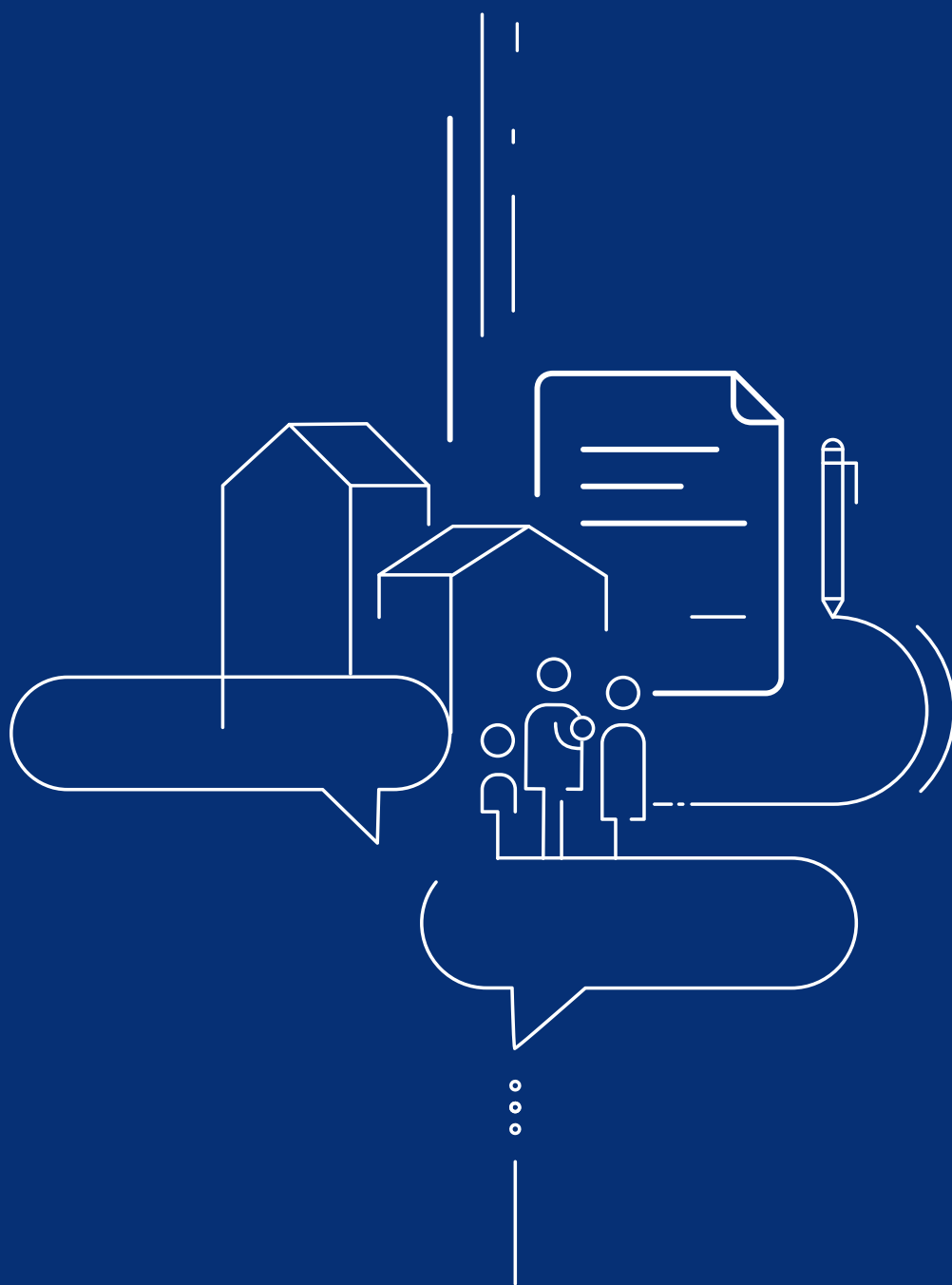




NIEM
ALL IN FOR INTEGRATION

Refugee Integration in Bulgaria 2019: A Comprehensive Monitoring Report

National report NIEM



Bistra Ivanova
Panayot Chafkarov



Refugee Integration in Bulgaria 2019:
A Comprehensive Monitoring Report



Multikulti

Collective

Bistra Ivanova, Panayot Chafkarov

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Project co-financed from the Polish National Programme under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.



EUROPEAN UNION
Asylum, Migration
and Integration Fund

Safe harbour

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- Iva Partsaleva

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Refugee Integration in Bulgaria 2019: A Comprehensive Monitoring Report is developed in the framework the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism project (NIEM). The report aims to present in-depth data on the quality of the legal framework and policies in support of the long-term integration of beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) in Bulgaria, and to analyse their implementation and the effects for the target group.

This report covers the period **1 April 2017 – 31 March 2019**.

This is comparative research across **14 EU Member States** – Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. The research under NIEM assumes that integration is a responsibility of the state, while NGOs and EU funds have a supporting role. This is why, it evaluates **solely the activities funded from the state budget**.

The cross-country comparison covers 12 dimensions:

- Mainstreaming
- Residency
- Family reunification
- Access to citizenship
- Housing
- Employment
- Vocational training and employment-related education
- Health
- Social security
- Education
- Language learning and social orientation
- Building bridges

The NIEM methodology uses qualitative and quantitative methods. It basically consists of a complex **system of over 160 indicators** – a tool for scoring the performance of each state in the 12 dimensions of integration of BIPs, which allows objective measuring, comparing, monitoring progress, etc.

The report methodology introduces an additional perspective for addressing integration: **three stepstones** with the following focus:

1. Setting the legal framework;
2. Building the policy framework;
3. Implementation and collaboration.

The above differentiation is yet another instrument whereby, in addition to verifying the existence of certain legislation and policies, an analysis can be made of how efficient they are in terms of their application, and, respectively, in terms of specific positive outcomes for the end beneficiaries.

The scoring by the various indicators and dimensions is based on a standardized questionnaire and evaluation by means of a scoring system. This approach allows **maximum objectivity** and a cross-country comparison based on **specific, measurable data and facts**. The maximum number of points is 100. In order to assess these scores, 4 broad ranges have been determined on a scale whereby the existence or absence of a legal framework, policies or practice is assessed: critically lacking (score below 25), marginally supportive (score below 50), moderately supportive (score below 75) and broadly supportive (score up to 100).

Key results 2019:

- **Weak dynamics.** One of the key conclusions from the 2019 research is that the development in the relevant countries is not dynamic, and they generally maintain results similar to the 2017 ones. BIPs rarely benefit from entirely favourable conditions. The biggest differences among the countries concern the policies aimed at actively encouraging integration; mainstreaming in long-term integration; cooperation among various stakeholders. Most governments do not have close collaboration with the local authorities and NGOs in the process of policy development. The funding of local authorities and NGOs is a serious issue.
- **Improved cooperation as a result of development only in several countries.** The only definitely positive development has been observed in respect of the step collaboration. A more in-depth analysis shows that this has resulted from targeted reforms in several countries – in particular, France and Lithuania, and, to a lesser extent, Latvia and Slovenia.
- **The differences between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have not diminished.** The research reveals that the substantial differences between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have not diminished. The dimensions in which the

gaps are most tangible are residency, family reunifications and citizenship. Against the background of overall stagnation, 2 countries stand out with positive changes – France and Poland, and 1 country where the situation has even worsened – Italy.

- **Few countries show positive development, some show a setback, and the majority show inaction.** The evaluation for only 3 countries – France, Latvia and Slovenia – illustrates substantial development in terms of their results. For another 3 – Romania, Hungary and Italy – the evaluation points to deterioration. As for the remaining ones, either minor or no changes are observed.
- **Diverging standards among the sectors persist, the progress in some being at the expense of a setback in others.** The dimensions with the most positive dynamics are social security, employment, health and education. The dimensions with the strongest deterioration are residency, housing and health. The most unfavourable conditions in all the countries have been identified in housing, employment, and vocational training.
- **Bulgaria maintains its profile of a country with an overall unfavourable environment for integration.** During the period considered, Bulgaria has not made any considerable progress in terms of the legal framework, policies and implementation in support of refugees' integration. The most favourable dimensions are: family reunification, mainstreaming, and education, and the most unfavourable ones are: language learning and social orientation, building bridges and citizenship.

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) project has been implemented by Multi Kult Collective and the Bulgarian Council on Refugees and Migrants in partnership with UNHCR, with co-funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union.



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Abbreviations

BIP	beneficiary of international protection
EA	Employment Agency
EO	employment office
EU	European Union
GP	general practitioner
LAR	Law on Asylum and Refugees
LARB	Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NGO	non-governmental organization
SAR	State Agency for Refuges
TCN	third-country national



1. Introduction and Main Results

1.1. Introduction













Refugee Integration in Bulgaria 2019: A Comprehensive Monitoring Report is the second monitoring report for Bulgaria under the National Integration Mechanism project (NIEM). Its purpose is to evaluate, as objectively as possible, the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) in Bulgaria by using over 160 indicators. Thus, the report aims to initiate an informed and in-depth dialogue at the national and local level on the quality of the legal framework, policies and implementation in relation to BIPs. Moreover, the research data can be used by the national government, the local authorities, the international organizations, the civil society, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. in order to develop laws, policies, mechanisms, road maps, programmes, projects, etc. to support the long-term integration of BIPs. The report has a special focus on the interaction among all stakeholders (national authorities, local authorities, NGOs, school, universities, businesses, etc.), as it is key to the multi-tier two-way integration process.

Similar research has been conducted by means of the same methodology in another 13 EU Member State, in addition to Bulgaria. These are the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. The participation of countries in the north, south, east and west of Europe allows making comparisons, sharing experience, challenges and best practices. A part of these are also reflected in the report.

The research covers the period **1 April 2017 – 31 March 2019**. A comparison and analysis of the changes occurring at the national level – in terms of the legal framework and policies, and the implementation thereof – is possible by using the data gathered via the same methodology for a previous period (till 31 March 2017)

The first part of the report reviews the research methodology, territorial scope, and general results.






The second part of the Report reviews the results in **12 dimensions**:

-  Mainstreaming
-  Residency
-  Family reunification
-  Citizenship
-  Housing
-  Employment
-  Vocational training and employment-related education
-  Health
-  Social security
-  Education
-  Language learning and social orientation
-  Building bridges

1.2. Methodology

The methodology of the report was developed by the Migration Policy Group (MPG) in Brussels on the basis of innovative approaches applied by experts from Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia under the UNHCR project “Refugee Integration. Capacity and Evaluation” (Burkin et al., 2013). This report was also the basis for the NIEM project which has published research at the national and EU level. In 2017 NIEM carried out a comprehensive review of the 12 dimensions of BIP integration and published a Baseline Report 2017 (Wolffhardt et al., 2019), which is at the basis of this report. The third report applying the same methodology is expected in 2021.













The methodology covers separately several groups of persons:

-  Asylum-seekers;
-  Recognised refugees;
-  Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (humanitarian status in Bulgaria¹);
-  Persons under temporary protection;
-  Resettled persons.

This allows an assessment of the differences in terms of their rights and integration opportunities.

The research under NIEM assumes that integration is a commitment of the state, while NGOs and EU funds have a supplementing and supporting role. This is why, it evaluates **solely the activities funded from the state budget**. The practices of NGOs (including with EU, international or private funding) are included in the boxes with best practices, but are not evaluated.

The research uses qualitative and quantitative methods. At the core of these methods, is a system of over 160 indicators whereby a detailed evaluation is made in **12 dimensions**:

-  Mainstreaming
-  Residency
-  Family reunification
-  Citizenship
-  Housing
-  Employment
-  Vocational training and employment-related education
-  Health
-  Social security
-  Education
-  Language learning and social orientation
-  Building bridges².

¹ Art. 9, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

² See Annex 1: NIEM Indicators

For the purpose of the evaluation, statistical data, documents, survey, etc. have been analysed, and a number of semi-structured interviews and focus groups with both experts and BIPs have been carried out.

In view of a more in-depth analysis, the research methodology focuses on **3 step-stones**:

1. Setting the legal framework – the indicators verify:

- Types and duration of residence permits;
- Conditions for obtaining long-term residence, family reunification and citizenship;
- Access to rights, services, benefits and entitlements across different policy areas/dimensions.

2. Building the policy framework – the indicators verify:

- The availability, scope and duration of targeted provisions and services;
- Provisions for special needs groups and needs-based criteria for the allocation of goods and services;
- Absence of administrative barriers;
- Fees for long-term residence, family reunification and citizenship;
- Awareness-raising/information for stakeholders and BIPs.

3. Implementation and collaboration – the indicators verify:

- The existence and implementation of an overall refugee integration policy/strategy;
- Mainstreaming across all relevant policy fields;
- Multi-level and multi-sectoral coordination with local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society;
- Acknowledgment of integration as a two-way process and support for an active role on the part of the receiving society;
- Encouragement of the participation of BIPs in society and integration policy making.

These 3 steps offer clear information whether the existence of a favourable legal framework and policies contributes to positive outcomes for BIPs and the receiving society, as a whole.

As a result of applying the above methodology, each indicator receives a numerical evaluation scoring a certain number of points – from 0 to 100 which is the maximum number. This approach allows a more objective analysis and comparability of the laws, policies, mechanisms across countries, as well as comparison within one country. The score outcome per indicator is obtained by means of ordinary average values. The same calculation is made for the score outcome for a dimension. As for the other indicators which most often require absolute numbers or percentages additional – scoring rules are used³.

³ See NIEM official website – <http://www.forintegration.eu/>





Depending on the number of points obtained, the evaluation is ranked on a scale. The scale consists of four broad ranges whereby the existence or absence of supportive legal framework, policies and practices is assessed as:

- Critically lacking (under 25 points);
- Marginally supportive (under 50 points)
- Moderately supportive (under 75 points);
- Broadly supportive (up to 100 points).

1.3. Territorial scope

The research cover 14 EU countries across the whole territory of Europe. Moreover, they represent different groups of countries in terms of their migration profile (“transit countries” or “destination countries”), history (older or more recent Member States), economic profile, etc. These are: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden. On the one hand, all of them comply with the EU acquis in the area of asylum and migration. On the other hand, however, they have broad discretion to shape their national legal and policy frameworks related to the integration of BIPs. Therefore, their legal systems represent a combination of the EU and national law.

The participating states can be categorized into 4 main types:

-  **France, Netherlands, Sweden** – Countries in the north and west of Europe that have a longstanding tradition of receiving refugees. Asylum policies and integration frameworks tend to be well established, accepting of a long-term integration perspective and rooted in domestic policy traditions of dealing with immigration. In the flows of the 2017 to 2019 evaluation period, these Member States primarily figured as countries of final destination.
-  **Greece, Italy, Spain** – Countries in Southern Europe that have more recently developed into destinations for people seeking international protection while also retaining the position of transit countries. Asylum and integration policy frameworks have become more comprehensive over the last decades. In the 2017 to 2019 period, these countries have mostly found themselves in a first line position dealing with arrivals to EU territory.
-  **The Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland** – Central and Eastern European countries with rather recent asylum systems adopted in the context of joining the EU and with weaker linkages to longer-term integration frameworks. EU legal provisions and support has often been instrumental in the development of policies. Neither frequent destination countries nor in a transit position, the numbers of beneficiaries in these countries were small in the 2017 to 2019 period.
-  **Bulgaria, Slovenia, Hungary, Romania** – Countries in Central/South-Eastern Europe that share most features with the other Central and Eastern European countries assessed. Some of them differ in that they have been exposed to significant movements of persons seeking protection in the EU during recent years, leading to challenges for their reception systems. Nevertheless, the numbers of BIPs in these countries have remained comparatively small in the 2017 to 2019 assessment period.

1.4. Key results 2019

-  **Weak dynamics.** One of the key conclusions from the 2019 research is that the development in the relevant countries is not dynamic, and they generally maintain results similar to the 2017 ones. BIPs rarely benefit from entirely favourable conditions. The biggest differences among the countries concern the policies aimed at actively encouraging integration; mainstreaming in long-term integration; cooperation among various stakeholders. Most governments do not have close collaboration with the local authorities and NGOs in the process of policy development. The funding of local authorities and NGOs is a serious issue.
-  **Improved cooperation as a result of development only in several countries.** The only definitely positive development has been observed in respect of the step collaboration. A more in-depth analysis shows that this has resulted from targeted reforms in several countries – in particular, France and Lithuania, and, to a lesser extent, Latvia and Slovenia. The differences between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have not diminished. The research reveals that the substantial differences between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have not diminished. The dimensions in which the gaps are most tangible are residency, family reunifications and citizenship. Against the background of overall stagnation, 2 countries stand out with positive changes – France and Poland, and 1 country where the situation has even worsened – Italy.
-  **Few countries show positive development, some show a setback, and the majority show inaction.** The evaluation for only 3 countries – France, Latvia and Slovenia – illustrates substantial development in terms of their results. For another 3 – Romania, Hungary and Italy – the evaluation points to deterioration. As for the remaining ones, either minor or no changes are observed.
-  **Diverging standards among the sectors persist, the progress in some being at the expense of a setback in others.** The dimensions with the most positive dynamics are social security, employment, health and education. The dimensions with the strongest deterioration are residency, housing and health. The most unfavourable conditions in all the countries have been identified in housing, employment, and vocational training.
-  **Bulgaria maintains its profile of a country with an overall unfavourable environment for integration.** During the period considered, Bulgaria has not made any considerable progress in terms of the legal framework, policies and implementation in support of refugees' integration. The most favourable dimensions are: family reunification, mainstreaming, and education, and the most unfavourable ones are: language learning and social orientation, building bridges and citizenship.



2. Results in the NIEM Integration Dimensions

2.1. Mainstreaming

2.1.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

In the reviewed period, the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015–2020⁴ sets the strategic framework for the integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) as a whole, incl. BIPs. It does not designate a ministry responsible for integration, nor a ministry responsible for language training or housing. However, it designates some other responsible ministries according to their competences⁵. Local authorities and social partners are mentioned as responsible stakeholders in the integration process, but without further details and without targeted funding⁶.

The strategy has an annual action plan from 2018 onwards with various objectives and some responsible stakeholders are mentioned accordingly. The action plan report is published in the first quarter of the following year. However, there is no obligation to take into account the advice and recommendations of local authorities and NGOs. The annual report is very basic and non-exhaustive and does not cover all stakeholders.

In general, it is envisaged that the implementation of the Strategy will be “financed from the state budget, through the budgets of the relevant institutions, as well as from the financial instruments of the EU and other international donor programs”⁷.

⁴ See National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015 – 2020 – https://www.mvr.bg/docs/librariesprovider79/%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8/national_strategy_migration_integration_20152020pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=e0ff3406_2

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

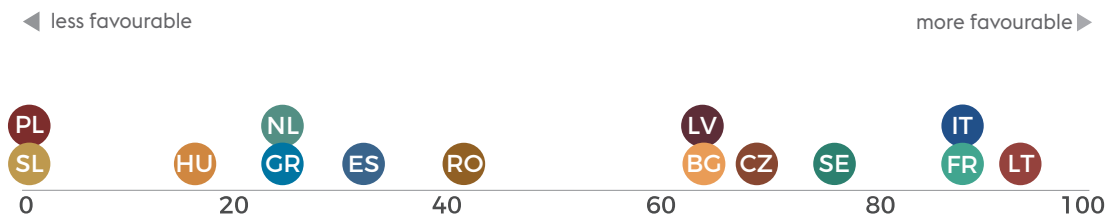
⁷ Ibid.

2.1.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. The integration of BIPs is not well developed in the national strategic document National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015–2020 – it does not specify a coordinating responsible body, nor does it guarantee funding.
2. No regular monitoring is provided to evaluate the integration activities and their specific results, nor is there a mechanism for ongoing improvement of the measures.
3. The annual reports about the annual action plans are too general and incomplete and do not provide enough information about the implemented measures and especially about their quality and effects.

2.1.3. 2019 results by country

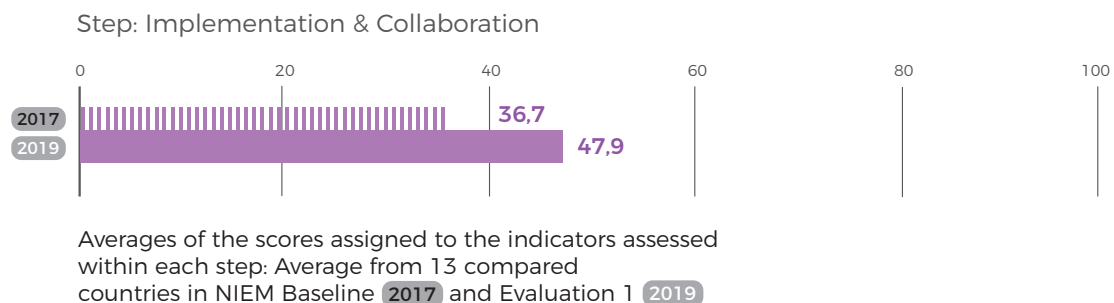
Step: Implementation & Collaboration



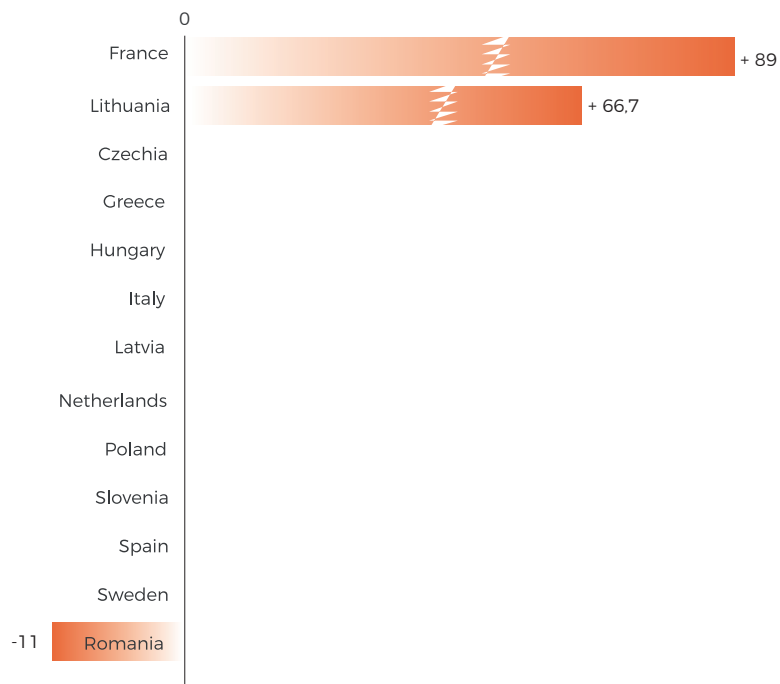
Assessed indicators:

- National strategy for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection
- Commitments in the national strategy for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection
- Monitoring and review of policies for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



Average of the scores assigned to each step
(as the average of the indicators assessed within each step)

2.1.4. Good European practices¹⁴

What EU and international law requires

According to Common Basic Principle 6 for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is a critical foundation for better integration. Moreover, Common Basic Principle 10 sets out that mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public-policy formation and implementation.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... adopt a national strategy on the integration of BIPs with a specific national budget.



⁸ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

... set out in the national strategy specific responsibilities or commitments for all relevant ministries, local and regional authorities as well as social partners.



... set up regular mechanisms to monitor integration outcomes for BIPs and review the implementation of the integration strategy together with stakeholders, with a duty to take into account the advice and recommendations of regional and local authorities and expert NGOs.



status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

NATIONAL STRATEGY INVOLVING ALL RELEVANT MINISTRIES, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS



In **France**, the inter-ministerial delegation for the reception and integration of refugees (DiAir) created in January 2018 is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Strategy in close collaboration with all relevant ministries (interior, employment, housing, education and health), the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) and the French Office for Immigration and Integration. The Strategy is implemented in each territory with the support of regional and local authorities, as well as civil society organisations. In addition, several studies were launched in 2018 to assess and monitor integration outcomes of BIPs. These were conducted by different ministries with the support of universities and research institutions (e.g., the ELIPA II research focuses on the integration of 6000 newly arrived third-country nationals and it will be conducted by the Ministry of Interior from 2019 to 2022). In order to review the implementation of the integration strategy, all relevant ministries meet every six months and an annual conference is organised by the DiAir, involving all relevant stakeholders for the integration of refugees.

ACTION PLAN TO LAUNCH COUNTRY-WIDE INTEGRATION POLICY INCLUDING MONITORING AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT



In **Lithuania**, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society, adopted in December 2018, aims to improve and ensure the successful integration of foreigners – including asylum seekers and BIPs – into society. Its implementation measures are financed from the state budget and EU funds. Remarkably, the action plan requires monitoring of the integration processes and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Moreover, it aims for stakeholder working groups on AMIF projects for decisions on their implementation, with the participation of NGOs, the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania and relevant ministries.

2.2. Residency

2.2.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

The Law on Asylum and Refugees (LAR) stipulates that BIPs are obliged, within up to 14 days from receiving the decision on granting international protection, to appear at the municipality of the city/town where they will settle in order to be entered in the population register⁹. The NIEM research in Bulgaria has established that this time limit is too short for BIPs to find accommodation – in most cases this is rented accommodation whose owner is expected to be willing to allow registration at the relevant address. The issue relates to the inefficient legal framework (the absence of a de-registration procedure), and the lack of information, fears and prejudices in respect of foreigners. Nevertheless, as the individuals concerned must comply with the 14-day time limit under LAR, they are often forced to use the service “buying an address at the black market”, i.e. buying an address for administrative purposes, which is not their real residence address.

Pursuant to the Law on the Bulgarian Identity Documents, BIPs are issued a document whose validity is from 3 to 5 years for persons with refugee status, and up to 3 years for persons with humanitarian status¹⁰. This concerns the term of validity of the identity documents issued, and not the duration of the international protection or the residence permission.

The Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria (LARB) stipulates that long-term residence shall be granted to an alien who had a legal and continuous residence in Bulgaria over a 5-year period before lodging the application for long-term residence¹¹. The calculation of the residence period with respect to BIPs includes also half of the residence period from the date of lodging an application for international protection till the date of issuing a Bulgarian identity document under the Law on Bulgarian Identity documents or the whole residence period between the respective dates if it is over 18 months¹². The requirements for granting a long-term residence status to BIPs are the same as for the other TCNs – they have to present evidence proving sufficient means of subsistence for themselves and the members of their family, without using social welfare, in an amount that is not less than the minimum salary and the minimum pension, as well as mandatory health insurance for the period of residence in conformity with the national law¹³.

2.2.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. In order to receive Bulgarian identity documents, BIPs have to present a document certifying their permanent address issued by the municipality on

⁹ Art. 35(1), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

¹⁰ Art. 59(1), p. 1, Law on the Bulgarian Identity Documents – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134424576>

¹¹ Art. 24g(1), Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134455296>

¹² Art. 24g(5), Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134455296>

¹³ Art. 24g(9), Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134455296>

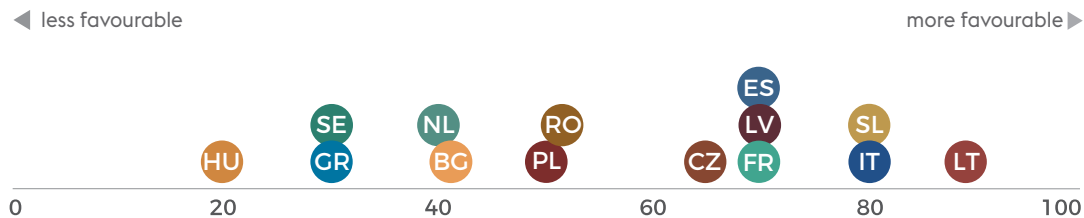
whose territory they live. Obtaining such a document is very difficult due to the obstacles in the access to housing in the country.

2. BIPs have to visit many institutions to ensure all the documents required, for example, a certificate from the State agency for Refugees (SAR), a certificate for permanent address from the municipality, lodging an application at the Migration Directorate with the Ministry of Interior (MOI). At present the “one-stop-shop” service is not available.
3. BIPs need to speak the Bulgarian language or be accompanied by a mediator/interpreter, as the staff of the institutions issuing the relevant documents often can communicate only in Bulgarian.

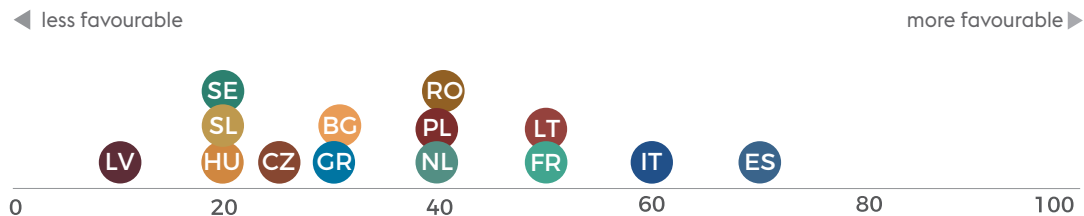
2.2.3. 2019 results by country

Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

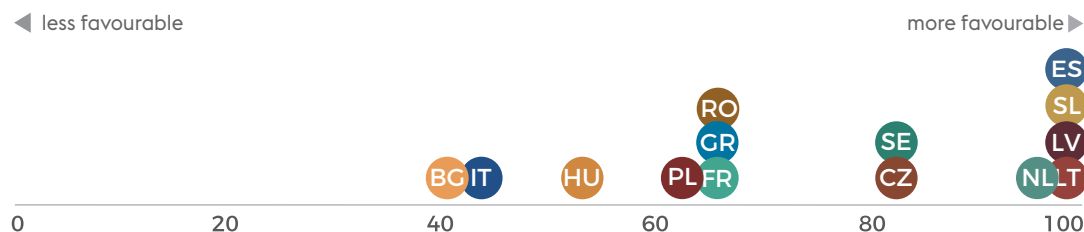


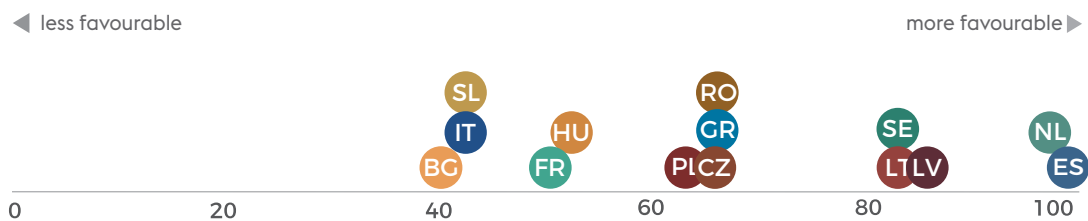
Assessed indicators:

- Type and duration of residence permit upon recognition
- Renewal of residence permit
- Residency requirements for granting permanent/long-term residence
- Facilitated conditions for permanent/long-term residence
- Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for permanent/long-term residence

Step: Building the Policy Framework

Recognised refugees



**Assessed indicators:**

- Administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence
- Fees for obtaining permanent/long term residence

2.2.4. Good European practices¹⁴**What EU and international law requires**

Under EU law, beneficiaries of international protection have a long-term perspective that is relatively secure and improves quickly over time. Upon recognition, refugees obtain a renewable residence permit of at least three years according to Art. 24 of the Qualification Directive. Less favourable conditions apply to their family members and to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Family members can be given a renewable residence for a shorter period, while beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can benefit from an initial one-year residence permit that should be extended to two years upon renewal. The EU long-term residence comes as an entitlement after five years of legal residence if BIPs can meet realistic economic, insurance and eventual integration conditions under the Long-Term Residents Directive. Following the Court of European Justice's (CJEU) P and S judgement, these conditions cannot be set as disproportionate and cannot simply be an obstacle to become long-term residents. The requirements must promote migrants' integration in practice and cannot have any discouraging objectives or effects. BIPs must be guaranteed effective access to free courses and learning materials. Their specific individual circumstances (age, illiteracy, education level) must be taken into account in the procedure. For example, they cannot be required to pay excessive fees, prove disproportionately high levels of language or civic knowledge, take obligatory and costly classes or pay high fines, as all of these requirements to restrict rather than open their opportunities to prove their willingness to participate in their new society. Although the Geneva Convention does not explicitly mention refugees' right to residence, contracting States are obliged under Art. 34 to facilitate the "assimilation" of refugees, in particular to expedite their naturalisation and to reduce the costs of naturalisation. Therefore, the obligation to protect refugees includes the obligation to facilitate all steps of the integration and naturalisation process.

¹⁴ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... provide, upon recognition, a residence permit valid for at least 5 years.

for recognised refugees
BG CZ ES FR IT
LT LV NL SL

for BSPs

ES IT NL

... renew the residence permit automatically or make renewal not necessary.

CZ IT SL

—

... count, when granting permanent/long-term residence, all time waiting for the asylum decision towards the resident requirement (if not granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition).

ES FR HU IT LT
LV NL PL RO SE

ES FR IT NL PL
RO SE SL

... waive for BIPs the conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residence (economic resources, language knowledge, housing, integration, fees, etc.) which normally apply for third-country nationals.

ES FR LT LV SL

—

... ensure facilitated conditions for groups of vulnerable BIPs applying for permanent/long-term residence by waiving conditions or by granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition.

LT SL

LT

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... pose no administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence with regard to required documentation, delays/ waiting periods and discretionary decisions.

CZ ES LT LV PL
SL

CZ ES LT LV PL

... ask no fees to obtain a residence permit, renew the residence permit or become permanent/long-term resident which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary).

CZ ES LV LT NL
SE SL

ES LT NL SE SL

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS



Spain and the **Netherlands** are the only countries that ensure the same level of protection to recognised refugees and BSPs. Here, the residence permit lasts five years for both groups and it is renewed upon simple application. The best absolute score on the residence indicators for recognised refugees has been obtained by **Lithuania**, which, however, applies restrictive provisions to BSPs. The state provides a residence permit valid for at least five years and it is renewed upon simple application. Permanent/long-term residence for recognised refugees is granted automatically upon recognition. The facilitated condition for granting permanent residence permits for refugees is related to the period of uninterrupted stay in Lithuania, which can be reduced. Facilitated conditions also apply to vulnerable individuals, for instance, the reasons for refusing an asylum applicant's entry shall not be applied to vulnerable persons – minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents, persons suffering from mental disorders, victims of trafficking and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other forms of violence. Similar frameworks are provided in **Czechia**, **Italy**, **Latvia**, **France** and **Slovenia**, where integration policies for recognized refugees are very favourable, but standards are significantly lower for BSPs.

ABSENCE OF FEES



A positive practice can be found in **Latvia** where, since the second half of 2016, if the first application for international protection is successful, beneficiaries are not required to pay the fee of obtaining the residency permit. A small fee is instead provided for BSPs which does not jeopardise their capacity to obtain the residency permit. Equal treatment of recognised refugees and BSPs is ensured in **Spain** and **Sweden**. In Spain, the fees for applying for a residence permit are lower than 10% of the minimum social assistance. In Sweden, there are no fees for BIPs, but some administrative delays and waiting periods can sometimes slow down the procedure to permanent/long-term residence.

2.3. Family reunification

2.3.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

The Additional Provisions of LAR define “family members” as: a) the husband, the wife or an individual with whom the alien has an evidenced stable long-term relationship and their unmarried underage children; b) unmarried children who have come of age, and who are unable to provide for themselves due to grave health conditions; c) the parents of either one of the spouses who are unable to take care of themselves due to old age or a serious health condition, and who have to share the household of their children; d) the parents, the guardian or custodian of the underage unmarried beneficiary of international protection¹⁵. The members of the family of an alien who have been granted refugee status are also considered refugees, insofar as this is compatible with their personal status¹⁶. In cases where a BIP marries another foreigner, he/she may receive a refugee status or a humanitarian status respectively, which is determined by the status of a family member with whom the person reunites¹⁷. The family reunification procedure under LARB grants family members a long-term residence permission¹⁸.

The Bulgarian legislation does not determine a minimum time limit for the person’s residence in the country as a condition for opening a family reunification procedure, neither does it lay down a maximum time limit for that. LAR does not set out requirements with regard to the person who wishes to reunite with their family such as evidence of financial resources, accommodation, health insurance, language competence, participation in integration measures, etc.; neither does it require a DNA test to prove the family tie when the necessary documents are not available – in such cases, the person signs a declaration or uses other options¹⁹. On the other hand, LARB lays down requirements in terms of the long-term residence permit – the applicants shall have accommodation, mandatory health insurance, sufficient subsistence means, without using social welfare, in an amount that is not less than the minimum salary and the minimum pension in conformity with the legislation of Bulgaria for the duration of their residence²⁰. Neither LAR nor LARB provide for a facilitated procedure for vulnerable persons.

2.3.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Family members who have obtained a residence permit under LARB do not have the same legal right to access services as that of the sponsor who is a BIP.
2. BIPs face serious difficulties to cover the cost of transport and visas, as there is no financial support for these purposes.
3. The lack of identity documents of family members remains a serious problem due to difficulties in issuing return certificates.

¹⁵ Paragraph 1(3) of the Additional Provisions of the Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

¹⁶ Art. 8(9), Art. 9(6), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

¹⁷ Art. 8(10), Art. 9(7), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

¹⁸ Art. 24(1), p. 13, Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134455296>

¹⁹ Art. 34(5), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

²⁰ Art. 24(2), Law on Aliens in the Republic of Bulgaria – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134455296>

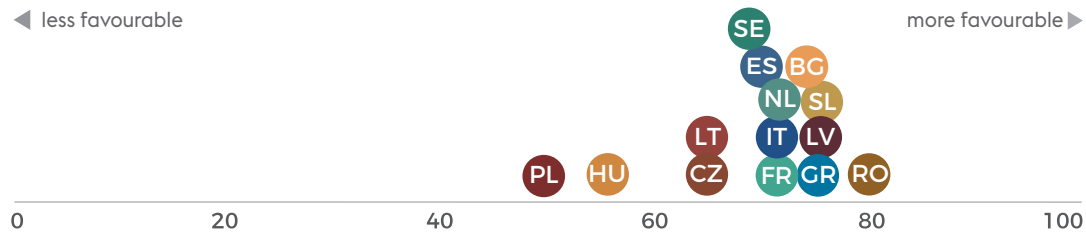
2.3.3. 2019 results by county

Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Assessed indicators:

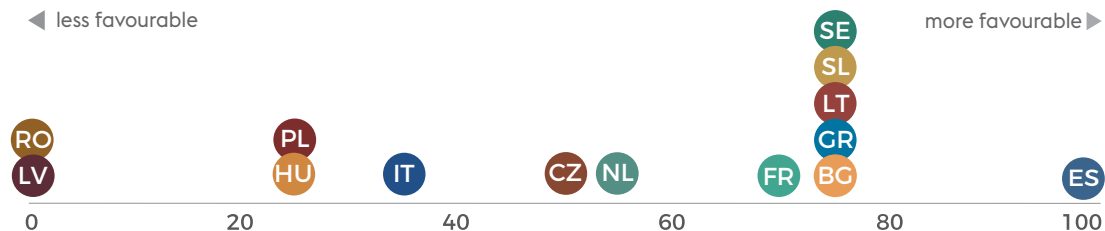
- Definition of family unit for family reunification
- Family unity and legal status of family members (derivative status)
- Residency requirement for family reunification
- Economic resource requirement for family reunification
- Housing requirement for family reunification
- Health insurance requirement for family reunification
- Language assessment for family reunification
- Requirement to comply with integration measures for family reunification
- Time limit for facilitated requirements for family reunification
- Documents from country of origin to verify family links
- DNA/age tests to verify family links
- Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification
- Expedited length of procedure for family reunification
- Status of family members
- Autonomous residence permits for family members
- Access to services for family members

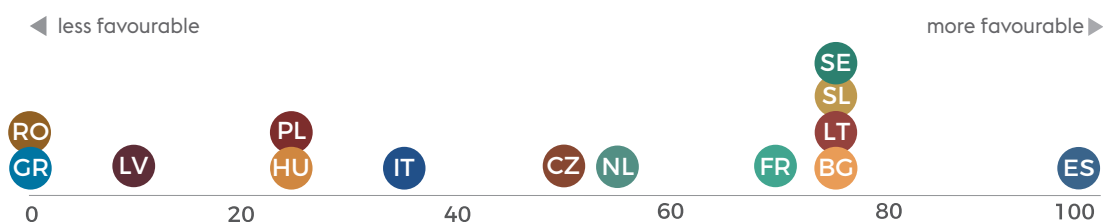
Step: Building the Policy Framework

Recognised refugees

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



**Assessed indicators:**

- Assessed indicators:
- Family tracing services
- Fees for family reunification

2.3.4. Good European practices²¹**What EU and international law requires**

Under EU law, the Family Reunification Directive sets out common rules for exercising the right to family reunification in 25 EU Member States (excluding the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark) and recognises the key role of family unity in the integration process of vulnerable migrant groups. Since the adoption of this Directive, family reunification is now a right for all third-country nationals who meet its conditions and is significantly easier for refugees. The Directive provides a general exemption from the waiting period and an exemption from the housing, health insurance and economic requirements if the request is submitted within a specific period after obtaining refugee status. This specific period cannot be shorter than three months (Art. 12). The European Commission Guidelines on the Family Reunification Directive acknowledge that this time limit can be a practical barrier to family reunification and therefore suggest Member States not to use this time limitation. Member States should also promptly provide clear information for refugees on the family reunification procedure. When time limits are applied, their length should take into account the barriers refugees might face in lodging their request for family reunification. As refugees might often lack the necessary documents to prove family ties, the application can be made on the basis of alternative documentary evidence and it cannot be rejected solely on the basis of lack of documentation (Art. 11). Among the various requirements, integration measures can only be applied for refugees and their family members once family reunification has been granted, meaning that, for example, family members cannot be required to take integration or language tests prior to their arrival. Specific attention should be given to refugees' individual circumstances to assess if they can be exempted from taking language or civic

²¹ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

integration tests. This assessment should take into account their age, education level, economic situation and health. The European Commission Guidelines on the Family Reunification Directive stipulate that the purpose of these measures is to verify the willingness of family members to integrate. A disproportionate level of integration measures is considered to be a barrier to this purpose. Language and integration courses should be offered in an accessible manner in several places, for free or for an affordable price, and be tailored to individual needs, taking into account, for example, the vulnerability of the refugees. Under international law, the right to family life is secured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 16) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 8), establishing a positive obligation on states to render this right effective. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects family unity and prescribes that a child cannot be separated from his or her parents against their will (Art. 9). The Convention requires States to deal with family reunification requests in a positive, humane and expeditious manner (Art. 10). The Geneva Convention underlines that family unity is an essential right of refugees and makes recommendations for respecting the principle of family unity (Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework	for recognised refugees	for BSPs
... enshrine a broad definition of family unity for family reunification (minor and adult children, spouse/partner, parents or grandparents, other family members in justified circumstances).	BG CZ HU SL	HU SL
... enshrine a broad definition of family unity for family members who do not individually qualify for protection but for a derivative status.	BG CZ ES GR IT LT SL	BG CZ ES GR IT LT SL
... not impose a residency requirement for family reunification.	BG CZ ES FR GR IT LT LV NL RO SE SL	BG CZ ES FR IT LT NL RO SL
... not impose an economic resource requirement for family reunification.	BG CZ ES FR GR IT LT LV RO SE SL	BG CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL RO SL

... not impose a housing requirement for family reunification.	BG ES FR GR IT LT LV NL RO SE SL	BG ES FR IT LT LV NL RO SL
... not impose a health insurance requirement for family reunification.	BG ES FR GR IT LT LV NL RO SE SL	BG ES FR IT LT NL RO SE SL
... not impose a language assessment requirement for family reunification.	BG CZ ES FR GR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL	BG CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL
... not impose a requirement to comply with integration measures for family reunification.	BG CZ ES FR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL	BG CZ ES FR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL
... not impose a time limit for facilitated requirements for family reunification.	BG ES FR IT LV RO	BG ES FR IT LV RO
... provide for exemptions from the documentation requirement and alternative methods when documents are missing.	GR NL	NL
... not impose DNA/age tests to verify family links.	BG CZ FR GR HU LV NL PL RO SE SL	BG CZ FR HU NL LV PL RO SE SL
... provide for facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification.	———	———
... entitle family members to the same legal status as their sponsor.	BG ES GR NL RO SE	BG ES LT NL RO SE
... allow family members to wait less than three years to obtain a residence permit which is autonomous of their sponsor.	ES FR RO SE	ES FR RO SE
... to provide family members with the same legal right as their sponsor to access services.	BG CZ ES FR GR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL	BG CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... provide for government-sponsored family tracing services.

ES PL

ES PL

... ask no fees to obtain family reunification which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary).

BG CZ ES FR GR
LT SL SE

BG CZ ES FR LT
SE SL

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

NL RO

The **Netherlands** and **Romania** are the countries with the highest score on family reunification as they enshrine legal provisions which are highly favorable for all BIPs without discriminating between recognized refugees and BSPs. There is no minimum duration specified in the law for the beneficiaries of any form of protection to apply for family reunion. Moreover, there are no economic, housing, integration, language, health requirements to comply with, and there is no time limit for enjoying these facilitated requirements. The law sets out a limit of nine months for a family reunification procedure; in case extraordinary verifications are required, the procedure can be prolonged with a maximum of six months. Also, family members have to wait less than three years to obtain a residence permit which is autonomous of their sponsor.

ABSENCE OF FEES

LT SE

Two countries refrain from asking for fees for family reunification. **Sweden** does not apply any fees for family members of BIPs. Similarly, in **Lithuania**, fees and charges are not collected for the issuance and renewal of the residence permit to persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection and their family members.

DURATION OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROCEDURES

SE

With regard to the duration of family reunification procedures, data gaps in most countries render it impossible to assess this NIEM indicator in a comparative way. However, in **Sweden**, 77% of family reunion cases in 2018, including voluntary migrants, were processed within six months, and 44% of cases for first-time applicants were processed within 270 days.

2.4.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

Bulgarian citizenship is granted by the President of the Republic of Bulgaria. The Minister of Justice submits a proposal to the President on granting or refusing Bulgarian citizenship. The Minister of Justice makes this proposal within 18 months from the date of lodging the application for Bulgarian citizenship at the Ministry of Justice – this is the general time limit for naturalization procedures²². The duration of the procedure for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship is not time limited.

Pursuant to the Law on Bulgarian Citizenship, holders of refugee status have the right to apply for citizenship after 3 years from receiving the status²³, and holders of humanitarian status – 5 years²⁴. It is only the years during which the applicant had the status that are calculated. Persons who are not Bulgarian citizens are entitled to acquire citizenship, if as of the date of lodging the application they: 1) are of age; 2) have not been convicted for a general intentional criminal offence by a Bulgarian court, and no proceedings have been instituted in respect of them for such an offence, unless the persons have been rehabilitated, 3) have income or employment ensuring their subsistence, 4) have the necessary level of Bulgarian language competence²⁵. The criteria do not include a requirement for the level of integration.

Children aged up to 14 acquire Bulgarian citizenship if their parents or the surviving one accept to receive Bulgarian citizenship or if only one their parents does so when the other one is a Bulgarian citizen²⁶. The same conditions for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship apply to children aged 14-18 if they request it²⁷. In case children aged up to 14 do not have Bulgarian citizenship and only one of their parents is a Bulgarian citizen, they can become Bulgarian citizens if both parents of the surviving one give their written consent thereto²⁸. The same conditions for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship apply to children aged 14-18 if they request it²⁹. The same conditions for acquiring Bulgarian citizenship apply to children adopted by Bulgarian citizens under the conditions of full adoption³⁰.

2.4.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. The overall naturalization procedure is not time limited, and, at the same time, difficulties are observed in terms of the access to information and the communication with applicants.
2. The right to appeal a negative decision on the naturalization application is not regulated in a procedure.
3. The right to appeal a decision on the withdrawal of Bulgarian citizenship is not regulated in a procedure.

²² Art. 35, Art. 36, Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

²³ Art. 13a(1), Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

²⁴ Art. 13a(2), Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

²⁵ Art. 12(1), p. 1, 3, 4, 5, Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

²⁶ Art. 17, Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Art. 18(1), Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

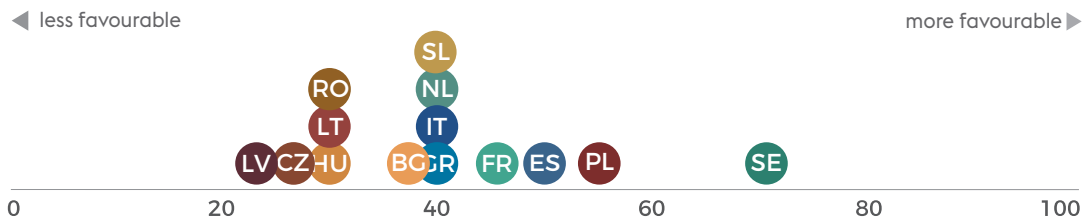
²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Art. 18(2), Law on Bulgarian Citizenship – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134446592>

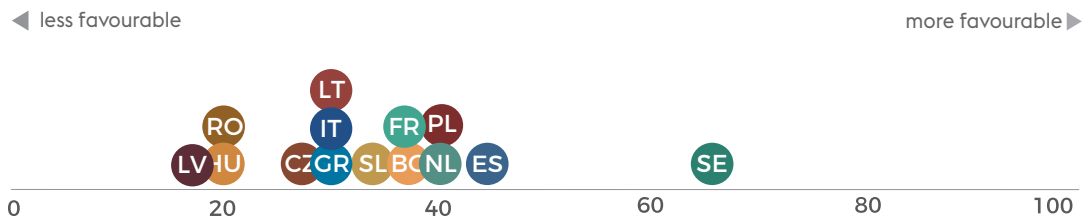
2.4.3. 2019 results by country

Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

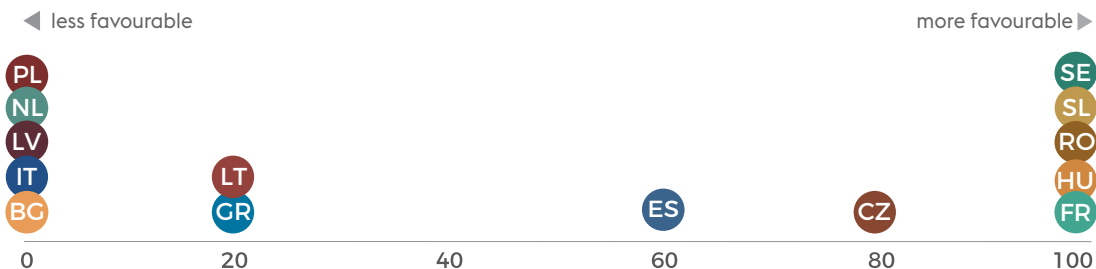


Assessed indicators:

- Facilitated residence requirement for naturalisation
- Period of residence requirement for naturalisation
- Economic resource requirement for naturalization
- Language assessment for naturalisation
- Integration/citizenship assessment requirement for naturalisation
- Criminal record requirement for naturalisation
- Documents from country of origin for naturalisation
- Facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for naturalisation
- Naturalisation by entitlement for second generation
- Expedited length of procedure

Step: Building the Policy Framework

Recognised refugees



**Assessed indicators:**

- Fees for naturalization

2.4.4. Good European practices³¹**What EU and international law requires**

The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Art. 34) and the European Convention on Nationality (Art. 6.4 in conjunction with Art. 16) requires states to provide for special acquisition procedures or facilitated naturalisation for recognised refugees. In the EU, every country has the ultimate competence to establish the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality. Member States therefore retain full control over who can be recognised as a citizen. However, any person who holds the nationality of any EU country is automatically also an EU citizen, and EU citizenship is conferred directly on every EU citizen by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. EU citizenship is additional to and does not replace national citizenship. It also confers a number of additional rights and privileges. For instance, citizens of the Union have a primary and individual right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaty and to the measures adopted to give it effect.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...**In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework**

... allow for naturalisation after three years of residence or earlier.

for recognised refugees

BG FR GR HU

for BSPs

—

... count all years as a permanent/long-term resident, as a BIP as well as awaiting an asylum decision towards the residence period required for naturalisation.

ES FR NL PL RO

SE SL

ES FR NL PL RO

SE SL

³¹ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

... impose no economic resource requirement for naturalisation.	ES NL PL SE	ES NL SE
... impose no language assessment for naturalisation.	SE	SE
... impose no integration/citizenship assessment requirement for naturalisation.	BG IT LT PL SE SL	BG IT LT PL SE SL
... reduce or not foresee a criminal record requirement for naturalisation.	FR PL	FR PL
... provide for exemptions from documentation requirements and for alternative methods where documents are not available.	ES GR SE	ES GR SE
... waive conditions for vulnerable persons applying for naturalisation (UAMS, the elderly, victims of violence and trauma, the disabled).	LT	LT
... provide for the automatic naturalisation of the second generation.	IT SE	IT SE
... commit by law to treat applications for naturalisation as soon as possible, prioritising BIPs.	—	—
In the Step: Building the Policy Framework		
... exempt BIPs from naturalisation fees or provide for a fee that amounts to less than 20% of the monthly minimum social assistance.	CZ FR HU RO	FR HU RO

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS



Sweden is the country which applies the highest legal standards to both recognised refugees and BSPs. Here, the duration of residence required to obtain citizenship is reduced for recognised refugees compared to other third-country nationals (while for BSPs it is the same). To this end, Sweden recognises three different periods as a valid timespan that can be counted towards the requirement: the years as a permanent/long-term resident, the years as a recognised BIP, and the legal stay awaiting an asylum decision. Importantly, no economic, integration and language requirements are applied to BIPs to obtain citizenship. In addition, when documents for naturalisation from the country of origin are not available, exemptions and alternative methods are provided. Some facilitated conditions apply to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and stateless persons. The second generation (children born in Sweden or children under 18) can automatically receive citizenship after only three years of residency, without the obligation to meet any further requirements.

ABSENCE OF FEES



In **Hungary, Romania** and **Slovenia**, the naturalisation procedure is free of charge and therefore is facilitated for BIPs. **Sweden** exempts recognised refugees (but not BSPs) from fees for obtaining citizenship.

2.5. Housing

2.5.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

After receiving a status, BIPs are entitled to financial assistance for accommodation for a 6-month period after the decision on granting international protection becomes effective, under the terms and following the procedure determined by SAR's Chairperson in coordination with the Minister of Finance³². In practice, however, there is no such decision by the chairman of the SAR, which is agreed with the Minister of Finance and no such financial assistance is paid. Instead, this serves as grounds for the existing administrative practice to allow vulnerable BIPs to remain on the premises of RRC for a certain (unknown) period up to 6 months after receiving the status. However, the practice can be considered arbitrary as it is not applied according to officially established criteria. To a large extent, the authorization also depends on how much of the capacity of the SAR centers is filled, which further complicates the predictability and security of this possibility.

BIPs have the right to choose where to settle on the territory of the country; however, state funding is not provided for that purpose. Bulgaria does not have a responsible ministry or another institution for BIP accommodation at the national level. Social housing is regulated at the local level, and the local authorities are not obliged to ensure such housing for refugees. While all BIPs are entitled to apply for social housing, many municipalities set criteria that are difficult to meet for BIPs such as residing on the territory of the municipality for period from 5 to 10 years and requirements for Bulgarian citizenship. At the same time, the municipal housing stock is insufficient and poorly maintained.

LAR stipulates that unaccompanied minor or underage beneficiaries of international protection shall be placed in accommodation till they become of age 1) with the family of relatives or close friends, a foster family, a social service – a residential-type institution or a specialised institution, under the terms and procedure laid down in the Child Protection Act³³; 2) at other places for special accommodation of minor and underage persons³⁴.

The Ordinance on the terms and procedures to conclude, implement and terminate integration agreements with beneficiaries of asylum or international protection sets out as an integration measure “ensuring accommodation for beneficiaries of international protection and their families”³⁵. Due to the absence of a responsible authority and funding, however, this ordinance has never been implemented with national funding.

³² Art. 32(3), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

³³ Art. 33, p.1, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>, this provision became effective on 1 January 2020.

³⁴ Art. 33, p.2, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

³⁵ Art. 14, p.1, Ordinance on the terms and procedures to conclude, implement and terminate integration agreements with beneficiaries of asylum or international protection – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136897655>

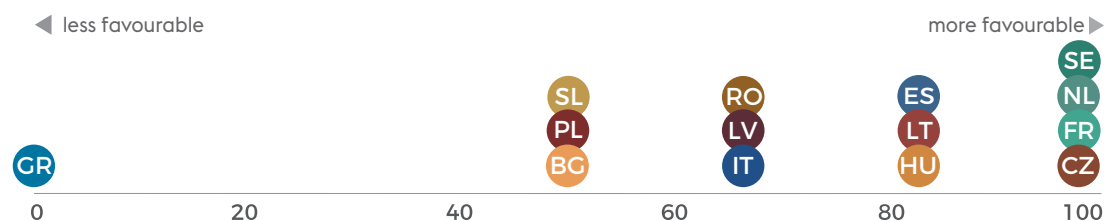
As for the right to property, the Property Law stipulates that TCNs cannot own land unless for investment purposes, and under special conditions³⁶.

2.5.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Housing support for BIPs is not available due to the absence of national funding³⁷.
2. The access to social housing is hindered by the restrictive legal framework and the insufficient housing stock.
3. There are no effective measures for persons from vulnerable groups. The ability to stay in SAR's centers after receiving status is an uncertain measure, as individuals do not know when they must leave.

2.5.3. 2019 results by country

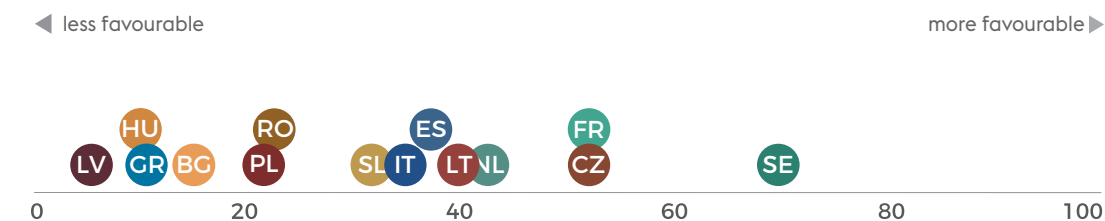
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Free movement and choice of residence within the country
- Access to housing and housing benefits
- Access to property rights

Step: Building the Policy Framework



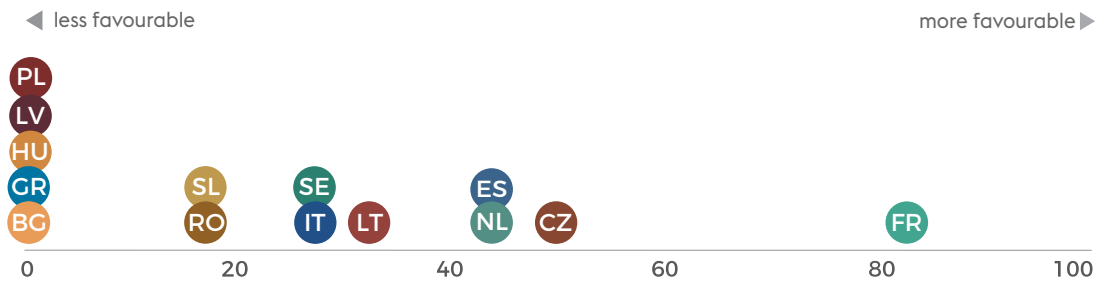
Assessed indicators:

- Access to housing for vulnerable persons
- Awareness raising about the specific challenges of beneficiaries of international protection on the housing market
- Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation
- Provision of targeted temporary housing support
- Provision of targeted long-term housing support
- Period of targeted housing support
- Administrative barriers to accessing public housing
- Housing quality assessment

³⁶ Art. 29, Property Law - <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2122102787>

³⁷ Housing support was provided with EU funding to very few refugees, most of whom resettled persons.

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into housing policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on housing for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on housing with expert NGOs

2.5.4. Good European practices³⁸

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, beneficiaries of international protection are only brought into the mainstream housing support system once they are recognised. Before recognition, the main rule of the Reception Conditions Directive is to guarantee freedom of movement for asylum seekers, although Member States are allowed to decide on asylum seekers' place of residence for reasons of public interest or public order or for the swift processing of the asylum application. Member States can also link the provision of material reception conditions to an assigned residence (Art. 7). Beneficiaries of international protection receive access to housing equal to that of national citizens and can enjoy free movement within the country after recognition (Art. 32 Qualification Directive). As the CJEU confirmed in its judgement in *Alo & Osso*, this right can only be limited in specific circumstances, for example, by the use of dispersal policies when, compared to other third country nationals, beneficiaries of international protection face greater integration difficulties. The sixth EU Common Basic Principle for Immigrant Integration, calling for access to public and private goods and services on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way, also applies to the housing area.

³⁸ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure free movement and choice of residence within the country.



... ensure same access to housing and housing benefits as nationals, with general conditions that newcomers can meet.



... ensure equal treatment with nationals in property rights.



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... ensure access to housing for all vulnerable persons.

... raise awareness about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market.

... provide targeted housing advice, counselling, representation.



FR: partially

... provide targeted temporary housing support without further eligibility rules.



... provide targeted long-term housing support without time limit.



... not impose any administrative barrier to accessing public housing (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).

... provide country-wide housing quality assessment.



In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... mainstream the integration of BIPs into housing policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).



... coordinate with regional and local authorities on housing for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.



... continuously provide means for expert NGOs to assist BIPs to find accommodation.



ES: most BIPs not covered

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

FULL ACCESS TO HOUSING AND HOUSING BENEFITS



Czechia, France, the Netherlands and Sweden provide the highest legal standards on housing. This implies that BIPs have freedom of movement and choice of residence within the country, full access to housing and housing benefits, as well as full access to property rights on an equal basis with nationals.

ACCOMMODATION, CARE AND GUARDIANSHIP FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS



In **Greece**, the “supported independent living for unaccompanied minors” initiative addresses the lack of accommodation in appropriate facilities for the thousands of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) living in the country under precarious circumstances – in detention, camps or even on the street. Implemented by METAdrasi, an NGO dedicated to reception and integration of refugees and immigrants, the comprehensive programme underpins the new regulatory framework for the guardianship of unaccompanied children introduced for the first time in Greek law in 2018. It offers safe housing for UAMs aged 16 to 18 (both BIPs and asylum seekers) as well a series of services that cover their basic needs (education, health, psychosocial development, legal aid, interpretation, etc.), along with a proper level of care and guardianship. This innovative activity aims to prepare and empower unaccompanied minors for a smooth transition into adulthood and their integration into Greek society.

FOCUSED EFFORT ACROSS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE THE HOUSING SITUATION OF BIPs



In **France**, the ministry responsible for housing issued a ministerial order addressed to all regional and local prefects with the objective to identify 20,000 accommodations for BIPs, including resettled ones, across all regions in 2018. The National Strategy for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, adopted in June 2018, also recalls the objectives set out in the ministerial order. A 2019 ministerial order updated the objectives to identify 16,000 accommodations across the country.

Regular steering committees involving regional, local authorities and public housing bodies have been set up in all regions in order to meet the above objective. Regional and local authorities have a key role to address housing needs of BIPs and regional prefects have to report the number of BIPs who have accessed accommodation every month. The objectives of the ministerial orders are, in fact, updated every year according to the needs pointed out by the monthly reporting of regional prefects, which operate with the support of associations accompanying BIPs.

New initiatives to raise awareness about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market have been recently adopted. The inter-ministerial delegation for accommodation and access to housing aims at improving access to housing for refugees by sending occasional information notes to public housing bodies concerning the specific entitlements of BIPs. The National Strategy for the Reception and Integration of Refugees also includes awareness raising of public housing bodies as a priority. In addition, the Ministry of Housing launched a campaign seeking to encourage homeowners to rent their property through a state-guaranteed housing rental intermediation system.

UPGRADING AND LINKING ACCOMMODATION TO COMMUNITY-LEVEL INTEGRATION

LT

In **Lithuania**, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society seeks to make a map of existing accommodation infrastructure which needs renovation/reconstruction in host communities of refugees. Additionally, it plans to carry out an integration support pilot project in a chosen municipality. To do so, it includes a flexible set of financial support for covering the support and service expenses related to integration, taking into account the needs of refugees and the local community.

TARGETED HOUSING SUPPORT

SE

Sweden provides the best conditions among the assessed countries with regard to policy-related indicators in the area of housing. Each region and municipality is allocated a specific number of beneficiaries whom they can accommodate each year and is made responsible for providing public housing. The allocation is based on a range of different criteria, including security of tenure, affordability of housing, accessibility of key services, adequacy of the accommodation, availability of employment opportunities and the beneficiary's own preference. However, a large number of BIPs still move to areas of their own choice, therefore regional actors and municipalities face some difficulties in mapping the housing conditions of all BIPs. Each municipality and region works differently with public housing and private housing actors to raise awareness and secure housing. "About Sweden", a social orientation handbook for immigrants, provides information on housing and some legal issues related to housing. In-cash housing benefits of various types are offered for beneficiaries who are living alone, beneficiaries living with children and beneficiaries younger than 29 without children.

2.6.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

Pursuant to the EU law and LAR asylum-seekers in Bulgaria are entitled to access to the labour market within 3 months after lodging the application for international protection (if proceedings are not completed)³⁹. After acquiring a status, BIPs are entitled to the same access to the private market as Bulgarian citizens, but are subject to restrictions in terms of positions for which Bulgarian citizenship is required⁴⁰. Some amendments to the Law on Labour Migration and Labour Mobility made in 2018 stipulate that the members of the families of BIPs are exempt from the requirement to have a work permit in order to access the labour market⁴¹.

The special targeted policy in support of the integration of BIPs on the labour market – the Programme on Refugees' Employment and Training adopted in 2016 – envisages language courses, vocational training and subsidised employment for a 1-year period for asylum-seekers entitled to work, BIPs, and unemployed Bulgarian nationals⁴². During the period considered, it is only the third component of the Programme that was implemented, in particular in respect of Bulgarian nationals working at SAR.

Unemployed BIPs and asylum-seekers are entitled to register with employment offices (EO) where they can also benefit from all the other employment promotion measures and mediation services that are available for Bulgarian nationals. They are carried out in the Bulgarian language, therefore BIPs, who do not know the language well enough, need translation/mediation, which the state does not provide. There is also limited support for starting one's own business, which, however, operates on the principle of reimbursement and cannot be considered effective⁴³. However, interviews with BIPs and experts conducted for the purpose of this research reveal that BIPs do not perceive EOs as effective, and rarely register with them. Nonetheless, the Employment Agency (EA) has both experience and capacity to inform its staff about the specifics of BIP employment, and take part in organizing job fairs in cooperation with SAR and NGOs.

2.6.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. The absence of state-funded Bulgarian language training which is needed for the access to employment.
2. The absence of effective employment-related measures for vocational training and contacts with companies (internships, training in the workplace, etc.), which can motivate BIPs and ill help them develop relations with employers.
3. The lack of support for starting up a business, including training, funding, mentor support, etc.

³⁹ Art. 29(3), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

⁴⁰ Art. 7(1), p. 1, Law on Civil Service – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134673408>; and Art. 32(2)2, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

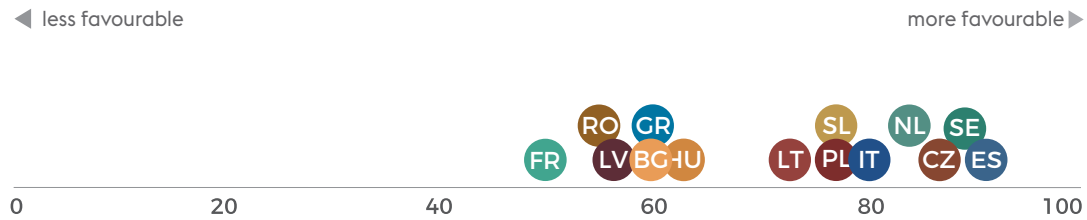
⁴¹ Art. 9(1), p. 3, Law on Labour Migration and Labour Mobility – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136803084>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Art. 49, Employment Promotion Act – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/-12262909>

2.6.3. 2019 results by country

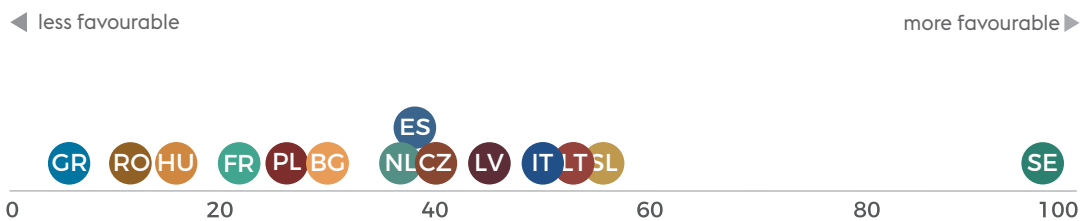
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to employment
- Access to self-employment
- Right to recognition of formal degrees and right to skills validation for beneficiaries of international protection
- Recognition procedures of foreign diplomas, certificates, and other evidence of formal qualifications
- Support in the recognition of foreign diplomas, certificates, and other qualifications

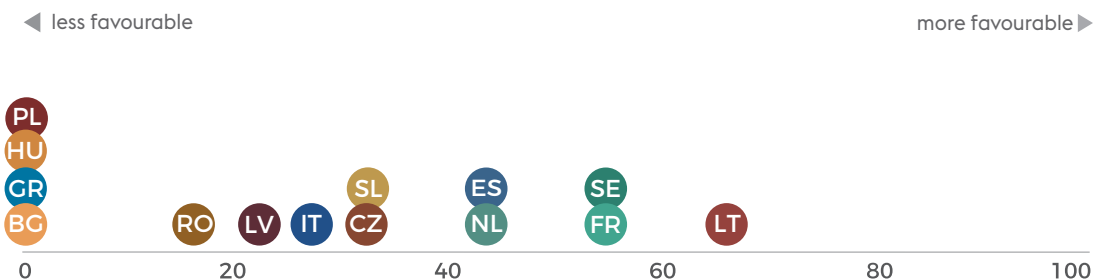
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to employment for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to accessing employment
- Awareness raising about the specific labour market situation of beneficiaries of international protection
- Assessment of skills
- Job-seeking counselling and positive action
- Targeted support for entrepreneurs

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into employment policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on employment for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on employment with expert NGOs or non-profit employment support organisations

2.6.4. Good European practices⁴⁴

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, access to the labour market remains limited until recognition, after which the Qualification Directive guarantees the equal treatment of beneficiaries of international protection and national citizens in terms of access to the labour market, vocational training, employment-related education recognition and assessment procedures of foreign qualifications (Art. 26). When relevant documents are missing, beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from alternative assessment methods (Art. 28). Before recognition, the Reception Conditions Directive stipulates a maximum waiting period for labour market access of nine months for asylum-seekers (Art. 15). The Directive calls for Member States to decide on conditions for labour market access that ensure effective access and avoid procedural obstacles. However, the Directive remains silent on the recognition of asylum seekers' qualifications (Art. 16). The third EU Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration stipulates that employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants and the contributions they make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure full access to employment in the private sector, the wider public sector as well as the core administration.

SE

... ensure full access to self-employment in general and to self-employment in the liberal professions.

ES HU IT LT SE

... establish the right to recognition of formal degrees and to validation of skills.

BG CZ ES GR IT LT
LV PL SE SL

... ensure that the same procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications are available to BIPs as for nationals.

BG CZ ES HU IT LT
LV NL PL RO SE SL

⁴⁴ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

... accept alternative methods of assessment when documents from the country of origin are unavailable and provide assistance in the recognition procedure.	CZ NL SE
In the Step: Building the Policy Framework	
... ensure full access to employment for all groups of special concern.	————
... not to impose any administrative barriers to accessing employment (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).	BG CZ HU IT LT PL SE
... raise awareness about the specific labour market situation of BIPs.	SE
... provide for high standards in the assessment of skills (country-wide criteria, translation, procedures where documentation is missing).	CZ SL SE
... provide for job-seeking counselling and positive action.	LT LV SL SE
... provide targeted entrepreneurship support.	SE
In the Step: Building the Implementation Framework	
... mainstream the integration of BIPs into employment policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).	LT SE
... coordinate with regional and local authorities and employment bodies on employment for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.	NL SE
... continuously provide means for expert NGOs or non-profit employment support organisations to assist BIPs to find employment.	CZ ES

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

TARGETED INITIATIVE TO FOSTER REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT



The **French** Skills Investment Plan developed by the Ministry of Labour has led to advances in terms of the policy and the overall coordination frameworks. As part of this strategy, the government issued a call for proposals in October 2018 with a budget of 15 million euros to facilitate the integration of 6,000 BIPs through employment. By December 2019, 35 projects which principally aim at building employment pathways for refugees have been awarded in total across the country. By 2022, the Skills Investment Plan will also allocate 63 million euros to the HOPE targeted programme, which aims at integrating refugees through work while providing comprehensive support (temporary housing, health care, language as well as vocational training). Additional funding is available under regional pacts of the Skills Investment Plan. The National Strategy for the Integration of Refugees, adopted in June 2018, mentions that the employment ministry will set up a mechanism to monitor the employment outcomes of BIPs within the framework of the strategy.

In **Latvia**, a project at the State Employment Agency (in the context of an Action Plan for promoting the socio-economic inclusion of BIPs) addresses groups at risk of social exclusion based on their age, gender, ethnicity or disability with information tailored to their specific needs. Informational and awareness-raising events have taken place in several cities. A 2018 campaign called Openness is Value sought to highlight the benefits of diversity and openness by speaking directly to employers, young people and the general public. In addition, job-seeking counseling has been strengthened by the State Employment Agency, which has a two year project targeting refugees and asylum seekers to share job opportunities and informative materials, and also to provide individual consultations and support for participating in wider employment programmes such as subsidised employment, on-the-job training, education programmes and paid social work.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESS TO IMPROVE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

The **Lithuanian** Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society foresees regular meetings with NGOs, the association of local authorities, ministries and other relevant organisations on integration issues, as well as monitoring of its implementation. It demands the organization of education events for employers to inform about integration needs, taking into account diversity in terms of gender, age, country of origin and family status. Not the least, the Action Plan requires targeted trainings on how to start a business. Since June 2017, beneficiaries of international protection are included in the list of persons who receive additional support in the labour market.

COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION POLICIES

In **Sweden**, labour market integration is a core element of the country's dedicated government portfolio dealing with BIPs. The strategy involves social partners, state agencies, NGOs, local and regional levels of government. The Employment Service, as a co-ordinating actor, conducts regular evaluations of the introduction programme and reports to the government about the results of the measures. The programmes are implemented locally with regional coordination, and even if the Employment Service has the main responsibility for labour market measures, municipalities are often involved and have important roles, such as language training. Sweden obtains the highest score related to the policy-related indicators among the assessed countries, in addition to a highly favourable legal framework. The introduction programme is guaranteed to last 24 months, implemented by specially trained staff and focusing on three main components: employment services, language training and civic orientation. The first step of this programme is to validate the newcomers' education, work experience and skills. There are several forms of subsidized employment available.

Unaccompanied minors of working age, single parents, women and persons with disabilities are identified as special needs groups in eligibility for mainstream employment services and targeted employment support. No administrative barriers exist for BIPs to access employment. Also, the government has adopted specific campaigns and measures targeting employers to raise awareness about the specific situation of BIPs. Targeted entrepreneurship support is provided, e.g., through a “fast-track” program for small businesses together with local business development centers.

2.7. Vocational training and employment-related education

2.7.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

Asylum-seekers and BIPs in Bulgaria are entitled to vocational education and vocational training under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian citizens⁴⁵. Persons under temporary protection enjoy the same right⁴⁶. As regards school vocational training, asylum-seekers and BIPs who are in mandatory school age have the same access as the local citizens, and, by way of exception, they are exempt from the requirement for legalisation and notarial certification of a number of documents⁴⁷. All persons aged above 16, however, are required by law to prove a certain education level in order to be eligible for vocational training. Education diplomas are a precondition for the access to vocational training. It is not possible for BIPs to have their skills recognised due to the absence of an alternative procedure for that purpose (except for asylum-seekers and BIPs who are in mandatory school age⁴⁸). Instead, persons aged above 16 have to attend literacy courses, as organized irregularly and only on a project basis.

The targeted national policy national policy focused on BIPs is the Programme on Refugees' Employment and Training adopted in 2016 which envisages language courses, vocational training and subsidised employment for a 1-year period for asylum-seekers entitled to work, BIPs, and unemployed Bulgarian nationals⁴⁹. During the period considered, however, it is only the third component of the Programme that was implemented, in particular in respect of Bulgarian nationals working at SAR. If it is possible to prove the required educational qualification, BIPs can participate in professional training through the EO. Vocational education and vocational training are provided only in the Bulgarian language.

2.7.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Lack of possibility to validate knowledge for the purpose of accessing vocational training.
2. Lack of state-funded Bulgarian language training as a prerequisite for inclusion in vocational training and employment.
3. Requirement for a certain level of education as a prerequisite for access to vocational training.

⁴⁵ Art. 26(1) и 26(2), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

⁴⁶ Art. 39(1), p. 2, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

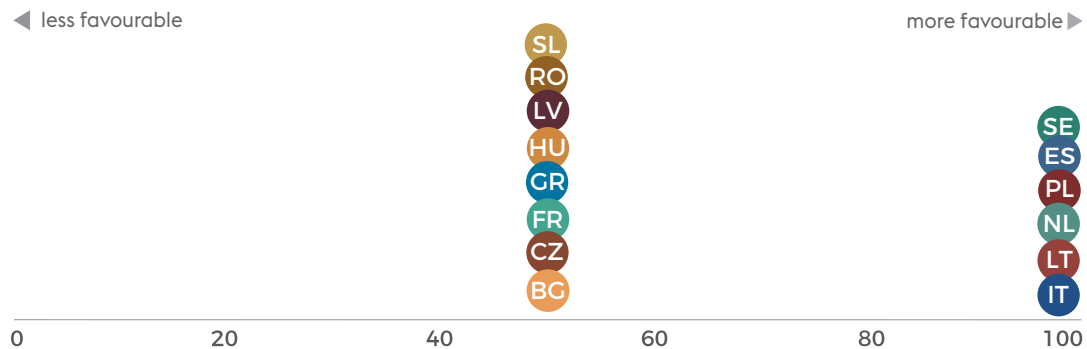
⁴⁷ Art. 108(6), Ordinance No 11 of 1 Sept. 2016 on the evaluation of students' performance – <https://www.navet.government.bg/bg/media/DOS-otsenyavane.pdf>

⁴⁸ Art. 166(6), Law on Preschool and School Education – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136641509>

⁴⁹ Employment Agency, Programme on Refugees' Employment and Training – <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/programa-za-zaetost-i-obuchenie-na-bejanci/>

2.7.3. 2019 results by country

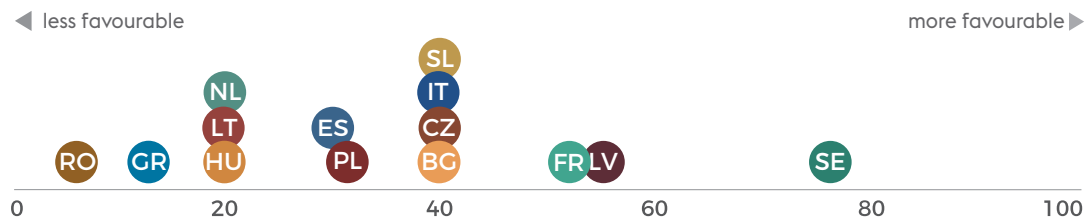
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to vocational training and employment-related education for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to accessing vocational training Raising awareness about the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection regarding vocational training
- Accessibility of vocational training and other employment-related education measures
- Length of targeted vocational training and employment education

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into vocational training and employment-related education policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on vocational training for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on vocational training and employment-related education with expert NGOs and non-profit adult education organization

2.7.4. Good European practices⁵⁰

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law and, to some extent, the Geneva Convention, beneficiaries of international protection are guaranteed the same treatment as national citizens and access to targeted support to address their specific needs. For access to vocational training, the Geneva Convention requires states to grant refugees at least the most favourable treatment granted to foreign citizens. The Geneva Convention establishes a general obligation to facilitate integration (Art. 34), and this duty is spelled out in the more concrete obligations under the recast Qualification Directive. Under EU law, access to vocational training remains limited until recognition, after which the recast Qualification Directive guarantees the equal treatment of beneficiaries of international protection and national citizens in terms of access to the labour market, vocational training, employment-related education, recognition and assessment procedures of foreign qualifications (Art. 26). When relevant documents are missing, beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from alternative assessment methods (Art. 28). Before recognition, the Reception Conditions Directive stipulates for asylum seekers a maximum waiting period of nine months for labour market access (Art. 15). The directive calls for Member States to decide on conditions for labour market access that ensure effective access and avoid procedural obstacles. However, Member States are not obliged to open vocational training possibilities to asylum seekers, and the directive remains silent on the recognition of qualifications (Art. 16).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

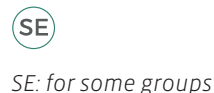
In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure same access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education as nationals, with general conditions that newcomers can meet.



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... both identify groups which need special attention in mainstream vocational training/education and make available targeted programmes (single parents, women, BIPs above 50, the disabled, victims of violence and trauma, minors arriving above compulsory schooling age).



... not impose any administrative barriers to accessing vocational training (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).



⁵⁰ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

... ensure that authorities regularly inform public employment services about the vocational training entitlements and needs of BIPs, that employment services regularly inform their staff, and that campaigns sensitize private training providers about the situation of BIPs.

SE

... take measures to increase the participation of BIPs in vocational training and employment-related education, as well as measures to encourage employers to provide vocational training and education to BIPs.

FR

LV

... ensure that BIPs benefit from targeted vocational training and employment-related education as long as individually needed, or without a time limit.

SE

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... mainstream the integration of BIPs into vocational training and employment-related education policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).

LT

... coordinate with regional and local authorities and/or employment bodies on vocational training for BIPs, by providing both immaterial (e.g., guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.

SE

... continuously provide means for expert NGOs or non-profit employment support organisations to assist BIPs in getting employed.

—

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

PLACEMENT AGENCY FOR BIPs

ES

In **Spain**, the Refugee Aid Commission CEAR has developed a placement agency “Agencia de Colocación de CEAR” for BIPs to promote their language learning, improve their employability and enhance their autonomy. Within this framework and drawing upon its alliances with companies, CEAR plays a key role in labour intermediation by matching asylum seekers and BIPs’ characteristics and needs with companies’ requirements in terms of labour demand.

LARGE-SCALE TARGETED VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION PROGRAMME

FR

In **France**, the employment ministry adopted the Skills Investment Plan to be implemented from 2018 to 2022. BIPs are considered as a priority target – particularly, those under 25 years of age and those who arrived less than five years ago. It is being implemented in a way that provides additional means to the regional level and encourages local employers to invest in the training of BIPs. Several regional pacts were signed in 2019. For example, the Ile-de-France region, where many BIPs are living, provides a budget of 7 million euros for vocational and language training for BIPs under the regional pact. The National Strategy for the Integration of Refugees, adopted in June 2018, relies on the Skills Investment Plan to facilitate the integration of BIPs

through vocational training. The HOPE project combines language learning courses, career guidance and vocational trainings over eight months, while providing temporary accommodation. To do so, it involves all relevant partners, including vocational training centres, regional prefectures, public employment services (“Pôle Emploi”), the Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), NGOs and private companies, to guarantee vocational training for the achievement of a diploma or a professional certification. Funding was provided to reach 1500 BIPs in 2019 and 63 million euros will be made available by 2022 under the Skills Investment Plan. Specific programmes have also been set up in 2018 for BIPs between the ages of 18 and 25 who are in a precarious situation. For example, the PIAL project provides language training and an allowance of 1,454 euros over a period of three to six months to help them access mainstream vocational trainings programmes that require a sufficient knowledge of the French language. Last but not least, since August 2018, within the framework of an agreement between OFII and Pôle Emploi, “immersion days” are organised to improve knowledge of their mutual services for BIPs, thus improving awareness about the vocational training entitlements and needs of BIPs among the public employment services.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED EDUCATION AT THE CORE OF INTRODUCTION PROGRAMMES



Sweden is the overall best-scoring country in this dimension. Vocational training is a central component of the country’s integration strategy for BIPs which involves several partners. Education and qualification are highly encouraged during the introduction programme which must include employment preparatory measures. The Swedish National Agency for Education is tasked to fill the introduction program with activities and measures, while the employment service, having the contacts with the newcomers, has the responsibility to find suitable programmes and schoolings. Therefore, it organizes its own programmes and procures targeted programmes from the private sector, also involving social partners. In addition, it has funds at its disposal and agreements with local businesses to provide internships which are often a fundamental aspect of vocational training. Generally, there are no specific limits to publicly funded support for targeted vocational training and employment-related education. The two state agencies involved carry out regular follow ups on the numbers and results of their efforts.

2.8.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

During the procedure for international protection, applicants are entitled to health insurance, access to medical help and free medical care under the terms and following the procedure for Bulgarian nationals⁵¹. LAR provides for an individual assessment for vulnerabilities and identification of special needs, which, however, does not result in providing regular health support during the procedure⁵². Persons under temporary protection are entitled only to emergency medical assistance⁵³.

After receiving a status, beneficiaries of international protection are obliged to have mandatory health insurance, and have to pay themselves the relevant contributions⁵⁴. This requirement is often a challenge for those who do not find employment right away, belong to a vulnerable group or do not have a support network.

One of the main obstacles continues to be the registration of BIPs with a general practitioner (GP), and of children with a paediatrician. The GP is important, as he/she makes referrals to specialists when specialised consultation is needed. According to information from experts interviewed for the purpose of this research, many doctors refuse to register refugees, and they point out a number of reasons for that: insufficient number of GPs and considerations related to the lack of interpretation services and, in some cases, of a medical history, high mobility and the persons' failure to appear, as well as cumbersome administrative inter-agency procedures. Similar to address registration, there is no procedure for de-registration, only for changing the GP. This results in big numbers of inactive patients on the patients' lists, which causes administrative hurdles for GPs, including fines. In 2019, GPs were not obliged by the law to register certain patients.

The language barrier is also a relevant factor: as many BIPs have difficulties when they see a doctor, they often need an interpreter or a mediator to accompany them. The services of the latter, however, are not funded from the state budget, but from NGO projects.

2.8.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. The biggest challenge for BIPs is the difficult access to registration with a GP or a paediatrician for children.
2. The state does not provide funding for interpreters, social workers and mediators who can inform the persons about their health rights and obligations, and accompany them when they see a doctor.
3. Even if BIPs have health insurance, they do not receive psychological help, including for victims of trauma, torture, violence, etc.

⁵¹ Art. 29(1), p. 5, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

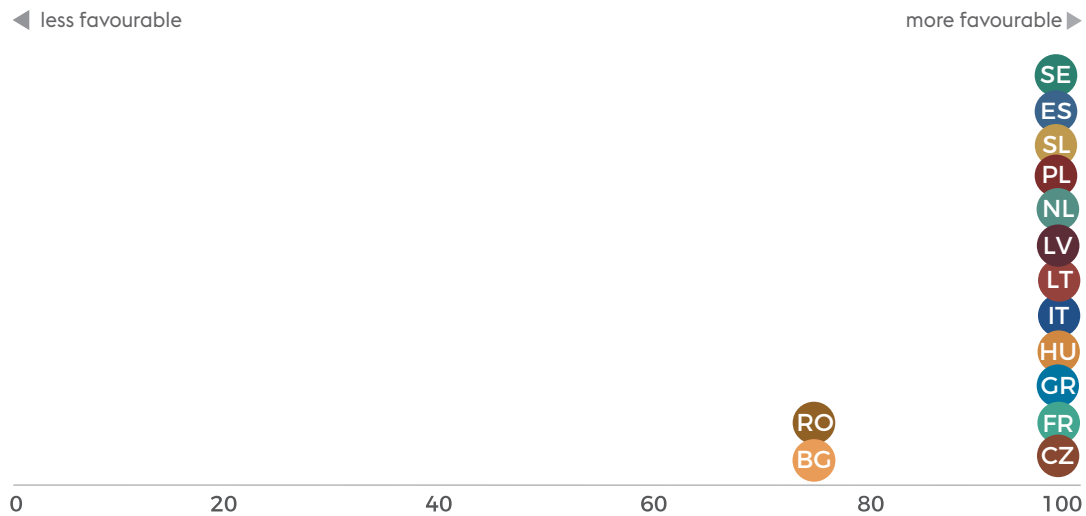
⁵² Art. 29(4), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

⁵³ Art. 39(1), p. 5, Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

⁵⁴ Art. 33(1), p. 4, Law on Health Insurance – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134412800>

2.8.3. 2019 results by country

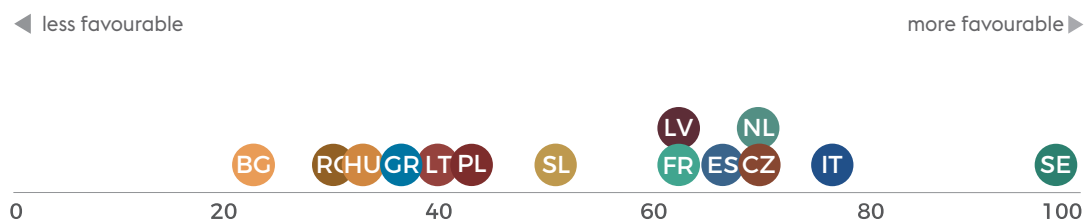
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Inclusion in a system of health care coverage
- Extent of health coverage

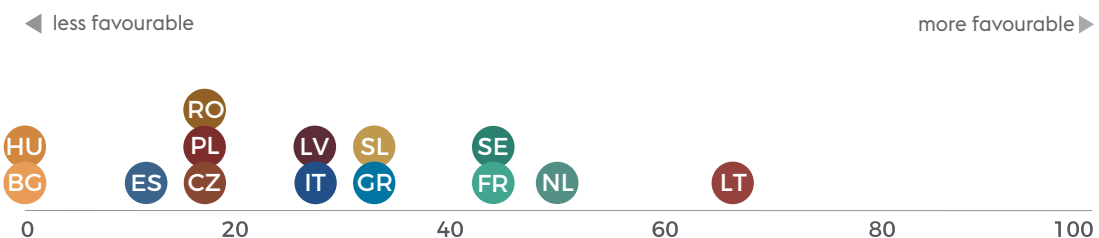
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to health care for special needs
- Information for health care providers about entitlements
- Information concerning entitlements and use of health services
- Availability of free interpretation services

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into health care
- Coordination with regional and local authorities and/or health bodies on health care for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on health care with expert NGOs

2.8.4. Good European practices⁵⁵

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, asylum seekers must receive necessary and adapted medical assistance from the moment of their arrival, although they will be able to enjoy access to health care without restriction only after recognition. According to the Reception Conditions Directive (Art. 19), during the reception phase, asylum seekers must receive necessary health care, which should at least include emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses and serious mental disorders. Asylum seekers with special protection needs, such as minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of violence, must receive adapted medical assistance. Under the Qualification Directive (Art. 30.1), beneficiaries of international protection have the same access to health care services as national citizens. Vulnerable groups of beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from adapted health care services beyond mainstream access to health care (Art. 30 .2).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure full access to a system of health care coverage under conditions which can be met as newcomers.



... provide for the same health coverage as for nationals.



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... ensure access to special needs health care for vulnerable groups (pediatric care, care for minors who have been victims of abuse or trauma, pregnancy and childbirth, physically or mentally handicapped persons, nursing for the elderly, psychiatric/psychosocial care for victims of torture, rape or other forms of trauma).



... proactively raise awareness among health care providers about the entitlements and specific health issues of BIPs.



⁵⁵ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

... not impose any administrative barriers to obtaining health care (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).

CZ GR LT NL SE

... systematically provide individualised information on health care entitlements and use of services.

CZ FR SE

... provide for free interpretation services across the health system or at least in major destination areas.

IT ES SE

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... mainstream the integration of BIPs into health policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).

LT

... coordinate with regional and local authorities and/or health bodies on health care for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.

SE

... continuously provide means for expert NGOs to assist BIPs to receive adequate health care.

—

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES

FR

In **France**, the ministry responsible for health issued in June 2018 an order addressed to regional health agencies in order to strengthen the health care system for newly arrived migrants and foster coordination at the regional level. The ministry has developed a digital platform to exchange tools and information with the agencies on the entitlements of BIPs to access health care services. A Regional Programme for Access to Prevention and Care (PRAPS) provides additional means to the regional health agencies to address the needs of beneficiaries of international protection.

SPECIAL RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR HEALTH REASON

IT

In **Italy**, a specific residence permit for medical reasons was introduced in 2018. People holding this permit cannot be expelled or rejected because they could experience significant damage to their already precarious health conditions in the event of a return to the country of origin or provenance.

COMPREHENSIVE, INDIVIDUALISED AND MULTI-LINGUAL INFORMATION CONCERNING ENTITLEMENTS

SE

Sweden obtains the highest possible score related to the policy-related indicators, being the only country that fulfills all benchmarks. With regard to information about entitlements and the use of health services, health communicators exist in most of the regions and the book “About Sweden” includes a chapter on health with different information. Some regions offer face-to-face information in the language of the BIPs, even though services offered vary greatly according to regions. The National Board of Health and Welfare’s report from 2016 identifies the need to coordinate information nationally.

2.9. Social security

2.9.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

The Law on Social Assistance entitles BIPs to social assistance⁵⁶. The application for using social services and social welfare is addressed to the Social Assistance Director, and is written in the Bulgarian language; however, interpretation is not ensured for the lodging of the application. BIPs are required to have an identity document issued which they cannot obtain without having accommodation and address registration at the relevant location. The examination of the application for social assistance requires that a social worker visits the BIP at his/her permanent address in order to conduct a social interview. Due to the housing situation and the practice of buying fake addresses on the “black market” for the purpose of address registration, as described above, many BIPs cannot be visited at their official address, which prevents them from the opportunity to use social welfare. An additional requirement for the granting of social benefits is prior registration with the EO. BIPs benefit from a simplified procedure, according to which they do not have to wait 6 months between registration and application for social assistance, if they have registered with the EO within 3 months of obtaining status⁵⁷.

BIPs, whose insurance contributions have been duly paid and meet the requirements for Bulgarian citizens, are entitled to additional benefits. However, they must hold a valid identity card and fill in an application for unemployment benefits in the Bulgarian language. The same requirement applies to sickness benefits. In order to have access to disability benefits, BIPs must have medical documents certifying their state issued by healthcare facility in Bulgaria.

The national case law contains evidence regarding some practical barriers to the access to social assistance. An example in this respect is a judgment of the Supreme Administrative Court of 10 December 2015 in case No 6027/2015 which upholds the judgment of the lower instance administrative court repealing an order of the Social Assistance Directorate in the town of Nova Zagora which refuses access to family allowances to a stateless person with humanitarian status for his/her four children. The Court holds that while the Law on Family Allowances does not explicitly mention this category of foreign nationals, the legal provision has to be interpreted in line with the special law, LAR, which does not lay down any restrictions in respect of the rights of beneficiaries of international protection.

After discontinuing the monthly allowance in the amount of 65 BGN⁵⁸ in early 2015, SAR reintroduced this practice in October 2018: asylum-seekers started receiving a small monthly allowance in the amount of 20 BGN⁵⁹ per month per person for meeting basic needs – the latter is financed through EU budget.

⁵⁶ Art. 2(6), Law on Social Assistance – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2134405633>

⁵⁷ Art. 10 (6), Rules for Implementation of the Law on Social Assistance- <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/-13038592>

⁵⁸ About 62 euro

⁵⁹ About 10 euro

In March 2019 the Parliament passed an entirely new Law on Social Services which will come into force on 1 July 2020. Until then, access to social services for PWDs is determined by the Law on Social Assistance. Within the framework of this Law, BIPs must also provide an identity card in order to use a social service.

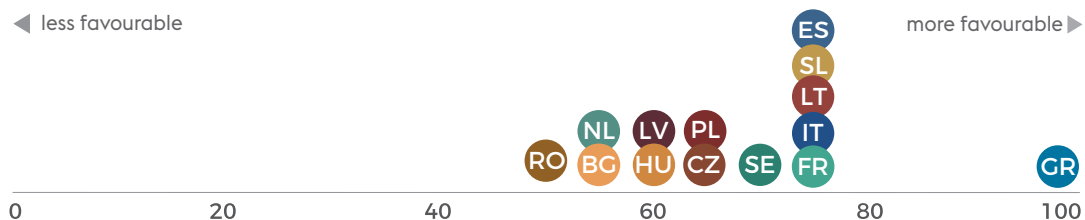
There is a lack of translators and mediators in the social services, which further complicates the reception and use of social services from the BIPs.

2.9.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Applying for social assistance is still conditional on having a Bulgarian identity document, which requires address registration and accommodation, the latter being a serious issue in Bulgaria.
2. Despite the case-law for the benefit of refugees, BIPs still receives refusal to provide family benefits for children.
3. Applicants for social assistance need to master the Bulgarian language at a high level in order to fill in the necessary documents and to communicate with the civil servants. This makes them dependent on social mediation, which is not ensured by the state.

2.9.3. 2019 results by country

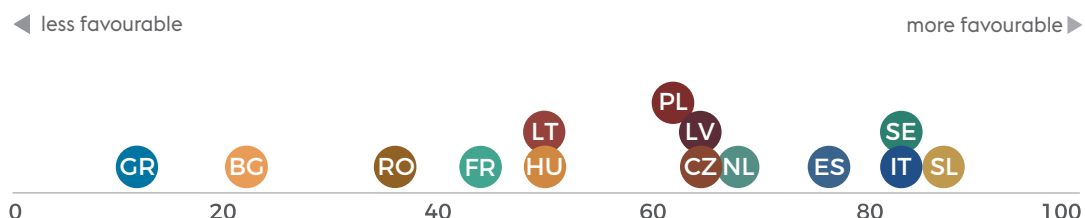
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Inclusion in a system of social security
- Extent of entitlement to social benefits

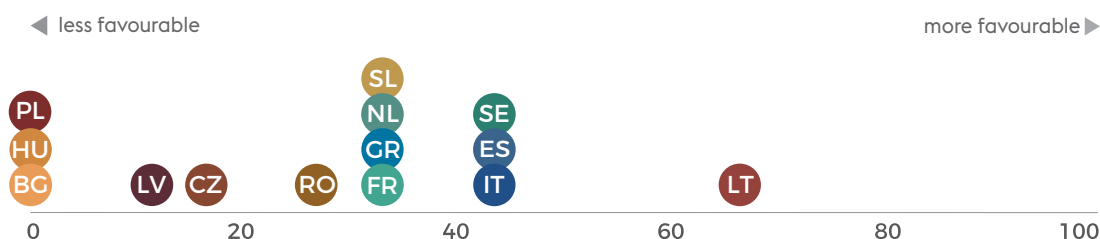
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Administrative barriers to obtaining entitlement to social benefits
- Information for social welfare offices about entitlements
- Information concerning entitlements and use of social services

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into social security
- Coordination with regional and local authorities and/or welfare bodies on social security for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on poverty relief with expert NGOs

2.9.4. Good European practices⁶⁰

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, asylum seekers remain dependent on the provision of material reception conditions and are not guaranteed targeted measures to support their transition after recognition. The Reception Conditions Directive ensures asylum seekers an adequate standard of living guaranteeing their subsistence and protecting their physical and mental health but does not specify the level of this support (Art. 17). After recognition, the recast Qualification Directive gives refugees access to social assistance under the same conditions as national citizens, but beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are only guaranteed access to core benefits (Art. 29). Member States who use this derogation have to show that such derogations are not discretionary, serve a legitimate aim and are proportional to fulfil that aim, and the level of the core benefits is defined in compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU. Both Directives are silent on the use of targeted measures that could address the specific financial difficulties of beneficiaries of international protection transitioning from reception centres to their new lives without any savings and social support.

⁶⁰ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure same access to social security entitlements as nationals, with general conditions that newcomers can meet.

ES FR GR IT LT SL

... provide key benefits (social assistance/minimum income support; unemployment-, sickness/disability-, family/children-related benefits; old age/survivors pensions) on a level equal to nationals as well as targeted (e.g., transitional) benefits.

CZ ES FR LT LV NL
SE

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... not impose any administrative barriers to obtaining entitlement to social benefits (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).

HU IT LT NL SE

... ensure that authorities regularly inform social welfare offices about the entitlements and specific limitations of BIPs, and that social welfare offices regularly inform their staff.

IT SE SL

... systematically provide individualised, face-to-face information on social security entitlements and the use of services to BIPs.

CZ FR SL

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... mainstream the integration of BIPs into social security (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).

LT

... coordinate with regional and local authorities and/or welfare bodies on social security for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g., guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.

NL SE

... continuously provide means for expert NGOs to assist BIPs in accessing income support and poverty relief.

ES

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES TO SMOOTHLY ACCESS FAMILY BENEFITS

FR

In **France**, since January 1, 2019, beneficiaries of international protection no longer need to wait until the issuing of civil status documents by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) to access social benefits. A “provisional family composition certificate” is now delivered to BIPs to facilitate and accelerate their access to social benefits. Before the reform, this was a real challenge for BIPs, who had to wait for several months before receiving their civil status document from OFPRA. In practice, however, many Family Allowance Offices (CAF) still require civil status documents (such as birth certificates) to recognise family-related benefits from BIPs.

In **Lithuania**, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society includes a strategy involving relevant partners to facilitate comprehensive income support for BIPs. *Inter alia*, the strategy foresees a pilot project on integration support in a chosen municipality which includes a flexible set of financial means to cover service expenses related to integration, taking into account the needs of refugees and the local community.

2.10.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

Education is one of the dimensions for which Bulgaria has the most favourable evaluation. This is due to the policies, and the informal collaboration among stakeholders. The latter, however, is not covered by collaboration indicators which measure formal actions.

Pursuant to the EU law and LAR, the access to the education system for children asylum-seekers or BIPs cannot be delayed by more than 3 months from the date of lodging an application for international protection⁶¹. They have access to preschool and school education in mandatory school age under the same conditions as Bulgarian nationals.

There is a targeted policy focused on children asylum-seekers and BIPs who do not have document certifying the completion of a certain grade or level of education: Ordinance No 3 of 06.04.2017 on the terms and procedure for the enrolment in education of asylum-seekers or beneficiaries of international protection. The children whose age corresponds to grades 1–4 are enrolled in a grade corresponding to their age⁶². Interviews are conducted with older children with the aim to assess their knowledge, and are enrolled in a grade that cannot be lower than the one corresponding to their age, minus 3 years⁶³. The children who have documents certifying an education grade or level completed undergo a recognition procedure, which is carried out by the school principal for students in grades 1-6, and by the Regional Inspectorate of Education for students in higher grades⁶⁴. Children asylum-seekers or BIPs benefit also from a facilitated procedure for proving previous education, in particular they are exempt from the requirement for notarial certification and legalisation of the available documents⁶⁵.

Children asylum-seekers and BIPs are involved in the mainstream education system as from the first day. Bulgaria does not offer preparatory classes for children who do not master the Bulgarian language. They are entitled to additional support for the Bulgarian language and for the various curriculum subjects⁶⁶. Bulgarian language training can have a duration of up to 12 months, and it consists of a fixed number of academic hours depending on the class in which the child was enrolled⁶⁷. Bulgarian language classes are funded from the national budget, which guarantees that

⁶¹ Art. 26(3), Law on Asylum and Refugees – <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

⁶² Art. 10(1), Ordinance No 3 of 06.04.2017 on the terms and procedure for the enrolment in education of asylum-seekers or beneficiaries of international protection – <https://web.mon.bg/bg/59>

⁶³ Art. 6(1) and Art. 11, Ordinance No 3 of 06.04.2017 on the terms and procedure for the enrolment in education of asylum-seekers or beneficiaries of international protection – <https://web.mon.bg/bg/59>

⁶⁴ Art. 108(7)(8), Ordinance No 11 of 1 Sept. 2016 on the evaluation of students' performance – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136903316>

⁶⁵ Art. 108(6), Ordinance No 11 of 1 Sept. 2016 on the evaluation of students' performance – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136903316>

⁶⁶ Art. 17(3) and Art. 178(1), p. 2 and 3, Law on Preschool and School Education – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136641509>

⁶⁷ Art. 13(13), Ordinance No 6 of 11 August 2016 on learning the Bulgarian literary language – <https://www.lex.bg/bg/laws/ldoc/2136903316>

they will be held, while the additional classes for various curriculum subjects do not receive such funding. The latter is a serious obstacle, as schools have delegated budgets which are very limited.

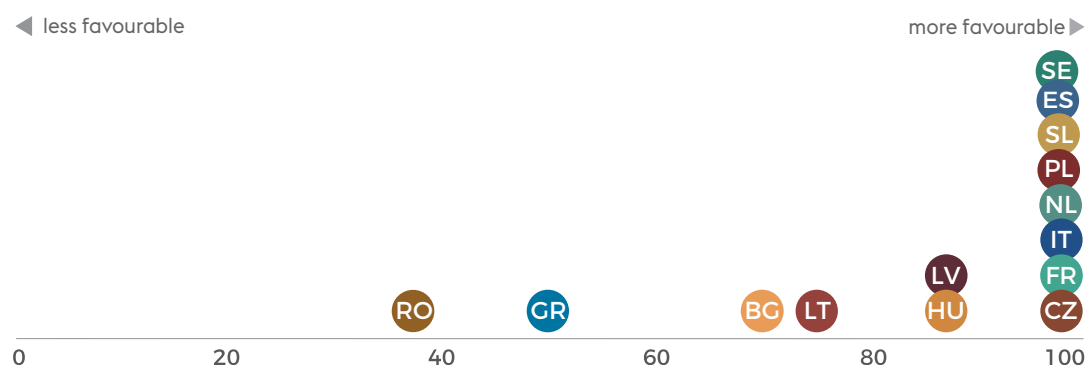
BIPs face, however, some challenges in terms of the access to school education after the mandatory school age and to higher education is different. They are required to present the original copy of their diploma for a completed education level – a requirement they can rarely meet⁶⁸.

2.10.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Lack of Bulgarian language classes after the 10th grade, and insufficient number of such classes for the lower grades.
2. Lack of sustainable additional support with state funding for other curriculum subjects.
3. Lack of special measures for unaccompanied minors and persons without or with very limited school education above the mandatory school age.

2.10.3 2019 results by country

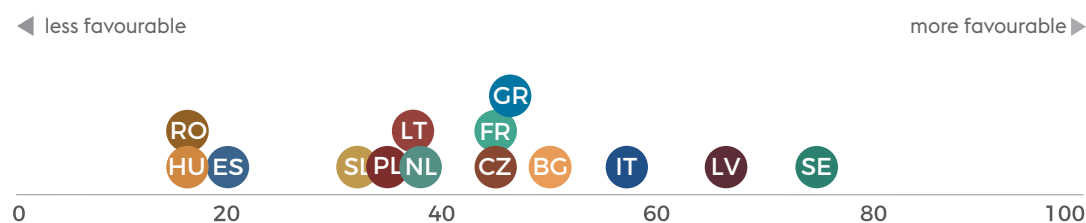
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to education from pre-school to tertiary level

Step: Building the Policy Framework



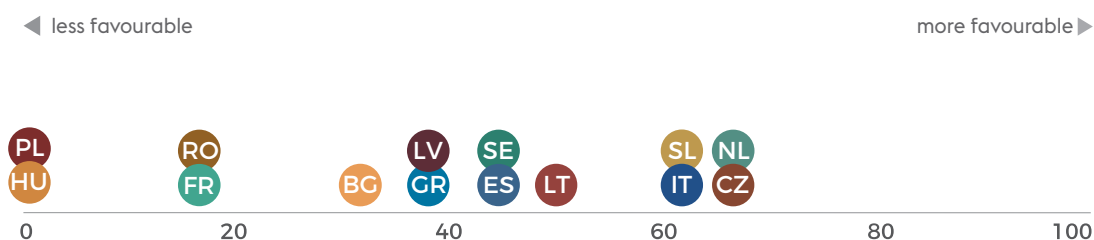
Assessed indicators:

- Access to education for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to education
- Awareness raising about the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection regarding education

⁶⁸ Art. 8(1), p. 2, Ordinance on the state requirements for the recognition of higher education degrees acquired and training periods completed in foreign higher education establishments – <https://www.lex.bg/laws/ldoc/-549417984>

- Placement in the compulsory school system
- Length of language support

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies
- Coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection
- Partnership on education with expert NGOs

2.10.4. Good European practices⁶⁹

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, already asylum seekers must have access to education, but this may be organised separately from the mainstream curriculum and classes until recognition, when minor beneficiaries of international protection gain full access to the mainstream school system. According to the Reception Conditions Directive (Art. 14), minor asylum seekers within three months of lodging their application should enjoy access to education under similar conditions as national citizens. The same article stipulates that minor children should have access to preparatory and language classes to facilitate their participation in the education system but does not provide any further guidance on the organisation or quality of these classes. Member States need to provide for alternative educational arrangements if access to the national education system is not possible due to the specific situation of the minor. Children recognised as beneficiaries of international protection have secure and full access to education under the Qualification Directive (Art. 27). In order to facilitate the integration process at school, these standards go beyond the Geneva Convention's limited guarantees that only ensure equal access to elementary education, while other forms of education are offered on terms as favourable as possible, guaranteeing at least equal treatment with foreign citizens. The fifth of the EU Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration is dedicated to education, stressing that efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.

⁶⁹ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure full access to primary, lower, secondary and tertiary education.



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... take into account the specific situation of vulnerable persons receiving international protection (UAMs, victims of violence and trauma, minors arriving above the age of compulsory schooling).

... not impose any administrative barriers to accessing education (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).



... proactively raise awareness among stakeholders about the specific situation of BIPs regarding education.

... adopt comprehensive assessment systems and measures for the placement of children under international protection in the compulsory school system.



... provide language support based on individual assessment until proficiency is attained or without time limit.



IT: partly

... offer in a systematic manner regular orientation and language programmes and targeted education measures which receive systematic funding.



In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies.



... ensure systematic coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection.



... continuously provide means for expert NGOs within an established framework.



status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION



Czechia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden are the countries which apply the highest legal standards to both recognised refugees and BSPs. They provide the same access as nationals to schooling for beneficiaries of international protection up to the upper tertiary education level, without imposing burdensome criteria that cannot be met as newcomers.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND MULTI-LEVEL COORDINATION



Czechia and **the Netherlands** provide the highest standards with regard to implementation and coordination in the education field. The national governments provide material and immaterial support to regional education authorities and school boards to better deal with the education needs of children and youth under international protection. In addition, these countries continuously provide means for expert NGOs within an established framework.

In **Lithuania**, the new 2018-2020 Action Plan on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society seeks to organise regular meetings on the implementation of policies bringing together NGOs, the Association of Local Authorities, ministries and other organisations working in the integration sphere. In addition, the Action Plan requires education authorities and bodies at regional and local levels to organise trainings for education workers to improve intercultural skills, reduce stereotypes and promote the values of respect for diversity and equality. It also aims to monitor integration processes and policy by collecting quantitative and qualitative data and register them at the state authorities.

In **Slovenia**, the Ministry of Education prepared a protocol on the inclusion of refugees in the education system and adopted other measures such as setting up a website with all relevant information, links and contacts. Schools receive some additional means to provide additional hours of Slovenian lessons and learning assistance for refugee children. The National Institute of Education and the National Examinations Centre prepared special exams for beneficiaries of international protection with incomplete documentation to prove that they have received primary and secondary school education.

In **Poland**, municipal-level authorities have improved the ability of the education system to address the needs of refugee pupils. This way, municipalities try to fill the loopholes existing in the central government system with their own activities. The largest cities are in the forefront of such work. The Immigrant Integration Model implemented by the City of Gdańsk foresees a range of measures. Educational activities include trainings for teachers, pedagogical councils, heads of school, children and their parents, as well as anti-discrimination trainings for state and municipal police officers. Innovative projects aim to diagnose both the needs of children and parents with migration experience and the needs of the schools. On the organizational level, the model has led to the appointment of intercultural inspectors and a coordinator for students with migration experience, the introduction of intercultural assistants in schools and the launch of consultation points for heads of schools. The Council of Immigrants to the President of the City advises on education matters as well. In a similar vein, Poznań has implemented a local model to improve the preparatory classes for newly arrived foreign pupils. For example, a “Welcome package” was developed and the “Poznań School Multicultural Leaders Network” was established as a project of the Teacher Training Center in cooperation with the city authorities. In this framework a “School of multicultural leaders” has been implemented that offers trainings for teachers of all types of schools and educational establishments.

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

In **Sweden**, there are no administrative barriers to access primary, secondary and tertiary education for BIPs. Also, a full range of provisions exist to correctly place children under international protection in the school system: a) nation-wide criteria to assess levels of education and prior learning; b) assessments with appropriate translation or in the first language of the child; c) guidelines for assessment where documentary evidence from the country of origin is unavailable; d) measures to avoid that children have to change their place of schooling during the asylum procedure; e) a mechanism to monitor the placement of children in special needs schools. Language programmes and targeted educational measures are offered in a systematic manner and receive systematic funding.

ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Slovenia improved the assessment of the knowledge of BIPs without proof of educational qualifications in 2018. Newly introduced assessment rules and exams are available both for BIPs wishing to continue education at

the secondary level (or apply for a job which requires completed school education) as well as for BIPs wishing to enrol in tertiary level higher vocational or academic programmes. The exams for those who cannot prove that they have already finished primary school outside Slovenia are administered by the National Education Institute of Slovenia (NEIS), which issues a certificate to successful candidates to be used for enrolment. Candidates can apply any time. The certificates, which open the door to tertiary education, are awarded by the National Examinations Centre. The assessment is made up of a written exam in mathematics and a written and oral exam in English. Candidates for the exam in mathematics can sit for the exam in English or in Slovene; the exam in English optionally entails instructions to candidates either in English or in Slovene. There are two sittings per year (in February and June) for this assessment.

2.11. Language learning and social orientation

2.11.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

LAR stipulates provides for SAR to organise Bulgarian language courses for asylum-seekers, including jointly with the Ministry of Education and Science . Such course, however, have not been held since 2013.

Courses for language learning or social orientation have not been conducted with state funding during the period considered. Such courses have been organised only by NGOs with EU and international funding.

The Programme on Refugees' Employment and Training – a fundamental national policy implemented by EA – sets out a measure for involving unemployed BIPs in a training with 180 academic hours under the key competence “Communication in a foreign language – Bulgarian language” . The Programme started in 2016, but this measure has never been implemented.

The Ordinance on the terms and procedures to conclude, implement and terminate integration agreements with beneficiaries of asylum or international protection envisages the possibility to include measures such as Bulgarian language courses in the integration agreement . As mentioned above, however, neither a responsible body, nor funding have been ensured for this Ordinance which has been implemented ad hoc and with a limited scope with EU funding.

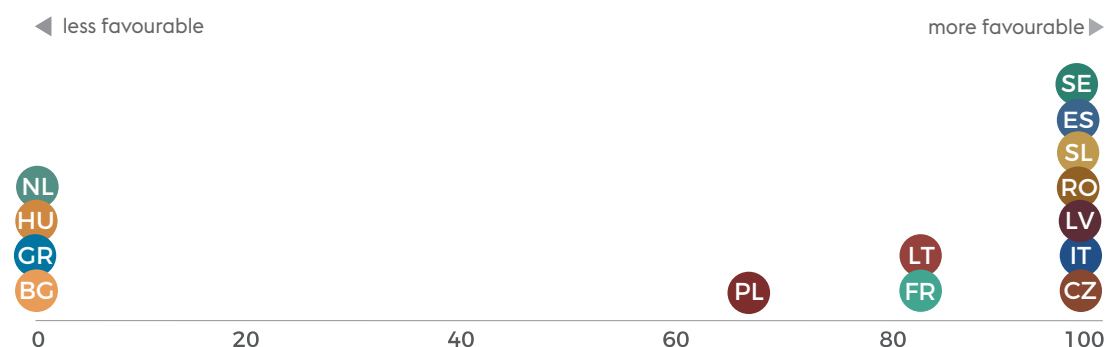
Neither LAR, nor the Ordinance on the terms and procedures to conclude, implement and terminate integration agreements with beneficiaries of asylum or international protection entitle BIPs to participate in social orientation courses.

2.11.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Absence of language courses with state funding since 2013.
2. Absence of social orientation courses with state funding.
3. Lack of sufficient possibilities to certify the Bulgarian language competence.

2.11.3. 2019 results by country

Step: Setting the Legal Framework



⁷⁰ Art. 53(1), Law on Asylum and Refugees- <https://lex.bg/laws/ldoc/2135453184>

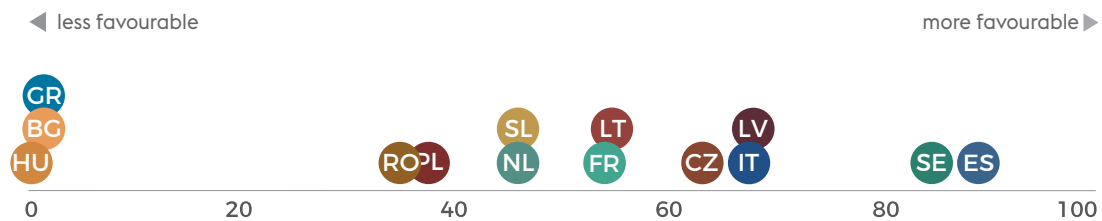
⁷¹ P. 6.1, Programme on Refugees' Employment and Training – <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/programa-za-zaetost-i-obuchenie-na-bejanci/>

⁷² Art. 8(2), p. 3 and Art. 10, p. 6, Ordinance on the rules and procedure to conclude, implement and cease integration agreements with beneficiaries of asylum or international protection – <https://www.lex.bg/en/laws/ldoc/2137169844>

Assessed indicators:

- Access to publicly funded host language learning
- Access to publicly funded social orientation

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Quality of language courses
- Duration of host language learning
- Administrative barriers to host language learning
- Duration of translation and interpretation assistance
- Quality of social orientation courses
- Provision of social orientation for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to social orientation

2.11.4. Good European practices⁷³

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, while the recast Reception Conditions Directive does not mention any specific forms of integration support to asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection become entitled to integration support under the recast Qualification Directive (Article 34). The Directive specifies that this support needs to take into account their specific needs. The provision implements the general obligation that can be derived from the Geneva Convention's article on naturalisation which is interpreted to facilitate the integration process until its legal end point. Within the EU framework, the Common Basic Principles underline that integration is a dynamic, two-way process including both migrants and locals. Common Basic Principles 7 and 9 list more concrete forms of building social cohesion. Beneficiaries of international protection and members of the receiving society should be given the chance to regularly interact and be part of shared forums and inter-cultural dialogues. This interaction should also include dialogue with decision-making bodies when beneficiaries of international protection can engage with national, regional and local authorities on the formulation of improved integration policies.

⁷³ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report "The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report" by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure access to free language courses with no further obligation attached.

CZ ES FR IT LV RO SE SL

FR: mandatory for beginners

... ensure access to free social orientation courses with no further obligation attached.

CZ ES FR IT LT LV PL RO SE
SL

RO: limited availability

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... ensure high quality of language tuition (course placement according to needs, targeted curricula, trained second-language teachers, regular evaluation along country-wide quality standards, different formats for different target groups).

CZ LV SE

... provide for language learning based on individual assessment until proficiency is attained or without a general time limit.

ES IT LT SE

... not to impose any administrative barriers to host language learning (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).

CZ ES IT LT NL PL SE SL

... provide needs-based translation and interpretation assistance for BIPs when dealing with authorities and public services until proficiency is attained or without a time limit.

ES IT LV SE

... ensure high quality of social orientation courses (country-wide standardised curriculum, interaction with the receiving society, regular evaluation along country-wide quality standards, complementary information material).

SE

... provide social orientation for groups of special concern (unaccompanied minors, parents with children, women, the elderly, victims of violence and other forms of trauma, illiterate or semi-illiterate persons).

ES SE

... not to impose any administrative barriers to social orientation (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).

CZ ES IT LT LV NL PL SE

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

OBSTACLE-FREE ACCESS AND LANGUAGE COURSES BASED ON INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT



Spain obtains the highest score related to the policy-related indicators. There are no administrative barriers to host language learning and several measures are taken to ensure high quality of tuition. The Ministry of Labour, Migrations and Social Security sets the guidelines to be followed by the NGOs which implement the programme. Language learning, translation and interpretation assistance are all based on individual needs until proficiency is attained. Similarly, no administrative barriers apply to publicly funded social orientation courses which comply with high quality standards and are provided for the full range of groups of special concern.

SPECIFIC TRAINING MODULES FOR UNSKILLED AND ILLITERATE INDIVIDUALS AND ON HIGHER LEVELS OF PROFICIENCY



In **France**, participants of language lessons are placed in courses (for 100, 200, 400 or 600 hours) after an initial assessment, both written and oral, of their French level. Teaching is provided by certified language teachers and the courses are evaluated. Since March 1st 2019, a specific training module for unskilled and illiterate individuals has also been introduced: those concerned are able to benefit from up to 600 hours of courses, and groups are composed of 12 people maximum. Other BIPs are placed in groups of up to 15 people. Furthermore, different formats exist to facilitate language learning. Specifically, evening or Saturday courses for employed persons are available in specific areas. Those wishing to continue beyond the A1 level can benefit from another optional 100 hours of training to reach A2 level and 50 hours to reach oral B1 level.

INTENSIVE SOCIAL ORIENTATION COURSES AND TARGETED COURSES ON PARENTHOOD AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION



In **France**, social orientation courses have been increased from 12 to 24 hours, spread over four days. The first day covers the history and values of the French Republic, the functioning of daily life and French institutions and the history of European construction. The second day focuses on access to healthcare, education, housing and employment and also on parenthood. The third and fourth days are dedicated to the drawing up of a personal "road map" - which includes three personal objectives to reach. These can be professional, social or cultural objectives. The last day depends on the objectives that were set by the participant, but generally consists of field trips to local museums or professional and vocational workshops. The project "Open school to parents for children's success", coordinated by the Ministries of Interior and Education, aims at further involving foreign parents in the education of their children through workshops on the French language, parenthood, childcare and supervision.

In **Romania**, a consortium of NGOs developed a new package of educational resources for migrants. The project REACT_RO (Educational resources for migrant orientation and Romanian language courses) was financed by the Romanian government, using AMIF funds and is meant to fill the gap in access to education for all categories of immigrants. The package includes a curricular framework of Romanian language books for adults and children, accompanied by specific workbooks for Romanian language teachers and learners and materials necessary for the assessment of competencies. Educational tools for orientation in society (a training course for trainers, a training manual for trainers, a guide for BIPs and TCNs) are also included. Starting in 2020, the new educational resources will be used in the standard integration programs offered to BIPs. In the medium term, the Ministry of Education wants to mainstream it in all courses offered to all categories of migrants.

2.12. Building bridges

2.12.1. Results for Bulgaria 2019

The National Strategy in the area of Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015–2020 sets out the following principle in support of integration as a two-way process: “public solidarity and tolerance with respect to foreigners while maintaining their identity (ethnic, cultural, religious, etc.)”, and “observing the principle of volunteering and two-way commitment in the integration process”⁷⁴. In addition to this statement, the Strategy does not set out any measures aimed at building bridges between BIPs and the receiving society, neither does it provide for funding such activities, including communication campaigns, public consultations with BIPs, volunteer activities, etc.

2.12.2. Key challenges facing BIPs in Bulgaria

1. Absence of a strategic vision on encouraging the receiving society to accept and actively integrate BIPs, which results in the lack of measures, funding or consultations with the individuals concerned.
2. Lack of financial resources for NGOs to build bridges between BIPs and the receiving society.
3. A rhetoric strongly stigmatising BIPs is observed in the society, including at the highest political level (national parliament), which negatively affects the public attitudes and incites xenophobia, discrimination and hate speech.

2.12.3. 2019 results by country

Step: Building the Policy Framework

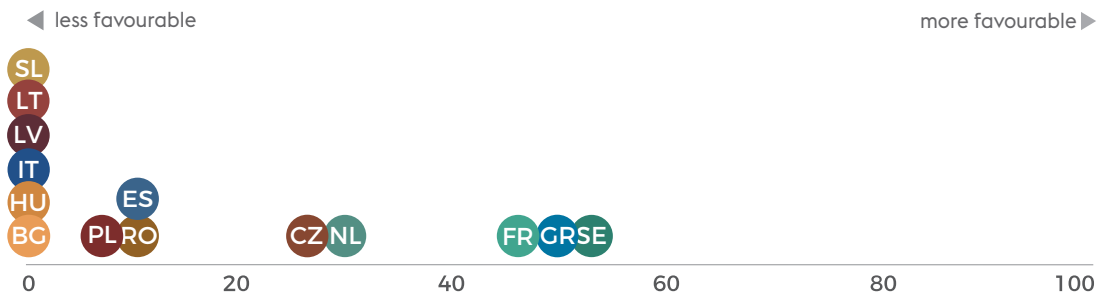


Assessed indicators:

- Expectations of mutual accommodation by beneficiaries of international protection and host society members
- Awareness raising on the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection

⁷⁴ National Strategy in the area of Migration, Asylum and Integration 2015–2020 – https://www.mvr.bg/docs/librariesprovider79/%D0%B4%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B8/national_strategy_migration_integration_20152020pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=e0ff3406_2

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

- Coordination with regional and local authorities on social cohesion
- Encouragement of voluntary initiatives to complement public policies
- Support for involvement of beneficiaries of international protection in civic activities
- Involvement in national consultation processes
- Involvement in local consultation processes

2.12.4. Good European practices⁷⁵

What EU and international law requires

According to the first Common Basic Principle for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. In addition, the seventh Common Basic Principle underlines that frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is fundamental for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens. The ninth Common Basic Principle also sets out that the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration. Likewise, the UNHCR Executive Committee in 2005 stipulated that the integration of refugees is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires the efforts of all concerned parties, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of the receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse community.

⁷⁵ All the sections on best practices in the 12 dimensions are taken directly from the Report “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report” by Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Thomas Huddleston – <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub/the-european-benchmark-for-refugee-integration-evaluation-1-comprehensive-report/dnl/59>

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... implement a strategy for the integration of BIPs which expects or obliges the receiving society to be actively involved and accommodate beneficiaries.

FR SE

... regularly run publicly funded campaigns to sensitize the receiving society about the situation of BIPs and target prejudices and perceptions.

ES

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

... request regional and local authorities to set up strategies referring to the interaction of the receiving society with BIPs and provide means for the implementation of these strategies.

FR NL SE

... encourage voluntary initiatives to complement public policies by funding the coordination of such initiatives at all levels, making them part of standard integration offers for BIPs as well as supporting their evaluation.

... support the involvement of BIPs in civic activities through both targeted information on the rights and possibilities of BIPs to join such activities as well as by offering means to organisations for reaching out to BIPs.

FR NL SE

... set up a body to consult with BIPs on issues concerning their integration, with at least one association of BIPs or one elected representative as permanent member.

... commit, in a national integration strategy, regional and local authorities to include BIPs in consultation processes and provide means to sub-national authorities to establish permanent consultation bodies.

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

ES

In **Spain**, a Community Sponsorship pilot project in the Basque Country aims to develop a model for the reception and integration of refugees in which society assumes direct responsibility. This will be carried out through initiatives arising from public administrations and private actors, including citizens, companies, non-profit organisations, etc. Supported by the Basque government, the intervention is part of an international network called the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which aims to provide guidelines and support for the implementation of this model of reception in other countries. The goal of the pilot is to draw lessons and conclusions that can be used in a broader project of community sponsorship as an initiative that can be reproduced in other regions of Spain.

In **France**, the national strategy adopted in 2018 has led to a range of improvements. It expects the receiving society to be actively involved and accommodate beneficiaries by means of micro-project funding, volunteer training and civic service. Two measures were launched in October 2018 by the inter-ministerial delegation for the reception and integration of refugees (DiAir): Volont'R, a civic service with and for refugees, and Mento'R, a mentoring programme for refugees. A call for proposals named "cohabitations solidaires" was published in March 2019 to promote access to housing with the support of French citizens accommodating refugees into their homes from three to twelve months. Another call for proposals, Fai'R, launched in February 2019, is to further develop initiatives that strengthen ties between refugees and local young people, in particular, through sport and cultural activities, and linguistic exchanges. Public awareness campaigns included a video contest for showing various experiences of refugees resettled in France, the communication contest Our clichés/No clichés – Refugees, a Chance for France and an exhibition led by refugee photographers and journalists.

New commitments and responsibilities at regional and local levels were created as well. Prefects have to supervise the launch and implementation of regional or sub-regional calls for tender issued by the ministry of the interior, which should also promote interaction of BIPs with the receiving society. As of January 2019, prefects have also the duty to appoint departmental referents in their region and create steering committees to design local roadmaps for the integration of BIPs. "Territorial contracts" have been signed in June 2019 with metropolitan cities to implement initiatives that foster integration pathways and foster interaction between refugees and the host society. Those cities will benefit from special funding ranging from EUR 200,000 to 300,000 (Dijon, Brest, Nantes, Nancy, Strasbourg, Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Grenoble, Bordeaux and Toulouse are already involved).

CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS

In **Lithuania**, the No More Bricks in the Wall campaign in the framework of the project Snapshots from the Border is aimed to raise awareness about migration and issues faced by migrants and refugees in Lithuania and Europe more broadly, as well as to advocate for the idea of integration as a two-way process. Besides solidarity-building events targeted at national stakeholders, it has included a series of podcasts (e.g., an interview with a refugee family, discussion with migrants and residents of Vilnius). By spreading its messages and video materials through social media channels, in public transport, through postcards and posters, the campaign has challenged public misconceptions about migration.



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