

ADVANCING REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN GREECE

UNHCR Greece | Update #2
September 2022



Refugees attending a vocational training programme. © UNHCR/Socrates Baltagiannis

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



2,844 career
coaching services
provided to
729 refugees and
asylum-seekers

64% requests from men and 36% from women



184 refugees and
asylum-seekers were
offered jobs
118 refugees and
asylum-seekers hired



124
collaborations with
employers across
Greece



399 asylum-
seekers attending
language classes in
four islands

60,000
refugees in
Greece

Source: UNHCR
estimate as of end
September

Our strategy

Successful integration needs a whole-of-society approach. UNHCR works with the State, local authorities, the private sector, civil society and refugees themselves to create synergies, promote sustainable change and offer targeted support in areas that demand immediate results. In Greece, UNHCR supports the efforts of the Government to advance refugee integration, building on the Agency's 70 years of experience from around the world.

UNHCR acts as a catalyst to contribute to the implementation of Greece's National Integration Strategy approved in November 2021. UNHCR's integration programme works at different levels and with diverse actors to enact change capitalizing on its cooperation with local and central authorities and designing its programming on the basis of its close relationship with refugees. Working with refugee communities, UNHCR identifies skills and experience, understands refugees' intentions and needs, and helps create support networks amongst peers. Reaching out to the private sector, the Office contributes to the creation of employment and training opportunities for refugees.

LATEST HIGHLIGHTS

Driving and Road Safety Lessons

On 26 September, 30 refugee graduates - men and women, from 13 countries, including from Afghanistan, Syria, Palestine, Cameroon and Iran - received their certificates for successfully completing UNHCR's Driving and Road Safety Project. The event was attended by the UN Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, along with the Deputy Minister for Integration, Ms. Sofia Voultepsi, as well as EU Ambassadors, representatives from the European Commission and refugee communities, and private sector partners.

The Driving and Road Safety Lessons Project is being implemented by UNHCR, in cooperation with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Road Safety Institute Panos Mylonas since July.

Job fairs for refugees

Following the job fair in Kos, on 13 and 14 September Lesbos held its first [job fair](#) for local employers and refugees at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). Some 400 refugees from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Sudan,

Somalia and other countries had the opportunity to meet and discuss with 16 local employers. At the end of the fair, 66 people were offered a job. One employer also provided skills training to 45 people, intending to proceed with the recruitments at the end of the training cycle.

Similar initiatives are planned on other islands as well. In Samos, for instance, UNHCR and NGO Samos Volunteers connected 20 refugees with a local employer.

Also in Lesbos, UNHCR staff are now present at the Municipal "Welcome office" at the centre of Mytilene once a week to understand the needs and provide advice and guidance to the self-accommodated refugee population in the city. The Welcome office provides administrative support to asylum-seekers and refugees, including for the issuance of social security numbers and to create email addresses.

Language classes for adult refugees on the islands

To support refugee employment in Lesbos, Chios, Samos, and Kos, UNHCR with its partner

METAdrasi runs learning centres for adult refugees where they can attend Greek language classes, but also find help to write their CVs and prepare for interviews to facilitate their search for employment. By the end of September, 399 refugees and asylum-seekers had enrolled in UNHCR-supported educational centres on the islands.

In Athens and Thessaloniki, UNHCR's partner METAdrasi supported 13 grassroots refugee

communities that offer Greek language lessons. UNHCR's partner provided them with teaching equipment, such as desks, chairs, and stationery, helped them set up a system to record registrations and attendance as well as to create a digital library with learning material. UNHCR's partner also reinforced the communities' efforts to disseminate information among its members and identified volunteer teachers and spaces to hold the classes.

GENERATING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

UNHCR strives to achieve this initially by piloting projects to help refugees find work in economic sectors where there is a need for additional workforce, and which have potential for further scale-up. In line with a bilateral [Memorandum of Understanding on Integration](#) signed between UNHCR and the Ministry for Migration and Asylum.

Currently, UNHCR has rolled out three pilots: the Adama Centre, which supports refugee employability; driving and road safety lessons and a joint UNHCR-Athens Development & Destination Management Agency (ADDMA) project for people with disabilities. Another three pilots will be launched in the coming months: neighbourhood nannies, cultural mediators, and personal helpers for people with disabilities. UNHCR also provides evidence-based advice on how to match integration policies to the needs of refugees and local communities and supports the Municipalities across the country to encompass refugee specificities in the provision of public services, thus boosting provision of assistance and chances of achieving self-reliance for refugees.

“Adama” employability centre

The Adama employability centre opened its doors in early 2022 to support refugees and asylum-seekers in finding employment and with other aspects of integrating in Greece. By September, 2,844 career coaching services had been provided

to 729 refugees and asylum-seekers from the mainland and the islands through the Adama centre run by UNHCR's partners CRS and Caritas Hellas, and more than 118 people had secured a job. At Adama, refugees and asylum-seekers get practical help on how to look for a job, write their CV, prepare for an interview, and understand Greek labour law. They also receive counselling, find help to prepare necessary documents to access the labour market and are supported in navigating the different public services and administrative requirements to work legally in Greece. Refugees across the country can attend in-person and remote career coaching sessions in English, Farsi, Arabic, French, Sorani, Kurmanji and Ukrainian.

In August, UNHCR provided a second grant to the Congolese community in Athens to map the academic and professional background, as well as the language skills and sectors of preferred employment for their members and connect them with the UNHCR-supported Adama employability centre for job matching and vocational trainings. So far, the skills of 291 Congolese have been mapped (as of September).

To boost refugee employability, UNHCR also connects refugees and asylum-seekers on the islands looking for work with local employment opportunities as well as the Adama centre in Athens. The Office liaises with local authorities and public services and informs employers and refugees on specific refugee-related labour

issues. In addition, it also helps refugees overcome systemic obstacles by providing for

instance interpreters through its partner METAdrasi to help refugees open a bank account.

MUNICIPALITIES AS CATALYSTS OF LOCAL INTEGRATION

In July, UNHCR and the City of Athens signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, to strengthen their collaboration on the integration of refugees. The agreement will promote the professional development of staff in the different departments of the City of Athens supporting asylum-seekers and refugees, while boosting integration activities, in line with the National Integration Strategy. UNHCR will deploy expert staff to support the City of Athens, and work towards expanding its international network.

In the context of its overall cooperation with the City of Athens, UNHCR works with ADDMA, the development agency of the Municipality of Athens, to link refugees with disabilities with the national social protection system and employment opportunities. Since the beginning of the project, 23 refugees have gained access to the welfare disability allowance, eight received assistive devices and 41 gained access to specialized services, including for rehabilitation.

**UNHCR deploys experts in
10 Municipalities
to provide guidance on refugee matters.**

Working together to maximize impact

UNHCR supports 10 Municipalities to strengthen their expertise on refugee issues and include refugees in their services. The Office deploys specialized personnel, facilitates coordination of resources and activities at local level and identifies sources of funding that can ensure the sustainable continuation of integration programmes for refugees and asylum-seekers living in the host communities.

i. Expertise on refugee issues

UNHCR deploys experts in Municipalities to support them pioneer policies and develop practical tools (e.g., action plans on integration) that foster the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees that live in their communities. As such, UNHCR experts contribute to making municipal services more accessible to refugees, including through the establishment of specific services such as language courses or even homeless shelters for those who need them.

ii. Policy-making and Coordination

Over the years, Municipalities have become increasingly involved in hosting refugee populations and have started developing innovative and flexible mechanisms to tailor services to refugees and create effective coordination tools.

UNHCR offers targeted operational support and helps local authorities in five municipalities to assist institutions such as the Migrants' Integration Centres, which provide services targeted to asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants, as well as the Migrants' and Refugees Integration Councils, consultative bodies to the Municipal Councils.

iii. Sustainability

UNHCR-deployed experts also help partner Municipalities access public and private funding to finance innovative activities, e.g. social housing and employability services for refugees. This helps Municipalities be more agile in developing and rolling out local integration plans.

ENGAGEMENT WITH REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

Advice from refugees to refugees

A group of nine recognized refugees living in Greece form part of an advisory group, who provides guidance to other refugees to facilitate their integration into the social, economic, and cultural life in Greece. Drawing from their own experience, they also inform UNHCR's programming for integration activities and advocacy through concrete recommendations on needed policy changes and practical examples of the obstacles that refugees may face along their way to integration.

The members of the Refugee Advisory Group have been selected based on their journey and achievements in integrating successfully in Greece. They are men and women from diverse backgrounds, like Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some are proficient in Greek, some have become naturalized, while others have started their own businesses.

Outreach volunteers

UNHCR also identifies asylum-seekers who are interested to become outreach volunteers and act as the connecting link between their community on the one hand, and humanitarian agencies and

authorities and the local population on the other. They help disseminate valuable information including on the regulations of the reception centre, the available services and how to access them, the roles and responsibilities of different actors, and how to get specific types of help.

So far, UNHCR has identified and trained **70 outreach volunteers** in **Thessaloniki, Karditsa, Larissa, Ioannina, Trikala.**

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Family reunification for recognized refugees

As part of UNHCR's work to find durable solutions for refugees, UNHCR's supports family reunification procedures for recognized refugees. Since the beginning of the programme in August 2021, UNHCR and its expert partner Greek Council for Refugees have helped 285 refugees to complete family reunification procedures. So far, 42 refugees have been reunited with their families in Greece.

How can you support refugee integration?

- By opening up jobs for refugees.
- By joining UNHCR in public advocacy and efforts to identify innovative solutions.
- By making a financial contribution to UNHCR [here](#).
- By developing and selling goods and services that refugees need.
- By exchanging ideas with organizations that help refugees and with the refugees themselves.
- By putting money into funds that invest in refugees.
- By serving as a role model and leading by example.

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