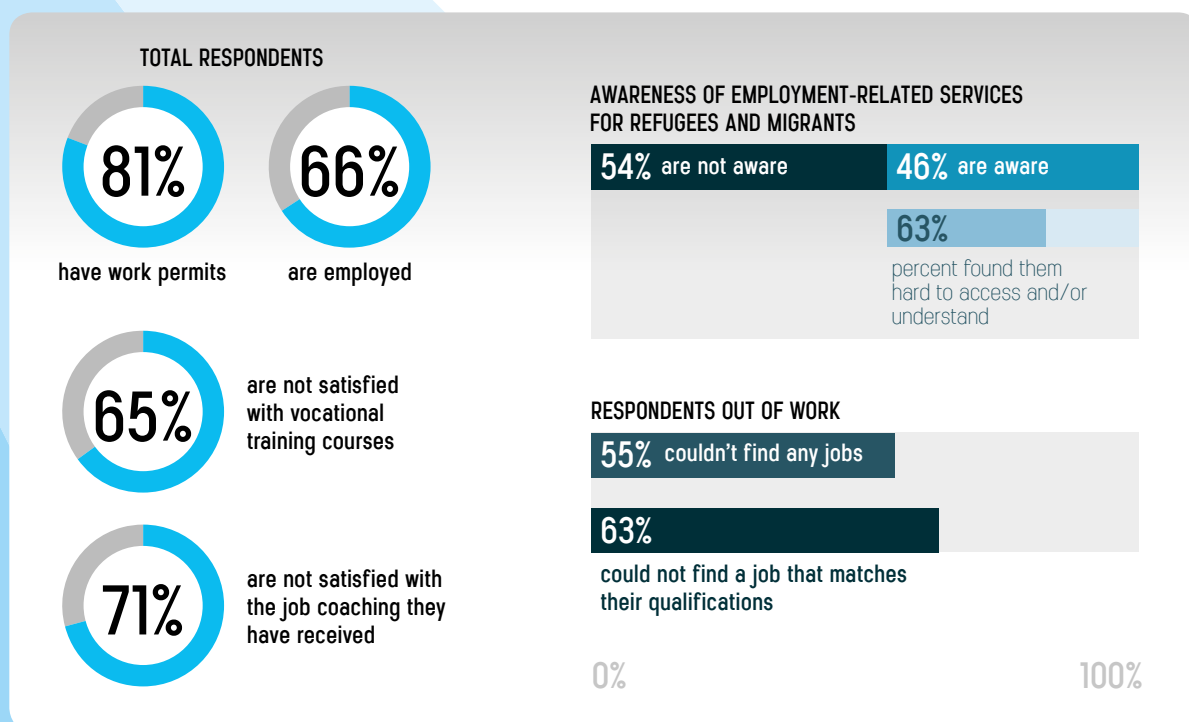


The two main challenges identified in accessing employment were support for learning of the local language and having one's qualifications recognised. A common theme was the low pay migrants and refugees received and the unrealistic level of language skills required.

Respondents said that the labour market plays an essential role in terms of dignity, financial autonomy, social integration, and the overall process of integration in the host country.

They also identified learning the language and qualification recognition as two major conditions for a better process of job integration.

Online survey results



Focus group results

FINLAND: Focus group participants all had jobs or were in a work-orientation program. Of those who worked, only one expressed satisfaction with their job; the others were not happy with their salaries due to the high cost of living in Finland. Participants felt quite satisfied with job training and placement programmes, especially with programmes provided by the Helsinki city government. A majority thought that the national employment service was not as efficient as the local programmes. Participants felt that the need to learn Finnish was important, but that employers set the fluency levels too high and made it difficult to find better jobs. The focus group in Finland also felt that negative stereotypes of immigrants reduced their prospects for employment.

GERMANY: Almost half of the focus group in Germany had no work permits, which prevented them from accessing any job integration program (a small part of the group did not even know that such programmes existed). Participants said that learning German was another challenge; they experienced it as a complicated learning process that needed more time than they had, especially for those with language barriers.

Focus group members said they needed more interaction with locals and free support for language learning in order to improve their entrance into the labour market.

In the case of **Greece** and **Italy**, participants shared very similar experiences, with participants in the focus group working long hours (12 to 14 hours per day), with low salaries, leaving no space for social integration and other activities. The sectors where they were able to find work were low-skilled jobs such as cleaning, washing cars, and delivery services. The focus group participants who did not have work commented that it was difficult to live, and those who were employed worked in informal jobs and without social security or insurance. When asked about work-orientation programmes,

most had not experienced such courses, which were seen as providing access to what one respondent described as “jobs that the Italians don’t want to do.”

The group suggested it would be helpful to create centres of skills recognition and abilities, which would help them find jobs more suited to their skills and previous work experiences. Along with language barriers, they felt that it was important that the environment is not discriminatory or racist. A majority agreed that there should be career guidance programmes to match job offers with the skills and competencies of each person.

In the **NETHERLANDS**, one-third of those who participated in the focus group were working part-time. However, they emphasized that their jobs did not correspond to their professional experience. Some also pointed out that the job search in the Netherlands was slow in comparison with their countries of origin, and they relied on a network of contacts to secure work. There was a noticeable lack of motivation among the participants, as they felt that the job search process was not focused on the recognition of their skills and abilities but more on getting them off social assistance and on ensuring financial independence. They were forced to take up low-skilled and low-paid jobs. Participants with lower educational qualifications said they could not access job search courses because these were not adapted to their needs and they needed more time, something the municipality could not offer.

“Integration is not only about learning a language or adapting yourself to the Dutch culture, it is about getting the right economic opportunities.”

Focus group participant, Netherlands

In **PORTUGAL**, refugees had problems finding jobs, mainly because the administrative situation made them “lose” one year by requiring them to get the residence permit before they could legally work. Language was another difficulty, and participants called for more language courses in order to facilitate their integration into the labour market. Some said they did not know about existing language courses or job-orientation centres and programmes, which reduced their chances of finding a job. The jobs they could get were generally low-skilled ones, with low salaries and tough working conditions. Some respondents—especially those in Lisbon—expressed that it was through informal avenues (friends and NGOs) that they had managed to find a job.

In **SPAIN (Barcelona)**, all group participants had only short-term contracts in low-skilled and low-salary sectors (e.g., as cleaning staff in hotels), and that sector was becoming more competitive. One participant said: “In cleaning jobs, there are always Dominicans. Immigrants always do that kind of work.” Participants noted the importance of Catalan language skills to find a job, but that this was no guarantee of better working conditions. In general, participants did not feel content with their jobs, but said they needed a job to get documentation.

“The contact persons at the municipality often do not provide enough information about trainings that help access jobs. There is not enough attention paid to skills, experiences and wishes. Often, an attempt is made to link people to work to get them off social benefits. This means talent and skills are lost.”

“We (refugees) are integrated when we get the job opportunities. For jobs, the most important thing is ‘networking.’ The more we meet with people and build up our network, the more job opportunities we can avail. In the Netherlands, you get the job with references that you make during networking.”

Focus group participants, Spain

General recommendations

- ★ Lower the language requirement for labour market entry, which will accelerate learning and economic independence.
 - ★ Create new tools to provide a more sophisticated assessment of skills and experience, beyond the limited and flawed equivalency determinations.
 - ★ Provide more attention to the assessment of women's skills and their employment opportunities.
 - ★ Highlight success stories through role models in order to inspire and motivate other newcomers.
 - ★ Consider providing job coaching and vocational training in the language of clients as well as host communities, to facilitate their access to the labour market.
 - ★ Simplify financial and technical support for refugees and migrants who want to start a new business.
 - ★ Improve cooperation and communication between national and municipal employment services (particularly in Spain).
-

Recommendations for local governments

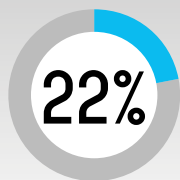
- ★ Ensure that integration officials work with clients to help to create a comprehensive and clear plan and timeline for skills development and access to internships or employment possibilities.
- ★ Create an employment app and/or database to enable newcomers to identify organisations that can provide them with assistance.

4. Unaccompanied minors

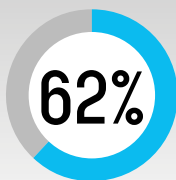


Many respondents said that those who arrived as unaccompanied minors did not feel sufficiently protected and had experienced discrimination or racism when undergoing age assessment.

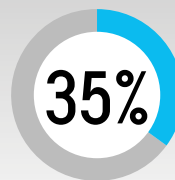
Online survey results



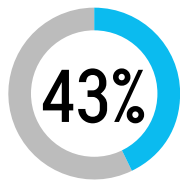
arrived as a minor to their current city



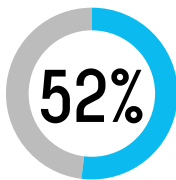
disagree or strongly disagree that they are protected and enjoying the same rights as EU minors



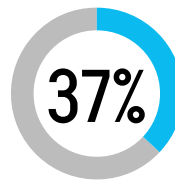
disagree or strongly disagree that they were provided with the necessary information through a qualified cultural mediator in the process of age assessment



experienced discrimination or racism while awaiting or during the age assessment



agree or strongly agree that they were accommodated in a place where adults are lodged while awaiting or during age assessment



were exposed to some risks while awaiting or during age assessment

Focus group results

For the group from **Finland**, all participants agreed that their experience was fearful because of the lack of family support and due to not knowing the new country. Some stated that they also felt excited about the “new world.” One participant said he came during winter time and was crying and afraid but felt excited about the snow and enjoyed playing outside because that way he could for a second feel “free of pain.” All said that there was no age assessment at the time they came to Finland. However, one participant said he did hear that, nowadays, age assessments were undertaken by the authorities.

In **Italy**, the group said that in the reception centre there was a long waiting time to start their asylum application. The age assessment was described as an invasive body check without the presence of any translator.

“When I arrived at the hospital, the doctor told the interpreter to stay outside and then did the exam on my wrist and later told me to undress. I took my shirt off, but he told me to take off everything, even my underwear, and started touching my private parts. Then later he told me to get dressed and go outside, and he told the interpreter that the result will be sent to the reception centre when it is ready. I felt terrible.”

Focus group participant, Italy

In the **Netherlands**, some participants shared that their age was identified by documents, while others said age assessment was done by making a calculated guess. In some cases, participants were arrested at the airport until they were able to clarify their age because they were not in possession of any documents. Some participants said they felt that Syrians and Eritreans got on the “priority list” while refugees from other countries—such as Afghanistan, Iran, or Iraq—were scrutinized more harshly.

Seven out of eight participants said that interviewers lacked empathy towards unaccompanied minors and failed to show an understanding for how the experience of travelling alone thousands of miles might have affected these minors. Participants noted that once the Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND) officials made a (subjective) judgment about an individual’s age, it becomes almost impossible to change that assessment. If it is not accurate, it could cause problems later on. Five out of eight participants said that this method was based on “guesstimation.” Participants felt that sometimes, when minors got a permit, IND deliberately delayed their case until they became “adults” so that they could not invite their families to join them in the Netherlands. Seven out of eight participants said that while the system really took care of minors as far as accommodation and education were concerned, the emotional well-being of minors was not taken into account. All participants agreed that female minors were the most vulnerable as they were in a minority and at risk of trafficking, prostitution, and harassment.

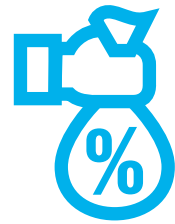
General recommendations

- ★ Ensure the transfer of unaccompanied minors to child reception centres upon arrival.
 - ★ Ensure that minors are accompanied by a guardian during the age assessment in order to avoid any abusive situations, and investigate allegations of abuse.
 - ★ Avoid relying only on subjective assessment by one official to make age determinations.
 - ★ Provide unaccompanied minors with guaranteed residency in the EU country in which they seek protection.
 - ★ Recommendations for local governments
 - ★ Anticipate reception requirements for unaccompanied minors in planning and preparation since ad hoc responses can exacerbate vulnerability.
-

Recommendations for national governments

- ★ Ensure that upon arrival, unaccompanied minors are provided all necessary information regarding the asylum process, including how they can apply for family reunification.
- ★ Protect unaccompanied minors from arrest based on the legal status of their parents.
- ★ Strengthen policies regarding the protection rights of unaccompanied minors, in particular preventing them from being arrested at airports.
- ★ Accelerate the fair processing of cases of unaccompanied minors.
- ★ Improve communication between unaccompanied minors and authorities, including adequate interpretation.

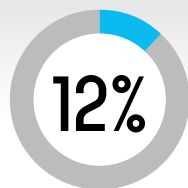
5. Microcredit



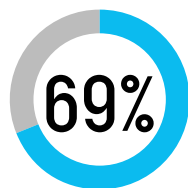
The consultation reveals that very few newcomers are aware of the possibility of getting a loan to start a new business and that available information is often difficult to understand.

Online survey results

TOTAL RESPONDENTS

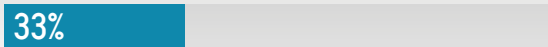


had heard about the availability of small loans for refugees and migrants

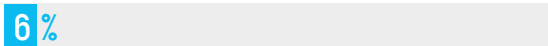


said they were interested to learn more about microcredit opportunities

RESPONDENTS WHO HAD HEARD ABOUT MICROCREDIT



thought the information was sufficient, accessible and easy to understand



of those who had heard about microcredit did actually apply for it

0%

100%



Focus group results

Microcredit is not a sufficiently visible option for the refugees and migrants consulted, as over 70 percent of participants in focus groups were not aware of the existence of such instruments. The microcredit programmes known by a small percentage of the group are the general national programmes that are not specifically focused on vulnerable communities. Only in the case of Finland were respondents aware of employment services providing them with information about start-up businesses.

In order to access microcredit and start a business, it is often necessary to have business partners and guarantors. This proves challenging for refugees and migrants who have smaller or no networks (or networks mainly composed of migrants), low economic strength in their networks, and limited visibility of migrants' past experiences. This leads to a lack of trust in their capacity to start a new business.

Participants also spoke of the role of self-limitation and negative perceptions about their own capabilities in the context of a new country where migrants and refugees were still not oriented, informed, or respected. This reduced their motivation to take the initiative that involved risks. In the case of the group in the Netherlands, participants did not regard themselves as eligible for such programmes.

A combination of obstacles makes access to microcredit and new business ventures highly unlikely; vulnerability and diminished self-confidence; poor access to information; limited capital; weak social networks; inflexible tax rates for microcredit. Only 2 percent of those consulted online referred to a business venture, and only 11 percent of the participants were aware of the availability of microcredit.

General recommendations

- ★ Disseminate better information on microcredit through media, financial institutions and other networks, in multiple languages.
 - ★ Simplify the processes for obtaining a loan and lower the requirements for guarantees.
-

Recommendations for local governments and civil society

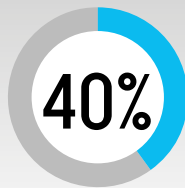
- ★ Ensure that training is provided to support migrants and refugees during the different stages of accessing microcredit (e.g., application, implementation, and evaluation). Share information about such trainings with organisations providing entrepreneurship development services to migrants and refugees, as they would be in a position to provide appropriate support.
- ★ Inform and support newcomers to access microcredit by providing workshops
- ★ Ensure that potential applicants have access to legal advice and support, including reassurance about impact of a possible business failure (e.g. no effect on housing, asylum process).

6. Higher education



The consultation revealed that only a minority of participants had their university degrees fully recognized by their host country.

Online survey results



completed higher education in home country (bachelor, master or PhD)

RESPONDENTS THAT EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION

29%

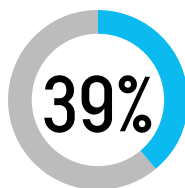
from other students or from professors

38%

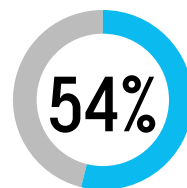
from university administrators

0%

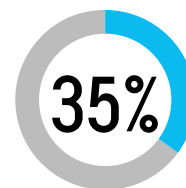
100%



of those who applied for qualification recognition received complete recognition of their previous qualifications



experienced language difficulties



faced challenges related to the costs associated with their studies

Focus group results

In **PORTUGAL**, it was stated by several respondents that integration in university depended a lot on the professor and the course itself. If the professor wanted to collaborate, things were easier and simpler. Sometimes, lack of communication due to language barriers made acquiring information and integration harder than it should be. The challenge for this group was access to university, including finding scholarships, language courses, and the equivalence process (i.e., recognition of their existing degrees).

In the **NETHERLANDS**, focus group participants felt that refugees and migrants had to start from scratch, which was demotivating and failed to capitalise on their prior experience and knowledge. The majority of participants agreed that the Dutch education system was based on standard courses where newcomers had to stick to a certain method that did not necessarily work for them. However, some schools were trying to be more welcoming for newcomers. One female participant was upset that the process of moving from asylum centres to the assigned accommodation in a municipality could take years, and that refugees could not start further education properly during this period, which was a huge waste of time. Other participants supported her view. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the degree equivalency system, which was overly complicated. Some certificates were not recognized by the Dutch education system and another mechanism was needed to evaluate the skills and experience level of the refugees.

In **ITALY**, the group felt that information about higher education was accessible. Nevertheless, language and transportation were daily obstacles to overcome. Some concern was expressed about discriminatory attitudes in the education system.

In **FINLAND**, those who finished their degree studies said information and integration in their universities had gone quite “smoothly.” They also said that the “tutor” system in universities was helpful for new students to have all necessary information about how the system works. They were satisfied with their university or school; they liked the autonomy of students in terms of the time they had to finish their studies, as well the number of optional courses. There was no perception of discrimination in the school system in the group consulted from Finland.

In **SPAIN** (Catalonia), there was a general expression of satisfaction, but some respondents said they had found it difficult to get recognition for their university degrees. The biggest challenge was to combine study and work, as public university was expensive.

In **GERMANY** (Berlin), most group participants expressed a willingness to proceed with their studies but said the lack of access to information or support were obstacles to overcome. Especially for wheelchair users, the lack of the necessary facilities was difficult.

General recommendations

- ★ Ensure information is available in multiple languages about education opportunities and requirements, ideally in places where they receive other support. Educational institutions should provide clear information about rules and technical issues students may face.
 - ★ Improve access to language courses and consider free support for the most vulnerable groups.
 - ★ Increase scholarships for refugee and migrant students.
 - ★ Improve qualification recognition and equivalence processes in order to ensure that previous skills and competences are taken into consideration. This is particularly relevant for those with higher education from their home countries, who have access to certificates.
 - ★ Expand tutor programmes in universities so that each student can benefit from a supervisor.
 - ★ Develop better support mechanisms for language tests (e.g., TOEFL).
-

Recommendations for local governments

- ★ Develop more programmes for accelerated and short trainings. This will support the people who just need a refresher course in the desired field.
- ★ Recommendations for NGOs and civil society organisations
- ★ Develop programmes to allow learning through volunteer work, internships etc.

7. Participation



Participation of refugees and migrants in political decision-making and policy formulation is generally quite low. The consultation found that the tone of political discussion about migration and integration in their host country was quite negative.

Focus group results

In **Finland**, some suggested that primary schools should encourage participation from an early age. It was proposed that for specific groups such as migrant young women there could be a training course on “Participation and political literacy” which would allow them to become more active and access the existing mechanisms of participation in their cities. The group also agreed that different local institutions should give practical training to young migrants on political participation.

A significant number of participants believed that political discussion in their host country was quite negative, especially if it touched on questions of migration and integration. It was suggested that media and other discussions about integration policy and refugees should always try to include those with first-hand experience. One man mentioned that he often participated in a monthly group discussion organized by a local migrant-led organisation to which local or national politicians are invited to talk about policies with the migrants. Some of the participants felt the interest of politicians was more focused on votes than on what really concerned people.

Some respondents said that migrants’ involvement in political arena was meaningless because they were not taken seriously. Other participants rejected this view, noting that Helsinki City Council had four migrant representatives and a vice-mayor with a migrant background. However, the group agreed that the political parties could include representatives of migrants and refugees in each party section. The group specifically agreed that this could work for the political parties that identify themselves as defenders of the principle of “equality of all.”

“Political parties are only interested in migrants only when the party believes they can get votes.”

Focus group participant in Finland

In **GREECE**, almost all participants agreed that political rights such as voting or nomination rights should be guaranteed, as in Greece no matter how long refugees or migrants have lived in the country, they do not have the right to vote.

In **GERMANY (Berlin)**, the majority in the group echoed the view that access to information and training were fundamental resources that allow a safe space and opportunities for migrants and refugees to participate. The group also mentioned that parliaments, political parties and civil society should connect with young people to find out about their needs and organize study visits and/or trainings that take these interests into consideration.

In **ITALY**, respondents felt that migrants and refugees should be given more opportunities to participate in public debate, especially on topics that concerned them, and that it was important to build capacity and communication skills to make such participation more impactful.

In the **NETHERLANDS (Amsterdam)**, the group agreed that people from all educational and cultural backgrounds and age groups should be included in the decision-making process about new arrivals. All participants acknowledged that there although not all migrants/refugees could be involved in decision-making, a representative group must be chosen to represent their interests.

In **PORTUGAL**, respondents said that refugees and migrants were not represented in public events such as conferences and lectures about migration, or that they were included only in a “decorative”

role. They also expressed the difficulty for a young person to find support from an NGO or the government to start any activity, and that gender equality is also not assured.

In **SPAIN (Barcelona)**, everyone in the group agreed that it was very important for political parties to identify people with migrant backgrounds in order to understand how they can be better engaged and included in political processes. It was difficult for any young people to participate even if they have no migration background. The group pointed out the importance of political parties connecting with young peoples' interests and problems to encourage greater participation.

The importance of **gender equality and women empowerment** was also stressed in the context of participation, and the importance education plays to fight stereotypes. Participants identified common stereotype in host cultures, such as ‘Arabs do not respect women's rights’, and observed limited understanding of the nuances of cultural norms. The importance of building bridges was a priority that would improve communication and understanding about gender equality.

Female participants also expressed feelings of being ignored, especially women aged between 40 and 50. They said that greater socialization and involvement in activities in which they were skilled would allow them to learn the local language and become more involved in decision-making within their communities.

General recommendations

- ★ The EU, national and regional governments should involve refugees and migrants in “structured participation”, meaning that participation is not an add-on but rather a planned process from design to evaluation within existing structures and processes.
- ★ Enhance support provided by national and local governments and civil society to migrant/refugees’ representative bodies and refugee-led organisations.
- ★ Encourage and facilitate women to seek greater involvement in political participation at all levels.
- ★ Carry out regular consultations with migrants and refugees and community organisations in order to inform policy-makers, especially prior to amending policies affecting their legal status or well-being.
- ★ Develop strategies and platforms to engage host communities and refugee groups in order to promote social cohesion and diversity.
- ★ Promote diversity and equal opportunities by nominating more women and young candidates from refugee backgrounds to positions in all levels in national and local governments, as well as civil society organisations ‘representing’ but not currently led by refugees and migrants.
- ★ Avoid “tokenization” of migrants in NGOs and ensure their inclusion in regional, national and local consultation processes. Improve government and NGO recruitment policies to foster inclusion.
- ★ Facilitate the establishment of platforms for refugees to give input on issues that matter to them, such as basic services, education, health, and civil and political participation.

8. EU Action Plan on Return

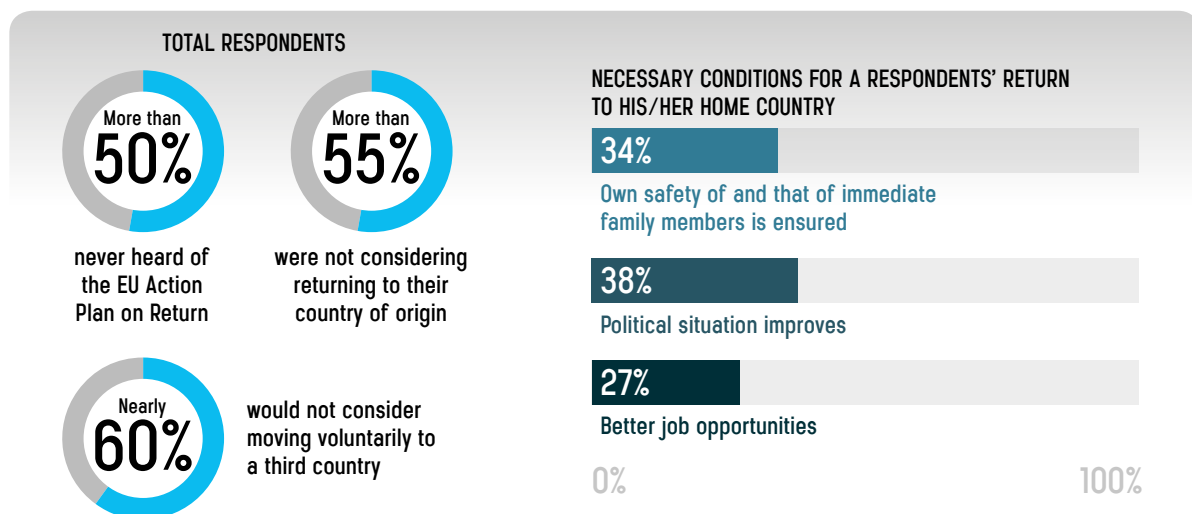


The consultation found that forced return is a pressing anxiety for many respondents, and a challenge to their ability to integrate. More than half the participants said they were not considering returning to their country of origin and would not consider moving voluntarily to a third country. Many participants said they'd prefer more investment in integration efforts than forced return policies.

While return policies are not seen as a component of integration by the EU, they are of growing relevance as more member states increase forced returns. This clearly overshadows newcomers'

attempts to integrate. The consultation did therefore include some discussion of return, and the subject was also included in the online survey.

Online survey results



Focus group results

Refugees and migrants who participated in this consultation were not aware of the EU Action Plan on Return. When the subject of return was introduced in the focus groups, participants expressed extreme sadness as it brought up many negative feelings, including losing their dignity and their life. Many viewed the prospect of return with great pain because it would mean starting over again, especially after investing so much to integrate, learn a new language and thrive in their European host country. When considering return, participants said that the necessary conditions for them included safety, political stability, freedom of speech, equal opportunities and economic opportunities as essential, and

that without any of those, return would not be a viable option for them. Some participants described the detention centre (which many returnees pass through) as being similar to a jail which was a major deterrent to return if it was used as a staging post. In the words of one participant, the centres are “a weapon to scare people.” A majority of participants would rather see investment in integration than forced return. Another participant said: *“We always feel bad about it whenever the topic is discussed...You can’t just pick up someone and throw him or her back to her country just like that”*.

General recommendations

- ★ Detention centres should be closed as this system is seen as a mechanism of oppression towards refugees and migrants.
-

Recommendations for the EU and member states

- ★ The EU and national governments should make greater diplomatic efforts to reduce and end conflicts in the country of origin.
- ★ The EU should allocate more resources for integration instead of for forced returns.

Conclusions

The consultation demonstrates that a vast reservoir of expertise exists among migrant and refugee representatives. Currently, experts with migrant and minority backgrounds are severely underrepresented in EU institutions and decision-making.

In order for EU and member state authorities to implement these recommendations, the EU should involve them in “structured participation”, meaning that participation is not an add-on but rather a planned process from design to evaluation within existing structures and processes.

The Urban Agenda Partnership on the Integration of Refugees and Migrants was a useful initiative which should be continued beyond 2019. The EU’s Migration Forum is a welcome process, but participation needs to move beyond annual events. From EMAB experience, participation needs to be regarded as a right rather than a gift. To be meaningful, it must include resources for participation, including for self-led refugee and migrant groups, so that newcomers can contribute to effective and sustainable policy making.

In addition, migrant and refugee leaders should be involved in consultation processes for the following:

- ☆ Updating the EU Integration Action Plan.
- ☆ Reform and implementation of a Common European Asylum System.
- ☆ EU budget and relevant funding program design, monitoring and evaluation.
- ☆ EU networks on migrant integration, from education, employment to entrepreneurship.
- ☆ European membership organisations working with migrant students, migrant women, minority groups, refugees, and undocumented migrants.

About the European Migrant Advisory Board

The European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB) was established in March 2018. It comprises a diverse group of experts with an immigrant and refugee background. EMAB works to increase the participation of immigrants and refugees in different policy-making processes affecting immigrants' access to rights.

The establishment of the board was one of the actions of the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. EMAB receives financial support from the Open Society Foundations. Civic & Co provides capacity building, facilitation and strategic advice to EMAB. Civic & Co is consulting company that designs innovative learning solutions for sustainable change. Open Society supports groups that work on a broad range of issues affecting the dignity, safety and well-being of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

EMAB's objectives

- ☆ Represent immigrants and refugees' interest in Europe as an advisory body through participation in policy debates and processes on local, national and European levels.
- ☆ Promote immigrants and refugees' access to rights in their communities in Europe.
- ☆ Contribute to building a positive and empowering narrative about immigration and asylum.
- ☆ Provide advice on immigration and refugee-related policies to the partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees.

EMAB stands for

- ☆ Universal human rights.
- ☆ Equality and equity for all groups.
- ☆ Meaningful participation.
- ☆ Anti-discrimination of all forms.
- ☆ Critical thinking.
- ☆ A holistic approach to social inclusion.

Members of the European Migrant Advisory Board

AMSTERDAM: Anila Noor



Anila Noor is a human rights activist and a researcher and an Open City Fellow, hosted by the City of Amsterdam. Noor has been based Netherlands since 2013 working as an independent researcher. She

holds two Masters Degrees; an MA in Conflict and Peace Studies from Erasmus University in the Netherlands and an MSc from Allama Iqbal Open University in Pakistan specializing in Gender and Women Studies. She worked for more than 12 years in research institutions and NGOs in Pakistan with two focus areas: women's rights and forced migration and integration policies. She has presented working papers at Oxford University and Bristol University in the UK and was part of a Summer School on "Forced Migration and Displacement" at the University of Tübingen, Germany. She is also a member of Kaldor Centre of Emerging Scholars Network Australia. Noor is currently working on the subject of Receiving Refugees in Urban Settings: Narratives from the Netherlands. She became involved in the subject of forced migration and identity crises after going through the same experience.

ATHENS: Asef Farjam



Asef Farjam is a sociologist and intercultural mediator with a refugee background from Afghanistan, who has been living in Greece since 2007. He is an Open City Fellow, hosted by the City of Athens, and previously worked for

Doctors of the World as an intercultural mediator. He obtained his Bachelor's degree in Sociology in 2015 from Panteion University of Athens and currently is an MA student in Sustainable Development at the Xarokopio University of Athens. Earlier in 2005 he accomplished an MCSE (Microsoft Networking Administration) course at Debagarane Tehran Technical Institute Shiraz, Iran. In September of 2013 he was nominated by the US ambassador of Athens Daniel Smith, as an IVLP (international visitor leadership program). Asef Farjam's mother tongue is Dari, but he is also fluent in English, Greek, Pashto, Farsi and Urdu. Since 2009 Farjam has worked to support refugees, migrants and other minority groups as well as volunteering with the UNHCR, the Hellenic Red Cross, MDM and the Orange House project. His life has been shaped by his personal experience and his strong belief in human dignity, universal values and sense of responsibility to find effective solutions in a challenging time. He is dedicated to the empowerment refugees and migrants to integrate and build a new life in their new host societies because he strongly believes that integration benefits both refugees and the host communities.

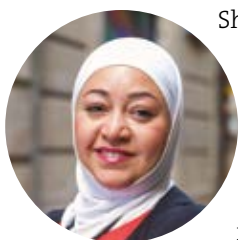
BARCELONA: Ana Lucía Olivos Pairazamán



Ana Lucía Olivos Pairazamán was born in Lima (Peru) and has been living in Barcelona for the past 27 years. She is currently an Open City Fellow. She graduated in Political Sciences

at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and has two master degrees in International Cooperation from University of Valencia (UV) and in Immigration Management from Pompeu Fabra University. She has experience in international migration projects as a result of her participation as Peer Advisor in a project led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). Besides this, Ana Lucia works with many organisations and NGO's with a focus on Migration in Barcelona. She has worked as a job counsellor for migrants and refugees to support their labour market integration. In her free time, she participates in different activities and projects to raise awareness and to promote interculturality in the city of Barcelona.

BAMBERG: Shaza Rihawi



Shaza Rihawi is a Syrian refugee resident in Bamberg, Germany, who is deeply involved in human rights issues and has first-hand experience in dealing with refugees and women's crisis.

She is a founding member of the Network for Refugee Voices (NRV), a founding member of International Wave. She is currently working on a five-year research project at the LifBi Institute as a research assistant for culture aspects, conducting Longitudinal Research on Refugees in the German Educational System. Previously, Shaza worked as a senior community service assistant for 8 years, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in Damascus. Prior to that, she worked

with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Centre for Strategic Studies in Syria. Shaza hold a Bachelor's degree and a post-graduate degree in sociology and a Masters in psychosocial work, in addition to a political science from Maxwell School-Syracuse University.

BERLIN: Namarig Abkr



Namarig Abkr is an Open City Fellow with the Migrationsrat Berlin-Brandenburg in Berlin. She is a political and human rights activist born in South Darfur, Sudan. She studied water and

environmental engineering in Sudan University for Science and Technology. Namarig worked with displaced women and youth in Darfur and she was a part of a youth movement against the Sudanese government. In Berlin she is a football coach for a self-led group of refugee women. She also continues her own education on theoretical topics such as social change, gender equality and feminist tools for social change.

BERLIN: Sinthujan Varatharajah



Sinthujan Varatharajah is a Berlin-based essayist and researcher and currently an Open City Fellow hosted at Migrationsrat Berlin-Brandenburg . He holds an MSc in Human Rights (Honours) from the University

of Roehampton, and an MSc in Race, Ethnicity and Postcolonial Studies from the London School of Economics, and is a PhD Candidate in Political Geography at University College London. Sinthujan has worked for the legal defence of asylum seekers as well as towards providing alternative housing solutions for refugees in London and Berlin.

HELSINKI: Abdirizak Hagi

Abdirizak Hagi is a Finnish-Somali career consultant at the City of Helsinki. He has several years of experience in career counselling and social mobilization. In 2011, he successfully ran for the executive board membership of the Finnish Somali League. His primary task was to mobilize the Finnish-Somali youth to become active members of the greater Finnish society. His passion to work for the greater good of the community led him to study law at the Tallinn University, School of Law. In 2016, he graduated with a bachelor degree in law, specializing in Transitional Justice, furthering his interest in the challenges of transitional justice efforts to restore peace, security, stability and good governance in his native country. In 2016, Abdirizak started to work as a career consultant at the Helsinki Skills Centre, which helps immigrants over 17 years old who have been granted a residence permit in Helsinki to access education or find employment. Abdirizak Hagi helps his clients to explore their purpose and uncover their “dream job”. He is excellent in assisting clients to find long lasting and cost-effective solutions. In his spare time Abdirizak volunteers to help people of immigrant background with legal issues.

ITALY: Lamin Fadera

Lamin is a Gambian refugee and a migration advocate who is currently based in northern Italy. He has an Advanced Diploma in Financial Accounting and Entrepreneurship and Micro-Finance from The Gambia Technical Training Institute. He spent seven years working in government, including the Immigration Department, where among others

things he oversaw registration of refugees from neighbouring countries. He later fell out with the former authoritarian regime, leading to his exile in November 2013. He crossed the Mediterranean along with many other refugees to Italy to seek protection and later on acquired a legal status. In Italy he completed a Junior School Certificate in 2015 and a professional course in Intercultural Mediation. He is a social worker with one of the biggest cooperatives in his area, working as a mediator, counsellor and an interpreter. In March 2016 he worked with a group of migrants to form MigrAction, with the objective of providing migrants with accurate information about asylum processes and their rights to protection amongst others

LISBON: Nour Machlah

Nour Machlah is an architecture master's student, public speaker and policy advisor based in Lisbon.

After the Syrian war, he moved to Lebanon, then to Turkey, and since 2014, he has been studying in Portugal completing his master's degree in architecture. He has taken part in conferences all over Portugal and Europe, on integration, human rights, peace and war, as well as the dialogue between cultures and religions. In 2016, he was a speaker at the European Parliament in Strasbourg and in 2017 he represented the European Youth Forum in one of the debates at the European parliament in Brussels being an ideas giver regarding to the new common European asylum system. In November 2017 he presented a TEDx talk at TEDx Porto on the topic of Stereotyping. Since 2016 he was involved in the integration process for migrant and refugees in Portugal as an advisor on social inclusion. He is very passionate about architecture, but also extremely keen to continue his path within public speaking and advocacy because he believes in the power of words.



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The European Migrant Advisory Board

(Clockwise, from back right) Abdulrizak Hagi, Nour Machlah, Namarig Abkr, Asef Farjam, Lamin Fadera, Adam Elsod (facilitator), Sinthujan Varatharajah, Ana Lucía Olivós Pairazamán, Anila Noor, Shaza Rihawi



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