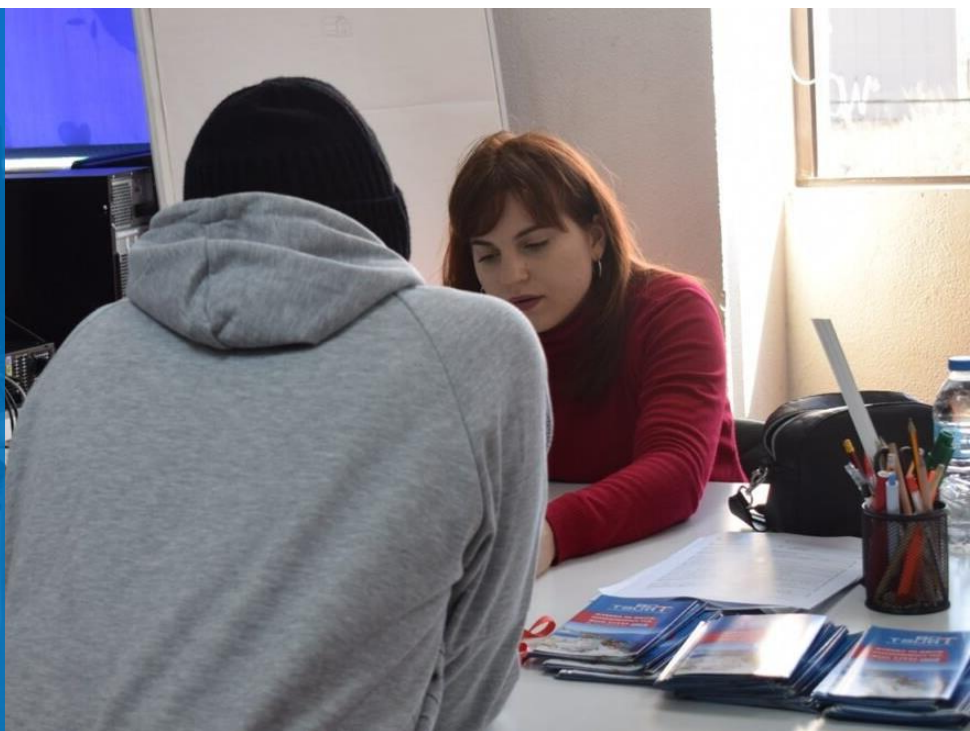


ADVANCING REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN GREECE

UNHCR Greece | Update #7
MARCH 2024



Our Strategy

74,170
Refugees and
31,550
Asylum-seekers
in Greece

Source: UNHCR estimate as
of end March 2024

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

Working closely with refugee communities, UNHCR identifies skills and experience, understands refugees' intentions and needs, and helps create support networks amongst peers. Reaching out to the private sector, the Office contributes to the creation of employment and training opportunities for refugees. Finally, UNHCR capitalizes on its ability to bring different actors together and works closely with central and local authorities and civil society to enact positive change for refugees.

Key Achievements *(since January 2022)*



Employability

6,015 refugees and
asylum-seekers received
employability services.



Hires

1,460 hires of refugees
and asylum-seekers.



Upskilling

2,128 adult asylum-
seekers attended
language classes.

129 refugees obtained a
driving licence.



Private sector

106 collaborations
with employers across
Greece.

LATEST HIGHLIGHTS

JOB FAIRS

UNHCR co-organized three job fairs with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, in coordination with different partners around Greece as a cost-effective way to advance refugee employability through job matching. The job fairs took place inside the reception centre of Lesbos, at the Blue Refugee Centre in Thessaloniki and inside the reception facility in Malakasa. During the three events, 860 refugees and asylum-seekers were interviewed by more than 60 employers from all over Greece, resulting in 620 job offers and 250 recruitments.

Entrepreneurship Counselling for Refugees - Ready4Business

In collaboration with METAdrasi, in 2022 UNHCR launched the "Entrepreneurship Counselling - Ready4Business" programme which provides a launching pad for refugees to start their own business. The programme provides entrepreneurial advice and assistance for developing company proposals.

The Ready4Business pilot project has so far supported 30 refugee entrepreneurs. The project continues with 14 refugees receiving support in developing their business plans.

Furthermore, the programme helped participants access financing for their businesses, as two received grants from the [People's Trust](#) and one obtained a loan through the Action Finance Initiative. The Action Finance Initiative (AFI) is a private, non-profit organization focused on supporting economic and social inclusion in Greece. Through the provision of microcredit, free training, and advice for the unemployed and micro-entrepreneurs, AFI aims to foster job

creation and improve the legal and institutional environment for self-employment.

Refugee Women Academy



UNHCR and Piraeus Bank launched the [Refugee Women Academy](#) in July 2023. The Academy, in partnership with NGO Odyssea, offers a specialized programme in the tourism sector which focuses on hospitality and language skills.

The Academy provides practical training, mentorship, and networking, aiming at the for participants' well-rounded professional development. The programme, which started on 25 September 2023, has trained by 28 March, 75 participants in Greek language and vocational skills for Kitchen Assistance and Room Service. Out of these, 18 found employment after completing the programme. In an innovative effort to encourage the participation of refugee mothers with young children, the Academy set up a child-friendly space, employing two child care assistants who had recently qualified through UNHCR programmes.

GENERATING LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

Stepping Stone Programme

UNHCR supports the educational integration programme "Stepping Stone" implemented by the NGO METAdrasi, which operates in seven locations: Athens, Thessaloniki, and the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, and Kos. Stepping Stone provides key services such as career counselling, job matching, CV preparation, and Greek language courses. By March 2024, Stepping Stone helped 2,642 refugees in their search for a job and 767 people were hired. As of 2024, "Stepping Stone" also offers support to the residents of the Controlled Facility for Temporary Accommodation of Asylum Seekers in Ritsona. In that time, over 700 people have attended Greek language courses.



Peyman, refugee from Iran, attends a Greek language lesson as part of the Stepping Stone programme.
 ©UNHCR/ Socrates Baltagiannis

Blue Refugee Centre

Refugees and asylum-seekers who live in Thessaloniki and nearby camps receive similar support through the **Blue Refugee Centre** run by Solidarity Now. The centre's main goal is to help refugees become self-reliant and, for those with special needs, gain access to essential welfare services. Employability officers provide individual career counselling, information sessions, entrepreneurship seminars and referrals to specialized actors and training.

By March 2024, the Solidarity Now had offered employability support in 1,991 cases which ranged from assessing refugees' employability profiles and helping them prepare CVs. The team facilitated 347 job interviews which resulted in 157 hires.

Adama Employability Centre

The **Adama** employability centre, run by UNHCR's partners CRS and Caritas Hellas, opened its doors in early 2022 to help refugees and asylum-seekers find work and other support they need to integrate in Greece. By the end of March 2024, the centre provided services like job searching, CV writing, and preparation for interviews to 2,573 refugees and asylum-seekers throughout the country, with 394 hires as a result.

They also received counselling, found help to obtain the documents necessary to access the labour market and were supported in navigating the different public services. Refugees across the country can attend in-person and remote career coaching sessions in English, Farsi, Arabic, French and Ukrainian.

ADAMA job-matching platform

Are you a refugee looking for work?
Are you an employer looking to hire refugees?

Scan to access the
 Adama Centre's
 online job-matching
 platform



Training and Vocational Projects

In October 2022, UNHCR and its partners joined efforts on integration initiatives to support the implementation of the National Integration Strategy and the Memorandum of Understanding between UNHCR and the Ministry for Migration and Asylum.

Caregivers to People with Disabilities:



Facinet, refugee from Guinea, has attended NGO METAdrasi's programme for assistants for people with cerebral palsy and mobility disabilities. Today he works at a facility taking care of persons with severe mobility disabilities. © METAdrasi

The "Caregivers to People with Disabilities" project trains refugees to become personal assistants to people with specific needs. Participants receive comprehensive training and support to fulfil registration requirements on the Ministry of Social Cohesion and Family platform. On 11 March, the Caregivers for People with Disabilities project launched its fifth cycle, offering training to refugees to become personal assistants for individuals with specific needs. So far, 73 have completed the programme and 17

are currently in training. To date, 15 individuals are working as caregivers for people with disabilities.

Intercultural Mediators:

The "Intercultural Mediators Training and Accreditation Programme" will develop a curriculum, a pool of trainers and a certification system to train and certify at least 30 refugees in cultural mediation to improve communication and facilitate refugees' access to essential services. Certified cultural mediators can find work in Migrant Integration Centres (KEM), select Community Centres, public services, entities, and NGOs. These roles are available within various programmes, such as reception and protection programmes for asylum-seekers and refugees.

MUNICIPALITIES AS CATALYSTS OF LOCAL INTEGRATION

City of Athens



In the context of its overall cooperation with the City of Athens, UNHCR works with ADDMA, the development agency of the City of Athens, to help refugees with disabilities access the national social protection system and employment opportunities. Since xxx the [Disabilities Inclusive](#) programme has helped 211 refugees to access specialized services including rehabilitation, 44 people applied for the welfare disability allowance and 20 received assistive devices, such as wheelchairs.

Municipality of Ioannina

In August 2023, UNHCR started implementing the programme "[#Together: Holistic support for effective access to socioeconomic rights and livelihoods in Epirus](#)", through a tripartite collaboration between the Municipality of Ioannina/Intercultural Centre "Academia" and the NGO INTERSOS Hellas. The primary goal of the project is to help refugees set career objectives, match their interests and qualifications with professions, foster self-sufficiency and independence, identify vocational training opportunities, and facilitate their access to national social solidarity programmes and financial inclusion projects. So far 230 refugees and asylum-seekers have received support.

Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies

The project "Advancing the Inclusion of Recognized Refugees in Greece (AIR)", led by the Municipality of Neapoli-Sykies in collaboration with UNHCR, assisted more than 65 refugees, with language courses, financial and social service needs like tax declarations, setting up bank accounts and accessing social benefits. The project, which concluded in March, also conducted awareness-raising activities, to promote coexistence and address prejudice.

Municipality of Heraklion

Operating in Heraklion, Crete, the "Refugee Assistance to Livelihoods and Employability (ReA)" project is a partnership between UNHCR and the Heraklion Development Agency, to support refugee livelihoods. This initiative provides assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers to ensure they fully enjoy their rights, and support in covering formalities related to public services, medical issues and education. Additionally, the project focuses on creating job opportunities for refugees, providing personalized advice to help them navigate and access the labour market. Between January and March 2024, the ReA project provided 230 employability services to refugees.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

Advice from Refugees to Refugees

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

The members of the Refugee Advisory Group have been selected based on their trajectory and successful integration in Greece. They are men and women from diverse backgrounds, like Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Some are proficient in Greek, some have become Greek citizens, and some have started their own businesses.

Outreach Volunteers

UNHCR also identifies refugees who are interested in becoming outreach volunteers and act as the connecting link between their community on the one hand, and humanitarian agencies and authorities on the other. They help disseminate valuable information in urban areas, including on available services and how to access them, the roles and responsibilities of different actors, and how to get specific types of help.

Family Reunification for Recognized Refugees

As part of UNHCR's efforts to find durable solutions for refugees, the organization actively supports family reunification procedures for recognized refugees. Reuniting separated families boosts integration prospects as united families typically adapt better in their new communities.

Family members not only provide a sense of safety, especially for vulnerable groups like women, children and older people, but also contribute to economic self-reliance. Getting back together with family also helps refugees affected by conflict-related trauma to heal. Since the beginning of the programme in August 2021, in collaboration with the Greek Council for Refugees, UNHCR has provided assistance in 224 cases of family reunification. So far, 93 individuals have already arrived and successfully reunited with their family members in Greece.



More than 230 jobs offered to refugees and asylum-seekers during a job fair in Thessaloniki

A job fair organized on 13 March by SolidarityNow and UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, in Thessaloniki, wrapped up successfully with more than 230 job offers after some 770 interviews. The event aimed to connect refugees and asylum-seekers in search of work opportunities, with employers from various companies operating in northern Greece.

[Read the full article here](#)

UNHCR is grateful to the donors of unearmarked and softly earmarked contributions to its 2023 global programmes.

Australia | Belgium | Canada | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Italy | Japan | Luxembourg | Netherlands | Norway | Republic of Korea | Spain | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom | United States of America

You can support the integration of refugees by:

- Opening up jobs for refugees.
- Joining UNHCR in public advocacy and efforts to identify innovative solutions.
- Making a financial contribution to UNHCR [here](#).
- Developing goods and services that refugees need.
- Exchanging ideas with organizations that help refugees.
- By investing in funds that support refugees.
- By serving as a role model and leading by example.

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