



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT **A**  
ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY



Economic and Monetary Affairs

**Employment and Social Affairs**

Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

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Internal Market and Consumer Protection

# Integration of Refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy Comparative analysis

Study for the EMPL Committee



DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES  
POLICY DEPARTMENT A: ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC POLICY

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STUDY

## Abstract

This study presents a comparative overview of recent policy developments in Greece, Hungary and Italy, which present some similarities as regards their position in the migration routes, but also very different approaches.

The focus of the analysis is on progress achieved in the last three years in the adaptation of the reception and integration system for the high numbers of new arrivals and on the main challenges encountered, with a focus on labour market integration measures.

Further, special attention is given to changes in perceptions, public opinion and political discourse with respect to the asylum and integration of refugees and how this influenced policy strategies.

The study has been prepared at request of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AIDA</b>	Asylum Information Database
<b>ALMP(s)</b>	Active labour market policies
<b>AMIF</b>	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
<b>ANCI</b>	National Association of Italian Municipalities (in its Italian acronym)
<b>ASL</b>	Offices of the Health Board (in its Italian acronym)
<b>AVR</b>	Assisted Voluntary Return (Italy)
<b>BMSZKI</b>	Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions (in its Hungarian acronym)
<b>CARA</b>	Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers (in its Italian acronym)
<b>CAS</b>	Temporary Reception Centre (in its Italian acronym)
<b>CEMR</b>	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
<b>CIE</b>	Identification and Expulsion Centres (in its Italian acronym) – now CPR
<b>COM</b>	European Commission Communication
<b>CPA</b>	First Reception Centres (in its Italian acronym)
<b>CPR</b>	Return Detention Centres (in its Italian acronym) – former CIE
<b>CPSA</b>	First Aid and Reception Centres (in its Italian acronym)
<b>CEAS</b>	Common European Asylum System
<b>CNOG</b>	National Council of Journalists (in its Italian acronym)
<b>EAFRD</b>	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
<b>EASO</b>	European Asylum Support Office
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EFTA</b>	European Free Trade Association
<b>ECHR</b>	European Convention of Human Rights
<b>EIN</b>	European Integration Network – now NCPI
<b>EMN</b>	European Migration Network
<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>EPC</b>	European Policy Centre

<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESI Funds</b>	European Structural and Investment Funds
<b>ESIF</b>	European Structural and Investment Funds
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU28</b>	European Union 28 countries group
<b>EUR</b>	Euros
<b>EURODAC</b>	European Asylum Dactyloscopy Database
<b>Eurojust</b>	EU Judicial Cooperation Agency
<b>Europol</b>	EU Police Cooperation Agency
<b>FEAD</b>	Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived
<b>FNSI</b>	National Federation of the Italian Press (in its Italian acronym)
<b>FNPSA</b>	National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (in its Italian acronym)
<b>Frontex</b>	EU Border Agency
<b>HUF</b>	Hungarian forint (HU currency)
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GRETA</b>	Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
<b>IAO</b>	Immigration and Asylum Office (Hungary)
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>ID</b>	Identity document
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>IOM</b>	International Organisation for Migration
<b>ISF</b>	Internal Security Fund
<b>LD</b>	Legislative Decree
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>MMIA</b>	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (in its Hungarian acronym)
<b>MIPEX</b>	Migrant Integration Policy Index
<b>MS(s)</b>	Member State(s)



<b>MSF</b>	Médecins sans frontières
<b>NCPI</b>	Network of the National Contact Points on Integration – former EIN
<b>NGO(s)</b>	Non Governmental Organisation(s)
<b>OAEA</b>	Hellenic Manpower Employment Organisation (in its Greek acronym)
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>OIN</b>	Office of Immigration and Nationality (Hungary)
<b>OP(s)</b>	Operational Programme(s)
<b>PD</b>	Presidential Decree
<b>PES</b>	Public Employment Services
<b>RIC</b>	Reception and Identification Centres (Greece)
<b>RIS</b>	Reception and Identification Service (Greece)
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>SOP(s)</b>	Standard Operating Procedure(s)
<b>SPRAR</b>	Asylum Seekers and Refugees Protection System (in its Italian acronym)
<b>TEAM</b>	European Health Insurance Card (in its Italian acronym)
<b>TUI</b>	Consolidated Act on Immigration
<b>UAM</b>	Unaccompanied minors
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>VET</b>	Vocational education and training

## **LIST OF COUNTRIES ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>BE</b>	Belgium
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria
<b>CZ</b>	Czech Republic
<b>DE</b>	Germany
<b>DK</b>	Denmark

<b>EE</b>	Estonia
<b>EL</b>	Greece
<b>ES</b>	Spain
<b>FR</b>	France
<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>FYROM</b>	Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia
<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>IE</b>	Ireland
<b>IT</b>	Italy
<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>LV</b>	Latvia
<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>NO</b>	Norway
<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a comparative overview of recent policy developments in the reception and integration of refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy. The focus of the analysis is on progress achieved in the last three years, the main challenges encountered and the changes in perceptions of key stakeholders, political actors and society.

These three countries present some similarities as regards their position in the migration routes, but show very different approaches to the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

### Dimensions and main features of asylum inflows

**All three countries are transit countries, with little pre-existing experience in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, and difficult socio-economic and employment conditions.**

These countries have experienced unexpected and unprecedented inflows of asylum seekers and migrants (including illegal border crossings) since 2015, due to their geographical position as main entry points to the EU on the three major migration routes of the 2015–2017 period:

- ✓ **Italy** is the main entry point on the Central Mediterranean route and received the peak of arrivals during 2016 and the first half of 2017. In 2016, it became the second country for number of asylum applicants and number of unaccompanied minors in the EU28. Asylum applicants are mainly from Africa, with the largest group from Nigeria.
- ✓ **Greece** is the main entry point on the Eastern Mediterranean route and the number of asylum applicants peaked in 2016 when Greece became the first EU country for number of asylum applicants compared to population (with almost 5 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants compared to 2.5 in the EU28 average). The share of women and children below 18 is very high (almost 40 %), reflecting the large number of family arrivals from Syria and Iraq. Unaccompanied minors represent instead a smaller share (12 %) among minors compared to the EU28 average.
- ✓ **Hungary** is the main entry point on the Western Balkan route. It received a record number of first-time asylum applications in 2015 (14 % of the EU total), and the highest number of asylum applicants compared to its population (almost 18 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants) in that year. Following the closing of its borders, the number of asylum seekers sharply dropped in 2016. The largest asylum applicants groups are from Afghanistan and Syria.

These countries show **higher and growing rejection rates compared to the EU average** in first-instance decisions on asylum applications, ranging from 60.6 % in Italy, to 76.3 % in Greece, and more than 91.6 % in Hungary compared to 39.2 % in the EU28 on average. These differences reflect both the composition of asylum seekers and the more or less open approach adopted in the country, with Italy showing a rather open approach in recognition rates compared to the very restrictive one in Greece and especially Hungary.

## Evolution of the legal and policy approach

In order to face the refugee crisis these countries had to rapidly set up a reception and integration system from scratch, as none of them had previous experience in dealing with large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees.

Being transit countries rather than destination countries, their **main policy investments focused on reception rather than integration measures**.

Notwithstanding these common issues, the **ways these three countries have faced the refugee crisis have been highly diversified**, in part due to the different geographical position and cultural/political contexts.

Italy and Greece are struggling with the management of huge numbers of arrivals in their harbours without closing their frontiers, and trying to improve their reception and integration systems. Hungary has shifted instead towards a rather restrictive approach, closing its borders on the Balkan route.

**Italy and Greece** have implemented **measures to improve the reception and labour market, and social integration of asylum seekers**. Although living conditions remain poor in many reception centres and the registration and assessment of applications takes a long time, both countries have **expanded their reception capacity and moved towards a simplification of the recognition procedures** in order to reduce the time needed for a decision to be taken. They also **adopted measures to support the early access to the labour market of asylum seekers**, as well as integration measures to support their labour market and social integration.

**Italy**, in particular, is moving from an emergency approach, mainly focused on providing first humanitarian assistance, to a more structured integration approach. This offers tailored pre-integration support to labour market access, education/training, and social activities to asylum seekers in the so-called SPRAR system, implemented by municipalities with the support of NGOs. However, these positive experiences are still limited and contribute to the wide differences in the way reception and integration takes place across reception centres and territories.

**Greece** also improved its legal framework and invested in reception capacity, although with problems in the practical implementation of reception and integration measures due to its more difficult socio-economic conditions and reduced administrative capacity. The refugee crisis was largely tackled with the help of international institutions and NGOs; in addition, the EU–Turkey Statement drastically reduced arrivals on the Greek islands from March 2016.

**Hungary** instead introduced more restrictive measures, building a fence at the borders with Croatia and Serbia, creating detention centres for asylum seekers irregularly entering or staying in Hungary, and opposing the EU relocation programme.

**Differences in approaches also emerge in measures taken for the labour market, and the social and educational integration** of asylum seekers and refugees.

While in all the three countries, recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to labour market and social support under the same terms as natives, **Greece** and especially **Italy** have also implemented measures to improve the integration of asylum seekers from the early stages of the reception process. **Hungary**, instead, drastically reduced public support, both in terms of financial support and public services. Support to integration is thus mainly provided by NGOs.

Besides language courses, **recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection** may access **employment services, language and professional training**,

**traineeships and unemployment benefits** on the same grounds as natives. Apart from some pilot projects, there are **no targeted measures** (e.g. mentoring and/or hiring subsidies for employers), and the implemented interventions reflect the overall weaknesses of employment policies and labour market conditions in these countries. For asylum seekers, while early language and integration courses are provided in reception centres, eligibility for labour market measures is different in the three countries. In Greece, they can look for a job as soon as they are registered for application, in Italy they have to wait 60 days from application, and in Hungary they cannot access employment services and the labour market until they are recognised as refugees.

There are however a **number of drawbacks in the implementation of labour market integration measures** in the three countries that hinder asylum seekers' and refugees' access to the labour market.

One is **shortage of concrete integration programmes**, so that in practice labour market integration measures are often not available. A second issue is the **lack of coordination** among employment services and institutions in charge of integration policies. Delays in the registration procedure is a further problem. The gravity of the crisis is another factor reducing employment opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.

**The same pattern emerges in social integration strategies.** In **Italy** social integration measures are increasingly based on small-scale projects managed by local authorities; in **Greece** and in **Hungary** implementation is mainly left to NGOs, often with the support of EU funding, with problems related to the long-term sustainability of projects and their limited coverage of asylum seekers and refugees. **Hungary** eliminated cash benefits in 2016 (pocket money, educational allowances and financial support for housing).

All countries adopted **new legislative/policy measures in recent years to safeguard the rights and welfare of unaccompanied minors.** However, **their application is still at a very initial stage** and the number of UAMs disappearing from reception centres is subject to growing concerns. **Italy and Greece** also introduced specific measures to support access of refugee children to the **educational system** with integration and/or language courses. In Italy, measures have also been taken to facilitate the participation of refugees in tertiary education, through the activation of protocols with universities and the provision of scholarships and tax/tuition exemptions.

**Italy and Greece** took steps to improve **access to free primary health care**, especially for vulnerable groups, regardless of their legal status. In **Hungary**, instead, access to free primary health care is only available for a period of 6 months after granting the refugee status.

**The provision of accommodation and housing** facilities to asylum seekers and refugees are among the main challenges in all the three countries. Asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres for the time needed to complete their application procedures and are limited in their mobility. Recognised refugees usually have instead the right to be supported in the search of affordable accommodation and free to move across the countries. Accommodation services, provided by municipalities and/or NGOs, are largely insufficient due to housing shortages.

Notwithstanding the improvement in the legal framework and integration measures, the **effective implementation of reception and integration measures is still inadequate** in the considered countries, and particularly in Greece and Italy, due to their weak administrative capacity and little experience in the management of large inflows of asylum seekers and refugees.

## Integration costs and funding

Being transit countries, **the considered countries are incurring high short-term fiscal costs for the reception of asylum seekers**, while the long-term costs of integration are instead likely to be lower than in final destination countries, as most of the asylum seekers tend to move to other destinations. This however implies that the possibility to achieve the long-term returns from investment is also lower.

According to IMF estimates, **both Italy (in 2016) and Greece (in 2015) showed a sharp increase in short-term costs** as a percentage of GDP to a level well above the EU average, while **cost estimates for Hungary (2015) remain below the EU average**.

The main issue regarding funding is the **long-term sustainability of programmes and their limited extent in terms of number of persons covered**, as in these countries it is largely based on the use of EU co-funding. The main fund used is the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (**AMIF**), supporting the first stage of the integration process of asylum seeker and refugee integration in all the three countries. In **Italy**, its use is focused on strengthening the reception system of asylum seekers, with specific emphasis on the first reception and early integration measures. In **Hungary**, AMIF supports access to education, language and training courses, activation and social inclusion measures for vulnerable persons, access to housing, etc. **Greece** however registered delays in the implementation of AMIF-related actions.

The **European Structural and Investments Funds (ESI Funds)** and particularly the ESF, play an important role in Italy and Greece to support longer-term integration policies covering education, employment and non-discrimination policies. The ESF is, however, not specifically targeted to asylum seekers and refugees, but to all migrants and disadvantaged groups.

## Evolution of the political climate

**The political costs of the refugee crisis has been high in the three countries.** The unprecedented rise in arrivals in small border territories has ignited anti-immigrant attitudes in public opinion, fomented by anti-immigration and anti-Europe movements.

In all the three countries, the topic of refugees is **highly prominent in media campaigns and in the political debate, with a rise of negative public attitudes** towards the reception of asylum seekers, and migrants more in general. The share of respondents with negative feelings towards immigration from third countries is higher than the EU28 average, ranging from 81 % in **Hungary**, to 70 % in **Greece** and 69 % in **Italy**, and has been growing in recent years.

This deterioration in public attitudes and political opinion is likely to have **very negative long-run consequences** in terms of social cohesion and political climate, especially in those countries, like Italy, where the migration issue is at the centre of the incoming political election debate.

Differences however emerge in the content of the **media campaigns and of the political debate** as well as in the role played by **anti-immigrant parties** in the government (e.g. Hungary).

These countries also share a **growing perception in the public opinion of being 'left alone'** in handling the refugee crisis and of the need for a stronger **common European policy on migration**.

## Main challenges and policy implications

**Among the main challenges faced by the three countries** are: the lack of experience and capacity in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees; the lack of funding



ensuring the long-term sustainability of programmes and extended coverage; the shortage of housing and accommodation facilities; the increasing negative attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees.

Existing research and evaluations suggest that effective integration policies benefit not only immigrants, but also the receiving society. Countries with inclusive integration policies tend to be more developed, competitive and better places for everyone to live in. Inclusive policies may also help public opinion to see the benefits of immigration to receiving countries, while restrictive policies harden distrust and xenophobic attitudes among public opinion. However, the capacity to manage effective integration policies depends very much on the possibility to **govern migration flows** and to avoid massive increases over a short time span concentrated in few territorial areas. The main **policy implications** thus relate to:

- ✓ how to **share the reception burden** and to promote a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across MSs;
- ✓ how to **improve the countries intervention capacity**, supporting MSs and local actors in the actual implementation and monitoring of reception and integration measures;
- ✓ how to **provide continuous funding** for reception and integration programmes.

To address these issues, a **greater coordination and cooperation between European institutions and MSs** is crucial. This implies a **greater EU role in supporting a fairer distribution of asylum seekers** across Member States, and more effective reception and integration measures through:

- ✓ a stronger focus on integration in the European Agenda for Migration;
- ✓ an effective multi-level governance and support to upgrade administrative and institutional capacity at national and local level, also through the exchange of experiences and good practices;
- ✓ sharing the costs of integration across and within MSs, eventually creating an ad hoc EU Integration Fund;
- ✓ improving data collection and establishing an EU coordinated information system, also for the monitoring and evaluation of reception and integration measures;
- ✓ supporting community building and awareness-raising on the benefits of immigration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Europe is facing the largest population movement since World War II. This is expected to continue in the future as people escape from armed conflicts, extreme poverty, lack of human rights and climate changes.

The aim of the study is to present a comparative overview of recent policy developments in the reception and integration of refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy, three transit countries which have recently had to face unexpected and unprecedented arrivals of asylum seekers and migrants at their borders. These countries strongly differ from main destination countries, due to their more difficult economic and labour market conditions, and weaker institutional capacities for labour market integration.

The focus of the analysis is on the policy reactions, progress achieved and main challenges with a view to integration of refugees including changes in perceptions of key stakeholders, political actors and society. In addition, the role EU instruments (policy guidance, funding) in supporting the development of refugees is considered.

The information sources are the country reports produced by country experts and annexed to this report, as well as the available comparative studies and data produced by international and European institutions and research centres.

The report is structured into six chapters.

Following this introduction, Chapters 2 to 5 present a comparative review of the three considered countries in the wider EU context. This starts with a comparative assessment of the dimension and main features of recent inflows in the three countries (Chapter 2). The analysis then moves on to the evolution of the legal and policy approach adopted in the three countries for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees (Chapter 3), and the use of EU funding (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 considers the evolution of public attitudes and the political climate in the three countries, while the final Chapter 6 presents the main conclusion and policy implications.

Before presenting the results of the study, it is necessary to clarify the various terms that are often used as synonyms in the media and in policy debate, although they have very different implications in the regulation of reception and integration measures.

**Box 1.1: Definitions**

**Beneficiaries of international protection or 'humanitarian migrants'** are persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status:

- ✓ **Refugees** are persons fleeing armed conflict or prosecution who '*owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country ...*' They have been granted international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention<sup>1</sup>.
- ✓ **Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection** are persons who do not qualify as refugees, but are eligible for subsidiary protection as '*substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm*', as defined in the EU Qualification Directive<sup>2</sup>.
- ✓ **Asylum seekers** are persons who have formally applied for international protection on the basis of the Refugee Convention or Article 3 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR), (refugee status, or recognised as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection), but their application is still pending. In practice, only a proportion of asylum seekers are granted refugee or some other form of humanitarian migrant status, while the rest have to leave the country. If people remain after being denied protection they become undocumented migrants.
- ✓ **Migrants** are persons that choose to move not because of direct threat of persecution but to improve their economic conditions through employment, or in some cases education, family reunion or other reasons<sup>3</sup>.
- ✓ **Unaccompanied children or minors** are children and young people under the age of 18 who are separated from both parents and are not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has the responsibility to do so<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – which is right? By UNHCR, 11 July 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2011/95/EU, OJ L 337, 20.12.2011, p. 9–26. See also EUR-LEX <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32011L0095>>. **Italy** grants humanitarian protection also to persons recognised as facing severe personal humanitarian conditions (e.g. health problems, victims of grave political instability, episodes of violence, insufficient respect of human rights, natural disasters or other severe situations in the country of origin).

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR viewpoint: 'Refugee' or 'migrant' – which is right? By UNHCR, 11 July 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/7/55df0e556/unhcr-viewpoint-refugee-migrant-right.html>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the United Nations, High Commissioner for Refugees (1997), Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum, Geneva. <http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf>.

## 2. DIMENSIONS AND MAIN FEATURES OF THE INFLOW OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN ITALY, GREECE AND HUNGARY

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Italy, Greece and Hungary present a few similarities in the inflows of asylum applicants:**
  - ✓ **They are or have been at the front line as entry points to the EU in the last three years**, and are facing **irregular border crossings**. **Asylum seekers are mainly transiting** through these countries to reach more attractive places, Italy and Greece being among the MSs hardest hit by the economic crisis.
  - ✓ **They show higher and growing rejection rates compared to the EU average** in first-instance decisions on asylum applications.
  - ✓ Asylum seekers and refugees, as in the other EU28 Member States, are **predominantly young males**.
  - ✓ The few available disaggregated labour market data show that, as in other EU28 countries, **refugees tend to improve their labour market condition with time**. Conversely, **asylum applicants tend to have worse labour market conditions than recognised refugees and other immigrants**, as they face legal barriers to regular employment while their asylum application is being processed.
- **The main differences relate to the time profile of arrivals, the country of origin of asylum applicants and rejection rates:**
  - ✓ **Italy** received the peak of arrivals in **2016 and the first half of 2017**. In 2016 Italy was the **second highest country for number of asylum applicants and number of unaccompanied minors in the EU28**. Asylum applicants are mainly from Africa, with the largest group from **Nigeria**. In 2016, Italy shows **rejection rates above 60 % and around 55 %** of first and final decision respectively.
  - ✓ The number of asylum applicants more than quadrupled in **Greece** in **2016**, when the peak of arrivals was reached, and was the **highest EU country for the number of asylum applicants compared to population** (with almost 5 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants compared to 2.5 in the EU28). Differently from Italy and Hungary **the share of women, and children under 18, is very high** (almost 40 %), reflecting the large share of family arrivals from Syria and Iraq. **Unaccompanied minors** represent, however, a smaller share (12 %) of minors compared to the EU28 average. In 2016, **rejection rates** were **above 75% and 50%** of first and final decision respectively.
  - ✓ **Hungary** received a record number of first-time asylum applications in **2015** (14 % of the EU total), and the **highest number of asylum applicants compared to its population** (almost 18 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants). Following the closing of its borders, **the number of asylum seekers sharply dropped in 2016**. The largest asylum applicants groups are from **Afghanistan and Syria**. Hungary records the **highest rejection rates** in the EU28 with rates above 90 %.

## 2.1 The dramatic increase of arrivals in Greece, Hungary and Italy since 2014

According to EUROSTAT data<sup>5</sup>, between 2010 and 2016 about 4,150,000 (extra-EU28) first-time asylum requests were registered in EU MSs. The inflows of asylum seekers increased dramatically in the years **2015–2016 when almost 2.5 million (extra-EU28) asylum seekers arrived in the EU**. In 2016, 1,205,804 (extra-EU28) first-time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the EU MSs; in 2015 there were 1,257,030, compared to only 562,680 in 2014.

**These inflows create major pressures** in many countries and regions in Europe, and **particularly in Italy, Greece and Hungary**, as well as in Turkey, that are on the front line as entry points to the EU. **Greece and Italy are the major entry points by sea**. Italy received the second highest number of asylum applicants (and first-time applicants) after Germany in 2016, while Hungary was the second country in the EU28 for number of arrivals in 2015.

**Table 2.1: Asylum applicants in 2016. Absolute values and compared to the population**

Country	Asylum applicants			Applicants per 1000 population *		
	2014	2015	2016	2014	2015	2016
European Union (28 countries)	626 960	1 322 825	1 260 910	1.2	2.6	2.5
Belgium	22 710	44 660	18 280	2.0	4.0	1.7
Bulgaria	11 080	20 365	19 420	1.5	2.8	2.7
Czech Republic	1 145	1 515	1 475	0.1	0.1	0.1
Denmark	14 680	20 935	6 180	2.6	3.7	1.1
Germany	202 645	476 510	745 155	2.5	5.9	9.1
Estonia	155	230	175	0.1	0.2	0.1
Ireland	1 450	3 275	2 245	0.3	0.7	0.5
<b>Greece</b>	<b>9 430</b>	<b>13 205</b>	<b>51 110</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>4.7</b>
Spain	5 615	14 780	15 755	0.1	0.3	0.3
France	64 310	76 165	84 270	1.0	1.1	1.3
Croatia	450	210	2 225	0.1	0.1	0.5
<b>Italy</b>	<b>64 625</b>	<b>83 540</b>	<b>122 960</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>2.0</b>
Cyprus	1 745	2 265	2 940	2.0	2.7	3.5
Latvia	375	330	350	0.2	0.2	0.2
Lithuania	440	315	430	0.1	0.1	0.1
Luxembourg	1 150	2505	2160	2.1	4.4	3.7
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>42 775</b>	<b>177 135</b>	<b>29 430</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>3.0</b>
Malta	1 350	1 845	1 930	3.2	4.3	4.4
Netherlands	24 495	44 970	20 945	1.5	2.7	1.2
Austria	28 035	88 160	42 255	3.3	10.3	4.9
Poland	8 020	12 190	12 305	0.2	0.3	0.3
Portugal	440	895	1 460	0.0	0.1	0.1
Romania	1 545	1 260	1 880	0.0	0.1	0.1
Slovenia	385	275	1 310	0.2	0.1	0.6
Slovakia	330	330	145	0.1	0.1	0.0
Finland	3 620	32 345	5 605	0.7	5.9	1.0
Sweden	81 180	162 450	28 790	8.4	16.7	2.9
United Kingdom	32 785	40 160	39 735	0.5	0.6	0.6

(\*) Relative to population as of 1 January.

Source: Authors' elaboration on EUROSTAT data (migr\_asyappctza) (demo\_gind)

<sup>5</sup> EUROSTAT data are provided by the Ministries of Interior, justice or immigration agencies of the Member States and EFTA countries. Data on asylum applications are collected monthly while data on first-instance decisions are collected quarterly. Data are based entirely on relevant administrative sources. A first-time applicant is a person who presented an application for asylum for the first time in a given EU Member State, excluding repeated applications: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics).

Due to its geographical location, **Hungary** also received a record number of first-time asylum applications in 2015, more than Italy and Greece and representing about 14 % of the EU total in that year, but recorded a first-instance rejection rate of around 90 % during the same year. However, asylum seekers are mainly transiting through these countries to more attractive places, Italy and Greece being among the MSs hardest hit by the economic crisis.

As shown in Table 2.1, the number of asylum and first-time asylum applicants is very different across EU countries and highly discontinuous, depending on the changes in refugees and migration policies at the EU and national levels, which affect migration routes.

Overall, at the EU level, the number of **extra-EU28 asylum applicants** more than doubled in 2015 compared to 2014, and declined by 4.6% in 2016<sup>6</sup>.

All the three considered countries registered an unprecedented upsurge in arrivals on their borders and in asylum applications in the period 2014–2016<sup>7</sup>, although with a very different time profile. **While in Hungary the peak in arrivals and asylum seekers was registered in 2015, in Greece the peak was reached in 2016, and in Italy it was in 2016 and the first half of 2017.**

In 2015, asylum seekers more than quadrupled in **Hungary**, and this country (with 177,135 requests) was the second highest European country after Germany for asylum seekers. Following the closing of its borders, the country recorded a considerable reduction (–84 %) in 2016<sup>8</sup>. On 30 June 2017, there were only **3,375 persons** with a **recognised** refugee and subsidiary status in Hungary, about **1.87 %** of all migrants and settled people, including foreign residents in Hungary beyond 3 months. The sharp decrease in the number of asylum applicants in the last two years is due to the drastic and restrictive measures taken by the Hungarian government:

- The closure of southern border by mid-October 2015. After 15 September 2015, the refugees crossing the border illegally were detained and brought to court. The processes ended in general with suspended jail sentences and expulsion from the country. However, the Serbian authorities refused to take back the refugees, so after release the refugees left the country, possibly towards Western Europe. In 2015 detention affected 2,393 persons, and in 2016 a few more, 2,621 persons.
- A legislative amendment (5 July 2016) allowing the police to move any migrant caught within 8 km of the border fence to the Serbian side without submitting their asylum application. While before the amendment an average of 130 people crossed the fence every day, after it most of them (estimated at spring 2017 around 7,000 people) had to wait to enter Hungary legally, through one of two 'transit zones' at Horgoş and Kelebia. Because of the legalisation of push-backs, between 5 July and 31 December 2016, 19,219 asylum seekers were prevented from applying for international protection or escorted back to the Hungarian–Serbian border. Most of them came from war zones: Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan.

<sup>6</sup> EUROSTAT News Releases, no.46/2017

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7921609/3-16032017-BP-EN.pdf/e5fa98bb-5d9d-4297-9168-d07c67d1c9e1>; [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics).

<sup>7</sup> Arrivals are usually more than asylum applications, as not all those that arrive become asylum seekers in the country of arrival. Some of them go to other countries, others are immigrants for economic reasons and do not apply for asylum, others enter the undocumented foreign population.

<sup>8</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics).

Between 2015 and 2016, **Italy and Greece** instead registered a sharp increase in the number of requests. In **Italy**, the number of extra-EU28 first-time asylum applicants increased by 45.6 % and in **Greece** this number more than quadrupled. In 2016, **Italy** (with 122,960 asylum applicants) became the second highest country after Germany for asylum applications.

In 2016, the EU–Turkey Statement contributed to sharply reduce the inflows to **Greece** and Hungary, while inflows to **Italy** increased<sup>9</sup>.

In the first 7 months of 2017 (1 January to 31 July 2017) a total of 94,802 persons have already disembarked in Italy, with an increase of 1.1 % over the same period in 2016<sup>10</sup>. According to national data reported by the country experts, in **Italy** data from the Italian Ministry for Home Affairs<sup>11</sup> show that in the first 6 months of 2017, an additional 72,744 requests of asylum were presented<sup>12</sup>. **Greece** instead registered a sharp decline since the EU–Turkey Statement of March 2016, and in the first 6 months of 2017 only 9,286 refugees and migrants crossed the sea from Turkey.

When considering the incidence of asylum applicants over the population, the ranking of EU countries changes in terms of refugees' emergency changes. Although the incidence is overall relatively low in the EU28, compared to the emergence in other non-EU countries, **Hungary** was the EU28 Member State with the highest number of asylum applicants compared to its population in 2015 (with almost 18 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants in 2015, compared to less than 3 as the EU28 average), while **Greece** was the first in 2016 (with almost 5 applicants for every 1000 inhabitants compared to 2.5 in the EU28).

### 2.1.1 From entry points to transit areas: changes in migration routes

The change in arrivals and asylum seekers in EU countries reflects the change in the migration routes that occurred in more recent years. The Adriatic–Ionian and the Danube macro regions are particularly affected by the migrants and refugee inflows, either as **main landing points** (as in the case of the North Aegean region in Greece and Sicily, or Puglia in Italy) or as **transit areas** (as in the case of the regions at the border between Croatia, Serbia and Hungary), or as final destination regions (as in the case of Bavaria or Baden Wurttemberg in Germany).

These regions are also increasingly affected by irregular border crossings. According to Frontex data (2016)<sup>13</sup> illustrated in Figure 2.1, among the **eight main routes for irregular border crossings into the EU**, either by land or sea<sup>14</sup>, the Eastern Mediterranean route, the Western Balkans route and the Central Mediterranean route have been the most significant in terms of volume and impact on the EU territory in 2015. The EU–Turkey Statement of March 2016 contained migration flows through the Eastern Mediterranean and Western Balkan routes, but increased flows through the Central

<sup>9</sup> Authors' elaboration on EUROSTAT data:

[http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_quarterly\\_report#Main\\_tables](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report#Main_tables).

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/files/luglio\\_2017.pdf](http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/files/luglio_2017.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> The Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration of the Ministry of Interior publishes monthly statistical reports on asylum applications and first-instance decisions.

<sup>12</sup> IRS elaborations on Ministry of Home Affairs data. Data – disaggregated by month – are available at the following link:

<http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasillo>.

<sup>13</sup> [http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk\\_Analysis/Annula\\_Risk\\_Analysis\\_2016.pdf](http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annula_Risk_Analysis_2016.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Central Mediterranean route, Eastern Mediterranean route, Western Balkan route, circular route from Albania to Greece, Western Mediterranean route, Eastern borders route, Western African route and Black Sea route.

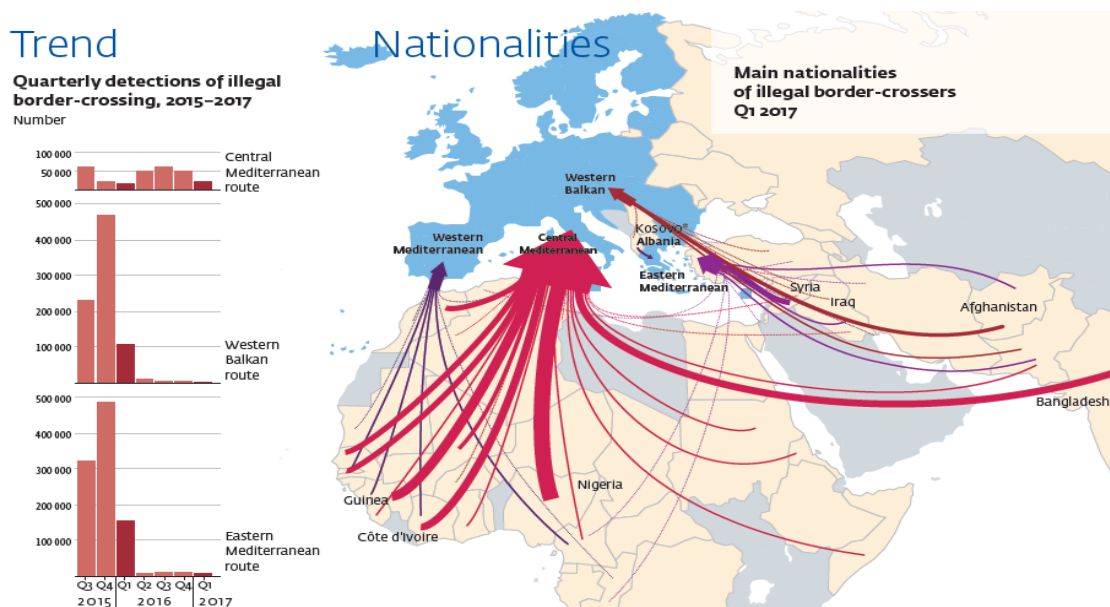


Mediterranean route. In addition, the physical barriers created at the border by **Hungary** limited access towards central and northern Europe, increasing the number of stranded migrants and refugees in the other Balkan countries and Greece. With the exception of Italy, which registered a 16 % rise in numbers of arrivals (from 155,842 in 2015 to 181,436 in 2016), the other Mediterranean and Balkan countries registered a sharp decline. For example, in Greece in 2016 the arrivals at almost 177,000 were 79 % lower than the 857,363 recorded in 2015.

The **Eastern Mediterranean route via Turkey to Greece** was the biggest migratory route in 2015, mainly used by asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The number of detected illegal border crossings reached 885,386 in 2015 from 57,025 in 2012. The **Western Balkan route** also reached its highest level of irregular migration in 2015 with 764,038 reported detections, up from only 4,658 in 2012, especially from Syria, Afghanistan and other non-regional nationalities.

The **Central Mediterranean route from Libya to Malta and Italy** has remained an important entry point to the EU throughout the crisis, mainly from Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia, Gambia and Sudan. This route is the most used since 2016, becoming the route of choice for smugglers in Africa.

**Figure 2.1: Detections of illegal border crossing and main nationalities of illegal border crossers**



**Source:** Frontex, FRAN Quarterly, 1 2017

### 2.1.2 High rates of application rejections in the three countries

The large and unexpected inflows of asylum seekers in the three considered countries increased the administrative burden for the examination of applications and the granting of refugee status.

For example, in Italy, while in 2010 the number of asylum applications examined was less than 15,000, it rose to an average of 25,000 per year in the 2011–2013 period and to 36,000 in 2014 and almost 90,000 in 2016. The percentage of permits issued for asylum



and protection purposes rose from 3.7 % in 2007 to 28.2 % in 2015. In the same period, the percentage of permits for work reasons dropped from 56.1 % to 9.1 %<sup>15</sup>.

According to EUROSTAT's most recent data, in the **EU28 the recognition rate sharply increased in 2016 to 60.8 % compared to 51.9 % in 2015**<sup>16</sup>. More than half (57 %) of total first-instance decisions were taken in Germany<sup>17</sup> where the refugee or subsidiary protection status, or an authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons was accorded in 64 % of the cases.

As shown in Table 2.2 and Box 2.1, reporting additional information provided by the country experts, **in 2016 the three considered countries show lower rates of recognition of extra-EU asylum applications than the EU28**, when considering the first-instance decisions on asylum applications. Hungary also shows a recognition rate below the EU average in final decisions<sup>18</sup>. **Hungary records the highest rejection rates** (above 90 %) among the three countries when considering both first and final decisions<sup>19</sup>.

**Table 2.2: First-instance and final decisions on extra-EU28 applications: total positive decisions and rejections (2016)**

	Total positive decisions*		Rejected		Total**	
	Obs	% (row)	Obs	% (row)	Obs	% (row)
<b>First-instance decisions</b>						
European Union (28 countries)	672 900	60.8	433 505	39.2	1 106 405	100.0
Greece	2 715	23.7	8 740	76.3	11 455	100.0
Hungary	430	8.4	4 675	91.6	5 105	100.0
Italy	35 405	39.4	54 470	60.6	89 875	100.0
<b>Final decisions</b>						
European Union (28 countries)	37 735	17.1	183 280	82.9	221 020	100.0
Greece	5 830	46.7	6 655	53.3	12 485	100.0
Hungary	5	0.6	765	98.7	775	100.0
Italy	50	45.5	60	54.5	110	100.0

(\*) The total number of positive decisions includes decisions granting refugee status, subsidiary protection status, authorisation to stay for humanitarian reasons (for countries where applicable) and temporary protection.

(\*\*) The total number of decisions includes positive decisions plus rejected applicants.

Source: EUROSTAT, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asydcfina&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asydcfina&lang=en)

<sup>15</sup> The Territorial Commissions for the recognition of international protection consist of four members, two of whom are members of the Ministry of Home Affairs, a representative of the Autonomy System, and a representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Acnur/UNHCR). At the hearing of the asylum seeker, an interpreter also participates. Ten Territorial Commissions have been set up, in addition to the National Commission, which mainly carries out the task of coordinating and training the members of the Territorial Commissions, as well as examining cases of cessation and revocation of the granted status.

<sup>16</sup> Source: EUROSTAT (migr\_asydcfsta).

<sup>17</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics).

<sup>18</sup> Data on decisions on asylum applications are available for two instance levels, namely first-instance decisions and final decisions taken in appeal or review.

<sup>19</sup> Source: EUROSTAT (migr\_asydcfsta).

### Box 2.1: Recognition of asylum applicants in the three countries

In **Italy** rejection rates have increased since 2015 when rejected applications became the majority, while in previous years they were around 39 %<sup>20</sup>. The percentage of those who are granted a refugee status in Italy is thus very low, 5.5 % in both 2015 and in 2016, and decreasing compared to the period 2013–2014. According to the latest data from Ministry of Interior<sup>21</sup>, in the first 6 months of 2017 an additional 72,744 requests of asylum were presented. The percentage of those who obtained a refugee status increased to 8.9 %, while rejection rates reached 58.4 %. Particularly high is the percentage of those who were granted humanitarian protection: 24.1 %. The high number of rejections and the subsequent appeals increase the workload of the administration and the time needed to complete the procedure, raising the costs for assistance as migrants remained in reception centres.

In **Greece**, of the 19,970 asylum claims registered on the islands from 20 March 2016 to 11 June 2017 in the context of the EU–Turkey Common Statement, only **4.4 %** (881 applicants) were granted international protection from the hotspot locations. The relative majority (**42.1 %**, i.e. 8,409 applicants), was referred to the regular procedure on the mainland either due to their vulnerability or because the applicants were not considered safe in Turkey, while **13.5 %** (2,687 applicants) were referred to the Dublin procedure for family reunification; **22.4 %** (4,471 applicants) were rejected as inadmissible. Moreover, **8.4 %** of applicants (1,686) explicitly or implicitly withdrew their request<sup>22</sup>.

**Hungary** presents the lowest recognition rates among the EU28 Member States, notwithstanding the indications of the Qualification Directive. The total recognition rate<sup>23</sup> drastically decreased since 2012 to around 9 % in 2013–2014, 15 % in 2015, 8.4 % in 2016 and 11.7 % in the first half of 2017. The **refugee recognition rate<sup>24</sup> was even lower** going from little more than 7 % in 2010 and 2012, to around 4 % in 2013–2015, 3 % in 2016 and 1.68 % in the first quarter of 2017. The majority (59 %) of the positive decisions in 2010–2016 provided subsidiary protection status, only 35 % refugee status and 6 % temporary (humanitarian) status. The number of persons with recognised refugee and subsidiary status in comparison to the total number of other migrants and settled people in Hungary (including the residents beyond 3 months) is thus very low reaching at the end of 2015 and 2016 slightly more than 3,000 persons (3,170 and 3,373 respectively).

**Source:** Country reports

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasilolo>

<sup>21</sup> IRS elaborations on Ministry of Home Affairs data. Data – disaggregated by month – are available at the following link: <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasilolo>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/30-06-2017/italygreece-update-implementation-hotspots>.

<sup>23</sup> The Total Recognition Rate percentage of the total number of accepted cases (refugees and other complementary protected) in the percentage of the sum of all granted protection + rejected cases (UNHCR methodology).

<sup>24</sup> The Refugee Recognition Rate is the percentage of persons granted refugee status in the sum of all granted protection cases and rejected cases (UNHCR methodology).

Differences in recognition rates across EU countries are likely to be related to both the composition of asylum seekers by country of origin, age and gender, and the approach and procedures adopted in each country.

EUROSTAT data<sup>25</sup> show that higher than average recognition rates at the EU level are granted to women and children and to asylum seekers from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq. As shown in Table 2.3, recognition rates for these same groups are lower than the EU average in Greece and especially in Hungary, while they are closer to the EU average or even higher (particularly for minors) in Italy, thus showing a very different approach to the recognition of asylum seekers in the three countries.

**Table 2.3: Recognition rate (extra-EU28) of first-instance decisions, average and by country of origin (main six), EU28, IT, EL and HU (2016)**

Country	Country average recognition rate	Main Countries of origin	Recognition rates by country of origin in the country	Recognition rates by country of origin in EU28
Italy	39.4	Nigeria	25.0	21.7
		Pakistan	36.9	17.4
		Gambia	32.4	29.8
		Senegal	26.0	22.1
		Côte d'Ivoire	30.9	27.0
		Eritrea	83.5	92.5
Greece	23.7	Syria	55.3	98.1
		Iraq	62.2	63.5
		Pakistan	2.3	17.4
		Afghanistan	46.6	56.7
		Albania	0.5	3.1
		Bangladesh	2.8	16.8
Hungary	8.4	Afghanistan	6.3	56.7
		Syria	9.5	98.1
		Pakistan	1.8	17.4
		Iraq	12.6	63.5
		Iran	7.5	52.5
		Morocco	0.0	7.3

Source: Own calculation on EUROSTAT data [migr\_asydcfst]

**Table 2.4: Recognition rate (extra-EU28) of first-instance decision by gender, EU28, IT, EL and HU (2016)**

Country	Country average recognition rate (%)		
	Total	Women	Men
EU28	60.8	64.9	58.8
Italy	39.4	58.0	37.3
Greece	23.7	40.4	18.7
Hungary	8.4	8.6	8.5

Source: Own calculation on EUROSTAT data [migr\_asydcfst]

**Table 2.5: Recognition rate (extra-EU28) of first-instance decision by age group, EU28, IT, EL and HU (2016)**

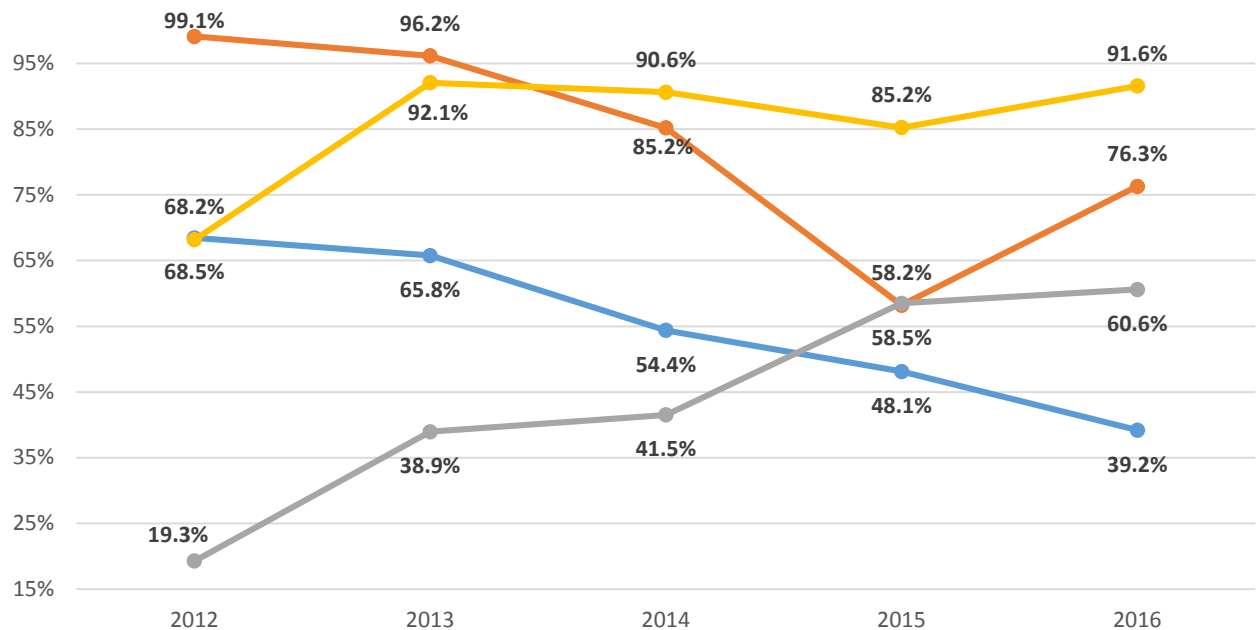
Country	Country average recognition rate (%)		
	Total	0–18	18+
EU28	60.8	68.5	57.4
Italy	39.4	73.8	35.8
Greece	23.7	44.9	19.3
Hungary	8.4	8.9	8.5

Source: Own calculation on EUROSTAT data [migr\_asydcfst]

<sup>25</sup> EUROSTAT (migr\_asydcfst).

As shown in Figure 2.2, **the number of rejections in first-instance decisions has increased considerably** in Hungary and Italy since 2012, while in Greece it dropped up to 2015, to rise again in 2016. This pattern is in contrast to the EU28 average, which shows a decline in the same period.

**Figure 2.2: Evolution of rejection rates in first-instance decisions in the EU28; Greece, Hungary and Italy 2010–2016**



Source: EUROSTAT, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asydcfina&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asydcfina&lang=en)

## 2.2 Differences in the socio-demographic profile of asylum seekers and refugees in the three countries

### 2.2.1 Changes in migration routes and country of origin of asylum seekers

Concerning the country of origin of asylum seekers, EUROSTAT data<sup>26</sup> show that in 2016, the largest five groups of first-time asylum applicants in the EU28 came from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Nigeria. The **composition however varies by country reflecting the prevalent migration route**. As shown in Figure 2.3, **Syrians** represent the largest asylum applicants group in Greece, while in Hungary the largest group is from **Afghanistan**, and in Italy from **Nigeria**.

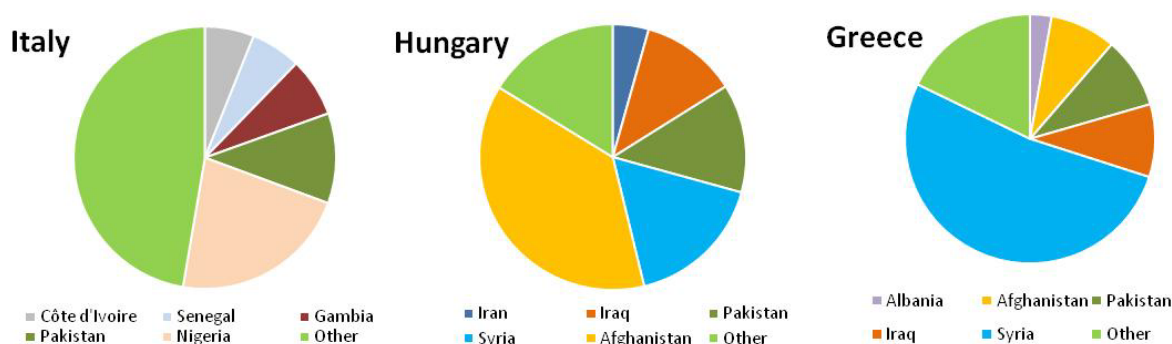
In detail:

- In **Greece**, Syrians represented 52 % of applicants in 2016, followed by applicants from Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This composition is confirmed in the first 6 months of 2017. Among the 9,286 refugees and migrants who crossed the sea from Turkey in the first 6 months of 2017, Syrian nationals continued to be the largest group comprising 37 %, followed by Iraqis (13 %), the Congolese (7 %), Afghans (6 %) and Algerians (6 %).

<sup>26</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five\\_main\\_citizenships\\_of\\_\(non-EU\)\\_asylum\\_applicants,\\_2016\\_\(number\\_of\\_first\\_time\\_applicants,\\_rounded\\_figures\)\\_YB17.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Five_main_citizenships_of_(non-EU)_asylum_applicants,_2016_(number_of_first_time_applicants,_rounded_figures)_YB17.png).

- In **Hungary**, Afghans are the largest group of asylum applicants in 2016 (37.6 %), and the second largest when considering the entire 2010–2016 period, followed by Syria (28.3 %). A much smaller percentage of asylum seekers arrived from Pakistan (8.4 %), Iraq (4.9 %), Bangladesh (1.9 %), Iran (1.3 %) in 2010–2016, all reaching the peak in 2015. Among the others (less than 1 % of asylum seekers during the period of 2010–2016 as a total) we find Palestine and Nigeria.
- **Italy** has a very different composition of asylum seekers from the other two countries and the EU average as most arrivals are from Africa. In 2015 and 2016, Nigeria was the first country of origin of asylum seekers: Nigerians totalled 27,000 in 2016, equivalent to more than one fifth of the total and growing (+ 48 % over 2015). Pakistan (11 % of total), Gambia (7.3 %) and Senegal (6.2 %) were following. These asylum seekers consider Italy only as a transit country, northern Europe being the chosen destination for most of them. These trends are confirmed in 2017<sup>27</sup>.

**Figure 2.3: Main countries of origin (first six) of asylum applicants in Greece, Hungary and Italy, 2016\***



(\*) Annual aggregated data (rounded)

**Source:** Elaboration on EUROSTAT data [migr\_asyappctza], Asylum applicants by citizenship; annual aggregated data (rounded)

### 2.2.2 Gender and age profiles are also different, reflecting the country of origin of asylum seekers

Asylum seekers and refugees, as immigrants in general, in the EU28 are **predominantly young males**. However the number of women and minors is increasing, particularly from conflict areas like Syria and Iraq.

The predominance of young males can be related to the extreme risks involved in migrating. For example, according to evidence produced by those interviewed in **Greece**, a number of women, particularly from Africa, crossing to Greece by sea are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, either in their country of origin or during their journey, and there are concerns that some may be victims of trafficking. Similarly, a report published by the **Italian** NGO BeFree<sup>28</sup> in April 2016 shed light on the modus operandi of organised criminal groups recruiting and transporting women and children from Nigeria to Italy and subjecting them to repeated violence and exploitation along the journey. As also

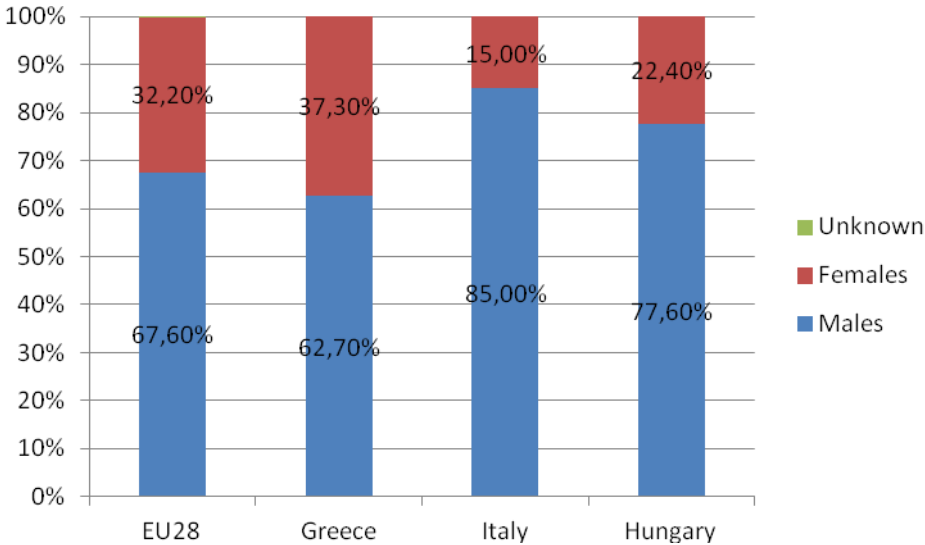
<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> BeFree Cooperativa Sociale contro Tratta, Violenze, Discriminazione. INTER/ROTTE. Storie di Tratta, Percorsi di Resistenze, Rome, 2016.

underlined by the *Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)*<sup>29</sup> many of the women and girls arriving from Nigeria to Italy appeared to be victims of human trafficking.

According to EUROSTAT data, in the EU28 two out of three extra-EU asylum applicants are men (67.6 % of all applicants). Although in all the three considered countries males are the majority among asylum seekers, there are differences in the gender composition, largely reflecting the country of origin of asylum applicants and the dangerousness of the migration route. While **in Greece the share of women is higher than the EU average**, in **Italy it is much lower** with women representing only 15 % of total asylum applicants, although their share almost doubled in the last three years from only 7.5 % of applicants in 2014. **Hungary** is midway between the other two considered countries, with women representing 22.4% of asylum applicants. These differences reflect the nationality of asylum seekers, as Syrians and Iraqis tend to escape their country in family groups, while asylum seekers from Africa are mainly young men.

**Figure 2.4: Gender composition of extra-EU asylum applicants in the EU28 and Greece, Hungary and Italy, 2016**



The percentage of women and men at EU level does not sum to 100 %, as 0.2 % are missing data

**Source:** EUROSTAT, Asylum statistics'

The **age profile** of extra-EU applicants is described in Table 2.6. In all the EU28 countries, including the three considered ones, they are much younger compared to native-born. In 2016, most of the applicants are aged 18–34 years old in all EU MSs.

<sup>29</sup> GRETA (2017) 6th General Report on Greta's Activities, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2016. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680706a42>.

**Table 2.6: Extra-EU28 asylum applicants by age in EU28, Greece, Italy and Hungary, 2016**

Extra-EU28 Asylum applicants								
	European Union (28 countries)		Greece		Italy		Hungary	
	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%
Less than 14 years	292 075	23.2	14 805	29.0	4 925	4.0	5 290	18.0
From 14 to 17 years	106 035	8.4	4 915	9.6	6 245	5.1	3 260	11.1
<b>Less than 18 years</b>	<b>398 110</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>19 720</b>	<b>38.6</b>	<b>11 170</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>8 550</b>	<b>29.1</b>
<b>From 18 to 34 years</b>	<b>644 050</b>	<b>51.1</b>	<b>21 910</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>98 875</b>	<b>80.4</b>	<b>17 200</b>	<b>58.4</b>
<b>From 35 to 64 years</b>	<b>208 990</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>9 155</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>12 825</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>3 585</b>	<b>12.2</b>
<b>65 years or over</b>	<b>7 690</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>0.3</b>
Unknown	1 115	0.1	0	0.0	5	0.0	0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 259 955</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>51 110</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>122 960</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>29 430</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: N. = Annual aggregated data (rounded)

Source: EUROSTAT, Asylum statistics

In detail:

- In **Italy** the age profile of asylum seekers is rather different compared to both the EU28 average and the two other considered countries. More than 80 % of asylum seekers are aged **between 18 and 34 years**, while the share of minors, although growing and largely represented by unaccompanied minors (54 %), is much lower than the EU average and the other two countries<sup>30</sup>.
- In **Greece**, asylum seekers are characterised by a **large share of women, and children** mainly under 14 years old. This relates to the fact that in Greece the majority of asylum seekers are Syrians and Iraqis, who usually arrive in family groups: 40 % of Syrian arrivals since the start of the year have been children, along with 35 % men and 25 % women.
- In **Hungary** too the **share of minors is relatively high (29 %)**, although still lower than the EU average.

**Unaccompanied minors (UAM) represent a relatively large share of asylum seekers and their number is growing<sup>31</sup>:**

- In **Italy**, unaccompanied minors are the majority of minors entering the country (54 % in 2016) and their number doubled in 2016, so that with 6,000 unaccompanied minors, Italy became the second Member State for number of asylum applications from UAMs after Germany. In the first 7 months of 2017 UAMs continued to increase, reaching 12,583<sup>32</sup> (13.3 % of total arrivals in that period). Among UAMs the number of those disappearing from the reception centres soon after disembarking in Italy (untraceable)<sup>33</sup> is also increasing.
- In **Greece**, unaccompanied minors were 16.5 % of the 0–17 years old group and 4.15 % of all asylum applicants on average in the 2010–2016 period; in 2016 the

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/i-numeri-dellasililo>.

<sup>31</sup> EUROSTAT News Release, 80/2017 – 11 May 2017

<http://www.europeanmigrationlaw.eu/documents/Asylum%20applicants%20considered%20to%20be%20unaccompanied%20minors.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> The Ministry of Interior publishes a monthly report where is possible to find some data about the UAMs Untraceable. Information available at: <http://www.lavoro.gov.it/temi-e-priorita/immigrazione/focus-on/minori-stranieri/Pagine/Dati-minori-stranieri-non-accompagnati.aspx>.



number of UAMs increased by almost five times reaching 2,350, 12 % of all minors and 5 % of all asylum applicants respectively.

- **Hungary** with 8,805 UAMs in 2015 was the third country in the EU (after Sweden and Germany) for number of UAMs in 2015. The majority of UAMs entering Hungary irregularly arrive from zones of armed conflict (Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria) and perceive Hungary as a transit country. Their numbers drastically fell in 2016 with the closing of borders reaching 1,220, equivalent to 4.1 % of all the asylum seekers.

### 2.2.3 Lack of data on the educational attainment of refugees

**No disaggregated data are available on the educational level of asylum seekers for the three countries.** However, some indications derive from the European Labour Force survey data in 2014 on the EU28<sup>34</sup>. According to this data **20.1 % refugees aged 15–64 in the European Union had a tertiary level of education**, compared to 27 % of other non-EU-born migrants. The **share of the tertiary educated has slightly decreased** in recent cohorts, as refugees who have arrived in the past 10 years are less likely to be tertiary educated than those who came 10–20 years ago, but this could be somewhat driven by the difference in age between the cohorts. There are wide country differences depending of the country of origin. Data on applicants in Germany show that the Iranians and Syrians were the most educated, having attended upper secondary education or higher.

## 2.3 The difficult labour market conditions of refugees/third-country nationals

It is difficult to assess the specific labour market conditions of asylum seekers and refugees, **because available data do not allow distinguishing between refugees from other immigrants**, with the exception of the EU-LFS ad hoc module that however refers to 2014 and presents some coverage issues<sup>35</sup>.

As shown in Table 2.7, the comparison between the latest **labour market indicators** of natives and immigrants show **common patterns in the three analysed countries**. According to EUROSTAT data, in all the considered countries non-EU immigrants show both **higher employment and unemployment rates compared to natives**, due to gender and age composition effects (e.g. the larger share of young men in the non-EU immigrant population compared to the native population).

The few available EU-LFS data (ad hoc module, 2014) that distinguish refugees from other non-EU immigrants<sup>36</sup> show **that refugees tend to improve their labour market condition with time** (see Figure 2.5), **and in some cases (as in Italy) present both higher activity and employment rates compared to non-EU immigrants**.

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<sup>34</sup> OECD (2016), How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe? A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module, OECD Working Paper 1/2016.

<sup>35</sup> The 2014 LFS ad hoc module covers 25 countries of the European Union but in 11 EU countries, including Hungary, no refugees or only insignificant numbers were identified. See OECD (2016), *How are refugees faring on the labour market in Europe? A first evaluation based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey ad hoc module*, OECD Working Paper 1/2016.

<sup>36</sup> See Migration Policy Centre, *From Refugees to Workers Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States Volume II: Literature Review and Country Case Studies*, 2016 on data from 2014 EU LFS ad hoc module on migrants.



**Table 2.7: Labour market conditions by nationality; latest data available**

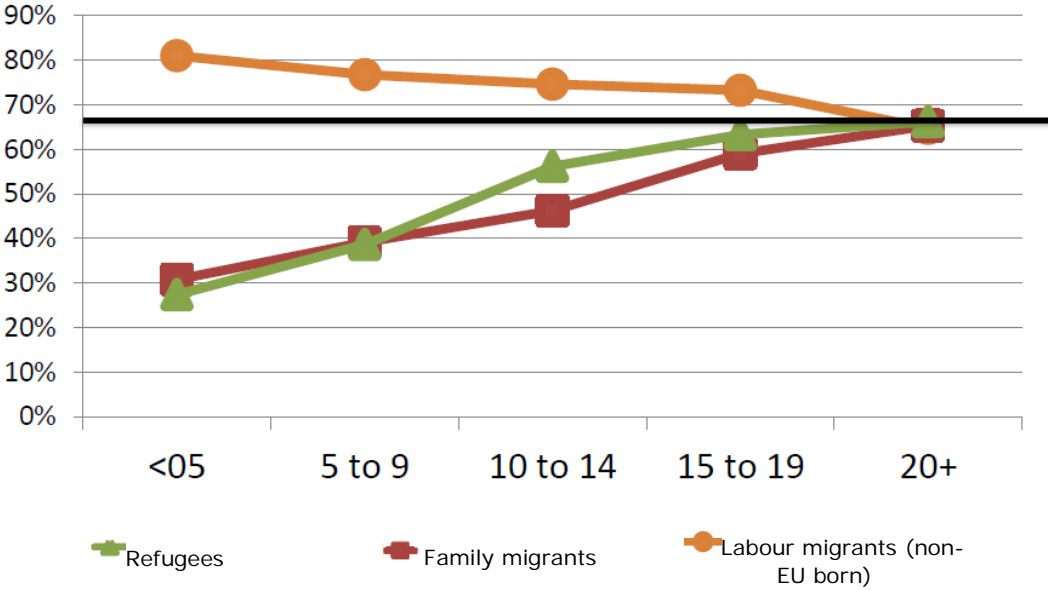
	Natives	Immigrants/third country nationals (non-EU)
<b>GREECE</b>		
Employment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	51.9 %	53.5 %
Unemployment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	23.0 %	31.6 %
Benefit recipients %	N/A	N/A
<b>HUNGARY</b>		
Employment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	66.4 %	67.3 %
Unemployment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	5.1 %	9.3 % <sup>(3)</sup>
Benefit recipients (2016) <sup>(2)</sup>	21 % <sup>(4)</sup>	N/A <sup>(5)</sup>
<b>ITALY</b>		
Employment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	56.9 %	58.4 %
Unemployment rate 15–64 (2016) <sup>(1)</sup>	11.4 %	15.2 %
Benefit recipients (2014) <sup>(6)</sup>	32 % <sup>(7)</sup>	N/A

(3) Low reliability; (4) in 2014, according to OECD SOCR database, the recipients of unemployment benefits were the 17% of (ILO) unemployed; (5) For migrants we can find some calculations for the year 2011 (activity and unemployment). (6) Istat Labour Force Survey data for 2016. No separate data for refugees. They are included in the third-country immigrants category; (7) Recipients of unemployment benefits as percentage of (ILO) unemployed, 2014

**Source:** (1) EUROSTAT – EU-LFS; (2) Eligible persons for jobseekers' allowance in the percentage of total number of registered jobseekers (in Hungary jobseekers' allowance exists for the unemployed persons). (6) OECD SOCR database via [www.oecd.org/social/recipients.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/recipients.htm)

However, **the labour market integration of refugees is in general much slower compared to the other migrants** and in the **short-run refugees are likely to present worse employment conditions** than economic immigrants. While the latter tend to choose their destination to maximise employment opportunities, refugees tend to secure personal safety, and thus they may arrive in countries and regions with few employment opportunities, as in the case of Greece and southern Italy.

**Figure 2.5: Employment rate by reason for migration and years of residence in the EU, 15–64**



Source: Konle-Seidl, R. (2017), based on EU-LFS 2014, 25 EU countries.

**Asylum applicants** tend to have even **worse labour market conditions than recognised refugees and other immigrants**, as in most countries they face greater legal barriers to employment while their asylum application is being processed, with conditions for granting access to the labour market varying across Member States. Recognised refugees are instead more likely to be involved in public programmes supporting their labour market and social integration.

### 3. EVOLUTION OF THE LEGAL AND POLICY APPROACH

#### KEY FINDINGS

- The massive refugee inflows faced by the three countries and their position as transit countries, has meant that **the focus of their public action was on reception rather than integration measures**. The **approach adopted in both reception and integration policies is however very different across these countries**.
- While **IT and EL** expanded their **reception facilities and services**, and moved towards a simplification of the recognition procedures, **HU** instead moved towards more restrictive measures in order to discourage arrivals.
- The three countries, although to a different extent, are taking actions in the direction pointed by relevant EU Directives on **third-country nationals' integration**, showing a common **difficulty in the implementation phase**. All **activated measures support the integration** of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, who are entitled to labour market and social support under the same terms as natives, although with **strong differences in approaches**. **EL** and **IT** have supported measures to improve integration since the early stages of the asylum application process, with the involvement of municipalities, showing however **difficulties in concrete implementation** due to their lack of experience and capacity in the management of these policies (especially **Greece**). **HU**, instead, **restricted public support** for the integration for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, which are mainly provided by NGOs.
- ✓ All the three countries support, to a different extent, **labour market integration** through language training, employment services and adult training programmes. For asylum seekers, instead, eligibility for labour market measures is different. While in **EL** asylum seekers can look for a job as soon as they are registered for application, in **IT** they have to wait 60 days from application, and in **HU** they cannot work until they are recognised as refugees. As for actual measures, **IT** is showing a clear move towards a structured integration approach, while in **EL** implementation is particularly difficult, and in **HU** integration measures are left to the intervention of NGOs.
- ✓ **Social integration** follows a similar pattern. While in **IT** it is increasingly based on small-scale projects managed by local authorities, in **EL** and in **HU** implementation is mainly left to NGOs, with the support of EU funding. The three countries adopted new measures to safeguard the rights and welfare of **UAMs**.
- ✓ **IT and EL** also took steps to improve **access to primary health care**, especially for vulnerable groups. In **HU**, asylum seekers, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection status are also entitled to free primary health care, but only for a fixed period.
- ✓ All the three countries show problems in the **provision of accommodation and housing**. Although asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres during application procedures, the provision of affordable housing for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection is constrained by lack of funds and housing shortages, especially in urban areas.

### 3.1 Background: the extent of EU intervention in dealing with asylum seeker and refugee reception and integration

In order to understand the recent developments in the legal and policy approaches in the three considered countries, it is helpful to briefly summarise the evolution of the EU background.

Although the regulation of migration flows and citizenship rights is **still under the competence of Member States**, with limited room for EU intervention, the **EU's legal competence has been extended** to the integration of third-country migrants legally living in EU countries with the Amsterdam and Lisbon Treaties and the Tampere European Council (Carrera, 2008).

Over time, the EU has set binding directives on migration and asylum, and has sought to harmonise reception and integration policies. However, substantial progress towards a comprehensive framework has been slow, especially in the case of third-country, low-skilled migrants and the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, due to the resistance of some Member States to the extension of EU competence in these areas.

The main issues in the international refugee protection regime that affect the distribution of refugees in the EU relate to **how the responsibility for providing asylum should be shared between EU MSs** and the **reception and integration measures** to be activated in order to minimise the risks and enhance the opportunities of immigration.

The first topic relates to both reducing the inflows of asylum seekers and supporting a fair distribution of asylum seekers and refugees across Member States. Both issues clearly require EU-level decisions. Since the 1990s, European institutions have gradually enacted a number of legislative acts aimed at building a **Common European Asylum System (CEAS)** for the reception and recognition of asylum seekers. At the core of the CEAS are: the Dublin Regulation, the recast Asylum Procedures Directive, the recast Reception Conditions Directive and the EURODAC rules on fingerprinting. In addition, refugees integration is based on the **Qualification Directive** (2011, revised 2013/32/EU) which sets minimum standards on the rights granted to all beneficiaries of international protection regarding access to employment and health care. It also extends the duration of validity of residence permits for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Directive 2013/33, which came into force in July 2015, sets out standards for the reception of asylum seekers.

The **Dublin system** is an intra-EU sharing mechanism, according to which the country of arrival is the one responsible for reception and initial aid, as well as for the management of the asylum application. This system is not adopting a fundamental principle of responsibility sharing and of equitable or 'reasonable' sharing. As a consequence, the unprecedented large-scale arrivals of refugees at the Italian and Greek coasts underlined the shortcomings of this system<sup>37</sup> and the need for reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), in general, and of the Dublin Regulation, in particular. In order to address this emergency and assist frontline Member States facing disproportionate migratory pressures, on May 2015 the European Agenda on Migration proposed the adoption of a hotspot approach and intra-EU relocation schemes.

According to the **hotspot approach**, 'frontline' Member States have to address the logistical challenge of organising the first reception and identification of migrants with the operational assistance of EU agencies, namely the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), EU Border Agency (Frontex), EU Police Cooperation Agency (Europol) and the EU Judicial

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<sup>37</sup> M. Wagner and A. Kraler (2016): ICMPD Working Paper, International Refugee Protection and European Responses, at [https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Wagner\\_Kraler\\_VMC\\_IntProt\\_WP\\_12\\_15112016-FINAL.pdf](https://www.icmpd.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Wagner_Kraler_VMC_IntProt_WP_12_15112016-FINAL.pdf).

Cooperation Agency (Eurojust). Joint hotspot teams were created by these agencies on the ground with the authorities of the frontline Member State to help to fulfil their obligations under EU law and to identify, register and fingerprint incoming migrants<sup>38</sup>. **Italy and Greece** are the first two Members States where this hotspot approach is currently being implemented.

The hotspot approach is also expected to contribute to the implementation of the **emergency relocation schemes**<sup>39</sup>. These schemes have been in place since September 2015 to support **Italy and Greece** in tackling the unprecedented increase in arrivals. The system is a temporary intra-EU, burden-sharing mechanism meant to share the responsibility of receiving refugees among the EU MSs. It applies to eligible asylum seekers arriving in Greece and Italy between September 2015 and September 2017. People in clear need of international protection are identified in frontline Member States for **relocation to other EU Member States** where their asylum application will be processed. **Migrants** are eligible if they are **from countries with an overall asylum recognition rate of 75 % or higher** (e.g. Eritrea, Syria, Yemen, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bhutan, Qatar, United Arab Emirates). Member States agreed to support Greece with the relocation of 63,302 persons in need of international protection and Italy with 34,953. This scheme is however currently opposed by many Member States, and particularly by Eastern Europe, and the number of relocated persons is much lower than that agreed.

The **European resettlement scheme**, in place since July 2015, is instead meant to provide legal and safe pathways to enter the EU for people in need of international protection. This is also a two-year scheme supported by the EU budget. For example in the **EU–Turkey Statement** from 18 March, it was agreed that for every Syrian national returned from the Greek islands another will be resettled to the EU directly from Turkey. This 1:1 mechanism aims to replace irregular flows of migrants travelling in dangerous conditions across the Aegean Sea, by an orderly and legal resettlement process<sup>40</sup>. Through this scheme, **Member States have agreed to resettle over 22,000 persons in need of international protection during the period 2015–2017. Over 17,000 persons**, mainly from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, **have been resettled so far**. Member States are also resettling Syrian refugees from Turkey under the EU–Turkey Statement of 18 March 2016, having provided protection to over 8,800 Syrians so far. In July 2017, the Commission launched a **new resettlement scheme for 2018**, aimed at ensuring continued resettlement from Turkey and the Middle East, but also extending focus on resettlement from North Africa and the Horn of Africa. The Commission has for the time being set aside EUR 377.5 million to financially support the resettlement of at least 37,750 persons during 2018.

**The dramatic increase in inflows since 2015 has however underlined the shortcomings in these provisions.** First, because it is almost impossible to oblige asylum seekers to stay in a Member State where they do not want to stay, particularly if that Member State does not offer effective protection<sup>41</sup>. The uneven distribution of asylum seekers in the EU MSs is an indicator of this. Second, because of the ‘unfairness’ of the

<sup>38</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2\\_hotspots\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/2_hotspots_en.pdf).

<sup>39</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170906\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement-sharing\\_responsibility\\_and\\_increasing\\_legal\\_pathways\\_to\\_europe\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170906_relocation_and_resettlement-sharing_responsibility_and_increasing_legal_pathways_to_europe_en.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170613\\_factsheet\\_relocation\\_and\\_resettlement\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/20170613_factsheet_relocation_and_resettlement_en.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Costello, C., Guild, E., Moreno-Lax, V. (2017), Implementation of the 2015 Council Decisions establishing provisional measures in the area of international protection for the benefit of Italy and of Greece.

Dublin system, **Greece and Italy are expected to take responsibility for the mass arrivals** across the Mediterranean without being prepared for it. Destination and transit countries blocked their borders, not applying the common EU rules of free travel or having respect for refugee rights and solidarity anymore. A result is the large number of those who arrived in Greece being moved to other Member States via the 'Balkan route' without being identified and stranded at the borders of Greece and Croatia.

In order to address these shortcomings, on April 2016 the European Commission adopted a Communication launching the process for a **reform of the CEAS**<sup>42</sup>, including the **revision of the Dublin system**. The Communication presents options for a fair and sustainable system for allocating asylum applicants among Member States; a further harmonisation of asylum procedures and standards to create a level playing field across Europe; and a strengthening of the mandate of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO)<sup>43</sup>. As for the Dublin system, instead of a radical reform as suggested by the European Parliament, the Commission proposes to streamline and supplement the current rules with a corrective allocation mechanism and the introduction of a **'solidarity contribution' of €250,000 per applicant in those MSs not accepting asylum seekers from other Member States**. The overall aim of the legislative proposals is to simplify the asylum procedure and shorten the time required for decision-making, discourage secondary movements of asylum seekers within the EU and increase the integration prospects of those who are entitled to international protection. The proposed measures are currently under discussion by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU.

For what regards **integration policies**, besides guidelines, little has instead been implemented at the EU level, as these remain primarily a national competence. A recent (March 2016) European Parliament Study<sup>44</sup> provides **indications for a strategy targeted to the labour market integration of refugees**, with examples and good practices from various Member States. However, the study highlighted a lack of comparative information on policies and practices in the EU Member States to support refugees' integration. Also with the purpose of filling this gap, the **Action Plan on the Integration of third-country nationals**<sup>45</sup> was prepared and then adopted by the Commission in June 2016: the Action Plan reflects the key elements underlined in the international debate, and provides a comprehensive framework to support Member States in developing and strengthening their integration policies. The plan targets all third-country nationals in the EU, and contains actions to address the specific challenges faced by refugees in the following policy areas:

- **pre-departure and pre-arrival measures**, including actions to prepare migrants and the local communities for the integration process;
- **education**, including actions to promote language training, participation of migrant children in early childhood education and care, teacher training and civic education;

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<sup>42</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards\\_a\\_reform\\_of\\_the\\_common\\_european\\_asylum\\_system\\_and\\_enhancing\\_legal\\_avenues\\_to\\_europe\\_-\\_20160406\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards_a_reform_of_the_common_european_asylum_system_and_enhancing_legal_avenues_to_europe_-_20160406_en.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards\\_a\\_reform\\_of\\_the\\_common\\_european\\_asylum\\_system\\_and\\_enhancing\\_legal\\_avenues\\_to\\_europe\\_-\\_20160406\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160406/towards_a_reform_of_the_common_european_asylum_system_and_enhancing_legal_avenues_to_europe_-_20160406_en.pdf).

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL\\_STU%282016%29578956\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU%282016%29578956_EN.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf).

- **employment and vocational training**, including actions to promote early integration into the labour market and migrants' entrepreneurship;
- **access to basic services such as housing and health care**;
- **active participation and social inclusion**, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation in cultural life and fighting discrimination.

The Action Plan also presents tools to strengthen coordination between the different stakeholders involved in integration measures at national, regional and local level – for example through the **European Integration Network (EIN)** promoting mutual learning between Member States – and a more strategic approach on EU funding for integration. One of the key measures of the Integration Action Plan was the transformation of the National Contact Points on Integration into the EIN with a stronger coordination role and mutual learning mandate<sup>46</sup>.

### 3.2 Shifting the focus from reception to integration: the evolution of the legal and policy approaches in Greece, Hungary and Italy

The dramatic refugee crisis faced by Greece, Hungary and Italy since 2014, and their position as receiving rather than destination countries, has meant that the focus of their public action was on reception rather than integration measures. The crisis was dealt with in different ways in the three countries.

**Italy** expanded its reception capacity, creating new reception centres and new temporary facilities. It slowly moved from an emergency approach, mainly providing first assistance, to a more structured approach offering tailored support, with a strong involvement of municipalities<sup>47</sup>.

**Greece** adopted a new Law on Asylum (4375/16) which introduced far-reaching changes in the Greek asylum system in line with the requirements of the recast Asylum Procedures Directive. The EU–Turkish Statement of 18 March 2016 drastically reduced the number of arrivals in Greece and changed admissibility procedures to determine whether Turkey could be considered a safe country for the asylum seekers. In addition, accelerated registration procedures were implemented on the applications of those asylum seekers who had remained stranded in Greece after the closure of the border with the Former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

**Hungary** instead moved towards more restrictive measures aimed at discouraging arrivals through the creation of a fence at the borders with Croatia and Serbia; the creation of transit zones at the border for the processing of asylum claims; the diffusion of detention centres for asylum seekers irregularly entering or staying in Hungary; and opposition to the EU relocation programme.

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<sup>46</sup> The European Integration Network (EIN) was created in 2016, and replaces the previous Network of the National Contact Points on Integration (NCPI). It brings together representatives of national public authorities from all 28 EU countries, and Iceland and Norway. Its mission is to provide advice to the Commission on issues related to the integration of third country nationals; to reinforce cooperation, exchanges and sharing of good practices between Member States in the field of integration of third country nationals; to promote mutual learning between Member States on integration relevant issues; and to promote cooperation within national authorities, and with local and regional authorities, civil society organisations and other EU level networks of Member States in policy areas relevant for integration of third country nationals (employment, education, equality, etc.), <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/eus-work/networks>.

<sup>47</sup> Migration Policy Centre, From Refugees to Workers Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States Volume II: Literature Review and Country Case Studies, 2016.



As regards **integration policies**, in the three countries **full integration measures and rights are usually granted to those with a recognised refugee status or with an international protection status** that intend to remain in the country. Like other EU MSs, the considered countries have developed specific legal provisions in relation to the procedures to be followed for asylum seekers and refugees, as well as anti-racism and anti-discrimination legislation, in some cases as a result of adopting European directives. However, the **legislative framework is still not fully implemented**, especially in the three considered countries, as they do not have a long-standing tradition in policies to support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

Table 3.1 below **summarises the main legal provisions** present in the three countries for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, while a more in-depth assessment of their evolution in recent years is provided in the following section.



**Table 3.1: Main provisions for the reception, recognition and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy**

	Greece	Hungary	Italy
<b>Residence permits*</b>	<p>Individuals recognised as refugees or beneficiaries of international protection are granted a three-year residence permit, which can be renewed, after a decision by the Head of the Regional Asylum Office.</p> <p>In practice, residence permits are usually delivered 1–2 months after the notification of the positive decision. Until then, applicants hold the asylum seeker card, stamped with the mention 'Pending Residence Permit'. An application for renewal should be submitted no later than 30 calendar days before the expiry of the residence permit.</p>	<p>Persons with protection status do not get a residence permit, but a Hungarian ID. For both refugees and persons with subsidiary protection the duration of the ID card is three years.</p> <p>According to an amendment of June 2016, refugee and subsidiary protection statuses shall be reviewed every three years.</p> <p>Persons with international protection status may stay in the reception centres for 30 days after the delivery of the decision.</p> <p>For refugees the Hungarian ID is automatically renewed after 10 years.</p> <p>Persons with subsidiary protection instead cannot merely renew their Hungarian ID, but the authorities examine <i>ex officio</i> whether conditions for subsidiary protection are still met.</p> <p>Both refugee and subsidiary protection status have to be examined by the IAO <i>ex officio</i> after three years from the day the status was granted.</p>	<p>A permit of stay is needed in order to apply for residence permits in Italy.</p> <p>If the refugee status is recognised, people receive a permit of stay for asylum from the Police Department. The permit of stay for asylum has duration of five years and can be renewed on each expiration. After five years of residence in Italy, refugees have the right to apply for Italian citizenship.</p> <p>If the subsidiary protection status is recognised, people receive a permit of stay for subsidiary protection at the police headquarters. The permit of stay for subsidiary protection has a duration of three years and is renewable at every expiry date, after the territorial Commission has reevaluated the case, sometimes without a new hearing. The permit of stay for subsidiary protection can be converted into a permit of stay for reasons of work, only where people have an identity card – a passport or a travel document.</p> <p>If the humanitarian protection status is recognised, people receive a permit of stay for humanitarian reasons. The permit of stay for humanitarian reasons has duration of two years and if people have a passport, it can be converted into a permit of stay for work.</p> <p>The applications are submitted to the territorially competent <i>Questura</i> of the place where the person resides. The main problem in the issuance of these permits is, often, the lack of a domicile (registered address) to provide to the police, as some beneficiaries of international protection do not have a fixed address to provide.</p> <p>The renewal of the residence permit for asylum is done by filling out the appropriate form and sending it through the post office. After the application for renewal has been submitted, people have to wait a long time – up to several months – to know the outcome of the request and to obtain the new permit.</p> <p>The residence permit for subsidiary protection can be renewed after verification that the conditions imposed in Article 14 of the Qualification Decree are still satisfied. In practice, these permits are usually renewed and the main reason why renewal may not happen is the committing of serious crimes. For humanitarian protection beneficiaries, even engaging in 'light' crimes can affect the renewal of the permit.</p>
<b>Family reunification*</b>	<p>The transposition of the Family Reunification Directive in PD 131/2006, provides that only recognised refugees have the right to apply for reunification with family members who are third-country nationals. According to Article 13 PD 131/2006, 'family members' include:</p> <p>(a) spouses; (b) unmarried minor children; (c) unmarried adult children with serious health problems incapable of supporting themselves; (d) parents, with whom the beneficiary was living and who was taking care of them before leaving, and without other family members to care for and support them; (e) unmarried</p>	<p>Under Hungarian law, the applicants for family reunification are the family members of the refugee in Hungary, not the refugees themselves.</p> <p>Only refugees are entitled to family reunification under favourable conditions <b>within 3 months following the recognition of their status</b>. They are exempted from fulfilling the usual material conditions: livelihood, accommodation, health insurance.</p>	<p>Since the entry into force of LD 18/2014, the family reunification procedure governed by Article 29bis TUI, previously issued only for refugees, is applied to <b>both refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection</b>.</p> <p>Beneficiaries can apply as soon as they obtain the electronic <b>residence permit</b> and there is no maximum time limit for applying for family reunification.</p> <p><b>Beneficiaries of international protection</b> do not need to demonstrate the availability of adequate accommodation and a minimum income. They are also exempted from subscribing a health insurance for parents aged 65 and over.</p> <p>According to Article 29 (1) TUI, beneficiaries may apply for reunification with:</p> <p>(a) <u>Spouses aged 18 or over</u>, that are not legally separated;</p> <p>(b) <u>Minor children</u>, including unmarried children of the spouse or born out of wedlock, provided</p>

	Greece	Hungary	Italy
	<p>partners with whom the applicant has a stable relationship.</p> <p>If the refugee is an unaccompanied minor, they have the right to be reunited with their parents if they do not have any other adult relatives in Greece.</p> <p>A recognised refugee can apply for reunification within 3 months from the deliverance of the decision granting refugee status by providing appropriate documents translated into Greek (i.e. family status, birth certificate or other document proving the family bond and/or the age of family members, and a certified copy of the travel documents of the family members).</p> <p>If the refugee is an adult and the application refers to parents and/or the application is not filed within 3 months from recognition, further documentation is needed: full social security certificate; tax declaration; a certified document proving that the applicant has sufficient accommodation to meet the accommodation needs of their family).</p>		<p>that the other parent has given their consent;</p> <p>(c) <u>Adult dependent children</u>, if on the basis of objective reasons, they are not able to provide for their health or essential needs due to health condition or complete disability;</p> <p>(d) <u>Dependent parents</u>, if they have no other children in the country of origin, or parents over the age of 60 if other children are unable to support them for serious health reasons.</p> <p>Where a beneficiary cannot provide official documentary evidence of the family relationship, the necessary documents are issued by the Italian diplomatic or consular representations in their country of origin, which makes the necessary checks at the expense of the person concerned. The family relationship can also be proved by other means and through UNHCR involvement.</p> <p>Family members who do not have an individual right to international protection, have the same rights recognised to the sponsor. Once in Italy, they obtain a residence permit for family reasons (Article 30 TUI) notwithstanding whether they were previously irregularly present. Minor children, present with the parent at the moment of the asylum application, also obtain the same status recognised to the parent.</p>
<b>Settlement** restrictions (for persons granted asylum)</b>	<p>According to Article 34 PD 141/2013, beneficiaries of international protection enjoy the right to free movement under the same conditions as other legally residing third-country nationals. No difference in treatment is reported between different international protection beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Lawful and continuous residence of three years in Hungary is a condition for applying for a national permanent settlement permit</p> <p>Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have freedom of movement within the territory of the state. There is no related restriction prescribed in law. Most NGOs providing shelter for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are located in Budapest, which means that the placement of beneficiaries is mainly concentrated in the capital of Hungary.</p>	<p>Italian legislation does not establish a limitation on the freedom of movement of asylum seekers. Nevertheless, Law 142/2015, Article 5(4) specifies that the competent Prefecture may limit the freedom of movement of asylum seekers, delimiting a specific place of residence or a geographic area where asylum seekers may circulate freely. If accommodated in a government reception centre, they could be requested to return to the centre by a certain time, in the early evening. More generally, in order not to lose their accommodation place, they are not allowed to spend days out of the centres without authorisation.</p> <p>Once they have obtained a place in a SPRAR project, beneficiaries have to accept it even if it implies being moved to a different city. If they refuse the transfer, they have to leave the reception system definitively.</p> <p>Among the rights of the refugees, there is also the right to be granted travel documentation (the application for travel documentation must be handed in at the police headquarters) and the right to move about freely in the territory of the European Union (except for Denmark and UK), without a visa, for a period of not more than 3 months.</p>
<b>Access to the labour market (during</b>	<p>Articles 69 and 71 L 4375/2016, provide for full and automatic access to the labour market for recognised refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries without</p>	<p>There is no access to the labour market during the asylum procedure.</p> <p>Refugees and persons with subsidiary protection</p>	<p>According to LD 142/2015 Article 22 (1), an asylum applicant can start to work within 60 days from the moment they lodged the asylum application.</p> <p>The stay permit 'for asylum application' authorises the applicant to work only until the</p>

	Greece	Hungary	Italy
<b>asylum procedure)</b>	<p>any obligation to obtain a work permit. However, access to the labour market is constrained by the crisis, high unemployment rates and further obstacles that might be posed by competition with Greek-speaking employees.</p> <p>Additional obstacles are posed relating to the enrolment of international protection beneficiaries in vocational training programmes, as according to national legislation this takes place 'under the same conditions and prerequisites as foreseen for Greek citizens', taking into account the significantly different position of beneficiaries of international protection and their potential inability to provide requested documents by reason of force majeure.</p>	<p>have access to the labour market under the same conditions as Hungarian citizens, except for positions required by law to be filled by a Hungarian citizen (e.g. public and civil servants).</p> <p>There is no special existing state support for obtaining employment. Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to use the services of the National Labour Office under the same condition as Hungarian citizens, even though it is hard to find an English-speaking case officer. Main support to integration is offered by NGOs.</p> <p>In practice, due to language and cultural barriers, access to employment is limited. In addition, employers often treat beneficiaries of international protection less favourably than Hungarian citizens and do not trust foreigners.</p>	<p>application procedure is settled, and cannot be converted into a regular stay permit for work reasons (Article 22(2)).</p> <p>The residence permit issued to refugees and to subsidiary protection beneficiaries allows access to work and even to public employment, with the exception of positions involving the exercise of public authority or responsibility for safeguarding the general interests of the state.</p> <p>Beneficiaries are entitled to the same treatment as Italian citizens in matters of employment, self-employment, subscription to professional bodies, vocational training, including refresher courses, for training in the workplace and for services rendered by employment centres.</p> <p>Refugees and asylum seekers with residence permits may freely register with Public Employment Services (PES) (<i>Centri per l'Impiego</i>). Following the enforcement of Law Decree 34/2014, registration can take place in any PES in the national territory.</p> <p>In addition, asylum applicants living in the SPRAR centres may attend vocational training when participating in integration programmes adopted by the public local entities (Article 22 (3)).</p>
<b>Eligibility for welfare benefits and health care (for persons granted asylum)</b>	<p>There is no eligibility to be registered as unemployed and to receive the unemployment allowance</p> <p>Free access to health care for beneficiaries of international protection is provided under L 4368/2016.</p> <p>However, the impact of the financial crisis on the health system and the lack of adequate cultural mediators aggravate access to health.</p>	<p>From January 2014 until June 2016, an 'integration agreement' with the Immigration and Asylum Office allowed those granted asylum to have a special integration benefit for two years. This possibility stopped at 1 June 2016. Since then persons granted asylum receive welfare benefits under the same terms as Hungarian citizens.</p> <p>According to the Hungarian Health Act, beneficiaries of international protection fall under the same category as Hungarian nationals. From 1 June 2016, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are entitled to health services under the same conditions as asylum seekers for 6 months after the date when international protection was granted to them. Before June 2016, this period was one year.</p> <p>In practice, similar to asylum seekers, beneficiaries face significant barriers regarding access to health care. Barriers mainly refer to language difficulties, lack of interpreters and administrative difficulties.</p>	<p>Article 27 of the Qualification Decree specifies that beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to equal treatment with Italian citizens in the area of health care and social security. Regularly resident refugees are entitled to the same treatment as natives from social assistance services related to labour accidents, professional illnesses, maternity, old age, death, unemployment and any other risk covered by social security.</p> <p>Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection have to register with the national health service. Registration is valid for the duration of the residence permit and it does not expire in the renewal phase of the residence permit. However, the lack of accommodation and a domicile affect access to medical assistance, as the renewal of the health card depends on the renewal of the permit of stay and many health services (such as the choice of a general doctor) are connected with the place of domicile.</p> <p>Pending enrolment, asylum seekers only have access to health treatment ensured to irregular migrants</p> <p>Exemption from the sanitary ticket depends on regional rules. The recast Reception Conditions Directive, according to which asylum seekers may be required to contribute to the costs for health care only if they have sufficient resources is applied only to the unemployed. NGOs (ASGI and others) asked the Ministry of Health not to distinguish between unemployed and inactive persons.</p> <p>LD 18/2014 provided that the Ministry of Health adopts guidelines for the programming of assistance and rehabilitation of refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries victims of torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, including specific training programmes for health personnel.</p>

Sources: Country case studies and latest AIDA country reports. AIDA Country Report: Greece, 2016 Update, March 2017; AIDA Country Report Hungary, 2016 Update, February 2017

### 3.3 First rescue and reception measures

In order to face the massive numbers in arrivals of asylum seekers to their Mediterranean shores, both **Italy and Greece** created new reception and identification centres or hotspots, i.e. closed-end structures, where the first registration, the division and reference of third-country nationals without documents takes place with operational support from EU agencies. In **Italy**, EASO deployed 114 officers to four hotspots; while in **Greece**, following the entry into force of the EU–Turkey Statement EASO deployed staff and services in the hotspots located at the Greek islands to speed up the process of examining the asylum requests in the first instance. EASO also offered financial support for infrastructure development. **Hungary** instead moved towards more restrictive measures aimed at discouraging arrivals.

In **Italy** until recently, the priority of the Government was **first reception and assistance** provided by the first aid and reception centres (CPSA) located at the main places of disembarkation<sup>48</sup>. During 2016, new centres were created to serve as hotspots. After disembarkation, foreign nationals who have entered irregularly in Italy receive humanitarian assistance, and are identified either as applicants for international protection or detained for expulsion.

First reception centres offer emergency support, food, clothing, medical assistance, linguistic and legal support, usually provided by NGOs and local voluntary associations. In these centres migrants are also registered for identification purposes. Given the high number of people arriving by boat or saved from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, these centres were large and complex structures which hosted, temporarily, large numbers of asylum seekers.

According to law<sup>49</sup>, these centres should ensure respect for private life, including gender differences, age-related needs and protection of the physical and mental health of the applicants. They also should respect the family unit of spouses and first-degree relatives, and provide specific services for vulnerable persons, prevent forms of violence and ensure the safety of the accommodated. However, **in practice, first accommodation centres do not all offer the same services and quality of assistance**, also due to the fact that the monitoring of reception conditions by the relevant authorities is generally not systematic, and complaints often remain unaddressed<sup>50</sup>.

The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) applicable to Italian hotspots require that **persons should stay in these centres only until the necessary operations to define the legal position of the immigrants are carried out**. LD 142/2015 does not specify any time limit for the stay of asylum seekers in these centres, and only provides that applicants stay ‘as long as necessary’ to complete procedures related to their identification, or for the ‘time strictly necessary’ to be transferred to the Asylum-Seekers and Refugees Protection System (SPRAR) structures<sup>51</sup>.

**Second-line reception** has been developed more recently. Initially it was managed through the Centres for Assistance to Asylum Seekers (CARA – *Centri di Accoglienza per*

<sup>48</sup> According to LD 142/2015 which regulates the whole Italian reception system. LD142/2015 entered into force at the end of September 2015. It does not substantially modify the previous reception system. It consists of two stages: at first, asylum seekers are placed in first aid and reception centres (CPSA), first accommodation centres (CPA) or temporary centres for emergency reception (CAS), and subsequently, in protection centres for asylum seekers and refugees (SPRAR), being the second reception stage.

<sup>49</sup> LD 142/2015, Article 10(1).

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR, UNHCR Recommendations on important aspects on refugee protection in Italy, July 2013, p. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

*Richiedenti Asilo*), and then it was moved under SPRAR (*Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*). Established in 2002 (L 189/2002), the **SPRAR system is a government funded<sup>52</sup> network of local authorities and NGOs which accommodates asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection**. SPRAR has expanded since 2013 to become one of the pillars of the second phase of assistance to asylum seekers. Different from CARA and CAS, SPRAR is not managed by the Ministry of Interior, but by the Association of Municipalities (ANCI – Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani). **Municipalities are thus now the most important actors in the second phase of assistance**. SPRAR is also characterised by the implementation of specific projects involving small groups of foreigners (between 10 and 20 foreign nationals), and during their stay in these centres asylum seekers receive a small daily allowance for personal needs<sup>53</sup>.

In **Greece**, EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust supported the Greek authorities in the management of hotspots for the identification, registration and fingerprinting of the incoming migrants to process the asylum claims and manage returns.

**Following the EU–Turkey Statement on March 2016, Greece introduced new provisions to grant free legal assistance to applicants for international protection** whose application was pending. However, in practice legal assistance (mostly through NGOs and lawyers from local bar associations) has been insufficient to meet asylum seekers' needs. Greece also established several Appeal Committees to decide on appeals lodged under the admissibility and eligibility procedures (applied to nationalities with low recognition rates) against the first-instance decisions taken by the Greek Asylum Service. In the **large majority of cases**, the committees **decided that Turkey did not qualify as a safe third country (or first country of asylum)** for the appellants (390 cases out of 407), while only 17 decisions confirmed the first-instance decisions on inadmissibility<sup>54</sup>.

In **Hungary**, first rescue and reception measures were initially based on open reception facilities. The Office of Immigration and Nationality (OIN) run three open reception facilities and provided in-kind material assistance to asylum seekers and refugees. From 2010 a policy of **extensive detention of irregular asylum seekers** started to be implemented. Irregular foreigners were accommodated in one of the four permanent administrative detention facilities run by the police. Unaccompanied children seeking asylum were instead hosted in the Home for Separated Children run by the Ministry of National Resources, while recognised refugees were transferred to open facilities. Since June 2011 asylum seekers – after 12 months in detention and submitting their application – were placed in open community shelters.

<sup>52</sup> The SPRAR system is financed by the FNPSA, the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services.

<sup>53</sup> Asylum seekers hosted in first reception centres receive €2.50 per day per person; in CAS, pocket money is agreed with the competent Prefecture, although the amount should be €2.50 per day per person and up to €7.50 for families. In SPRAR pocket money varies depending on the individual project from €1.50 to €3 with up to 20 % reduction for families exceeding two people.

<sup>54</sup> European Commission, Fourth Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU–Turkey Statement, COM (2016) 792 final, 8.12.2016, reported in EMN 2016 report cit.

**Box 3.1: Hotspots in Greece after the EU–Turkey Statement**

In Greece five hotspots were inaugurated in 2015. After the EU–Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016, the hotspot facilities were turned into detention centres. All people arriving after 20 March 2016 are:

- returned to Turkey in case they do not seek international protection or their applications are rejected, either as inadmissible under the safe third country or first country of asylum concepts or on the merits;
- required to remain at the islands until they have their applications examined;
- allowed to move to the mainland if their asylum application is considered to be admissible, either due to exemption from the statement (see Fast-Track Border Procedure) or because the safe third country or first country of asylum concepts may not be applied in their case.

An example of these changes is the situation in the two reception centres in Lesbos-Mytilene. Since the Balkan route from Greece to northern Europe was shut down in March 2016, around 57,000 refugees and migrants have been left stranded in Lesbos, Chios and Samos. In addition, expulsions to Turkey have been limited, as most asylum seekers have to wait while the overwhelmed Greek authorities record all their details and make a formal ruling on their status. There is also concern relating to proper assessment of vulnerabilities within the scope of the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) procedure. On several islands, the RIS procedure could be completed without the registered person having been assessed for potential vulnerabilities. This situation has become even more complicated due to problems regarding the continuation of the collaboration between RIS and the NGOs providing medical and psychosocial services. Indeed, a number of push-backs to Turkey have been reported in 2017 without asylum seekers' applications being properly registered and examined on the islands<sup>55</sup> Even more concerning, detention as an administrative measure has been applied even more extensively. According to the Joint Action Plan on the implementation of the EU–Turkey Statement, the detention capacity on the islands is to be increased. To this end, in February 2017, a pre-removal detention facility was established on the island of Kos. Finally, the living conditions of the hotspots remain below acceptable standards. Overcrowding is serious, general living conditions can be described as inhumane and provision for winter care is inadequate.

**Source:** Greek case study

Following the high migration wave in 2015, on September 2015 the government declared an *emergency situation caused by mass immigration*<sup>56</sup> which was extended to the whole country in 2016<sup>57</sup>. **In June 2015, Hungary also started to build fences on its border with Serbia and Croatia** to prevent asylum seekers from entering the country illegally. In September 2015, an amendment to the Criminal Code established the offences of unauthorised (illegal) crossing, vandalism in relation to the border fence and obstruction of the construction works related to the border fence. Hundreds of migrants remained stranded at the Serbia–Hungary border after the closing of the frontier.

**To apply for asylum, foreigners have now to enter the 'transit zone' built into the fence, and are not entitled to enter Hungary until their application has been accepted.** Transit zones are the only places where asylum seekers are allowed to enter the country. In the two transit zones of Horgoş-Röszke and Kelebija-Tompa it is possible to ask for asylum and to *wait for resolution*. All asylum seekers including families with small children and unaccompanied children between the ages of 14 and 18 have to stay in the

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/world/europe/turkey-greece-asylum-pushbacks.html?mcubz=3>.

<sup>56</sup> Government Decree 269/2015.

<sup>57</sup> Government Decree 41/2016 (III. 9).



transit zone during the entire asylum procedure. The children between age 14 and 18 are accommodated in separated sector. As part of the procedure, the asylum seeker is interviewed by the Asylum Office and has to present the reasons for leaving the home country and report whether he has asked for asylum previously somewhere in Serbia, Croatia, Greece or Bulgaria. In 'transit zones' there are houses where the asylum seekers are entitled to spend 3 months. These houses were previously planned for 50 persons, and in spring 2017 have been enlarged to accommodate 250 persons.

As consequence of the new rules, on 12 June 2017 the Immigration and Asylum Office hosted **463 asylum seekers** in its facilities, among them 379 people in the (two) transit zones<sup>58</sup>. Due to the low processing capacities asylum seekers – including families with small children – have to wait outside the transit zones (in Serbia) in difficult circumstances.

Those who are entitled to refugee or subsidiary protection status are admitted to the reception centre in Vámoszabadi. The possibility to remain at reception facilities was reduced from 60 days to 30 days<sup>59</sup>. At the reception centre people under international protection wait for documents (identity card, social security card, etc.), and are entitled to accommodation, board, travel allowances, health care, reimbursement of the costs for education and training, and financial support for leaving the country permanently. In the reception centre, recognised asylum seekers are also contacted by NGOs to plan for their integration in Hungary once leaving the reception centre.

### 3.3.1 Territorial concentration and imbalances in the absorption capacity

In both Italy and Greece, arrivals are predominantly by sea and concentrated in southern harbours and islands. The **concentration of asylum applicants in specific areas** creates imbalances in the capacity of territories to absorb them and increases the discontent of the local population. This problem is particularly strong in Italy and Greece. Although hotspots have been created in both countries, disembarkations do not always take place in them and this creates difficulties in the provision of humanitarian aid and in the set-up of the necessary reception procedures.

In **Italy** migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East leave from the Libyan coasts and arrive in Sicily. In 2015, **the majority of disembarkation operations (around 70 % of the total) took place in a Sicilian harbour**<sup>60</sup>. Data for 2016 confirm this trend<sup>61</sup>. Out of a total of around 180,000 migrants who arrived to Italy irregularly by sea, less than one third (52,337) disembarked in one of the four existing hotspots<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> From 463 asylum seekers, 8 were at open reception centres, 76 were detained in asylum detention centres, and a total of 379 people were detained in the two transit zones. (Magyar Helsinki Bizottság, 2017). (Detention centres for asylum seekers are in Tompa, Röszke, Békéscsaba, Nyírbátor, Kiskunhalas. Immigration detention takes place in Győr, Budapest, Nyírbátor, Kiskunhalas.)

<sup>59</sup> Paragraph 80 of Act XXXIX of 2016 on the amendment of certain acts relating to migration and other relevant acts.  
[https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=A1600039.TV&timeshift=ffffff4&xtreferer=00000001.TXT](https://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=A1600039.TV&timeshift=ffffff4&xtreferer=00000001.TXT).

<sup>60</sup> See ANCI, Caritas, Cittitalia, Migrantes, SPRAR, UNHCR, Rapporto protezione internazionale 2016, at 85.

<sup>61</sup> Ministry for Home Affairs, Civil Liberties and Immigration Department, Cruscotto statistico 31 December 2016.

<sup>62</sup> According to the Ministry of Interior, hotspots are 'a designated area, usually (but not necessarily) in the proximity of a landing place where, as soon as possible and consistent with the Italian regulatory framework, new arrivals land safely and are subjected to medical screenings, receive a leaflet on legislation concerning immigration and asylum, they are controlled, pre-identified, and, after having been informed about their current condition as irregular immigrants and the possibility to apply for international protection, they are fingerprinted. Subsequently, they receive detailed information on the procedure of international protection, the relocation programme and the assisted voluntary return (AVR). If they have applied for international protection, they are channelled into the asylum procedures, including relocation for those who are entitled and have applied; otherwise they are channelled to the return procedures.

(Lampedusa, Pozzallo, Trapani and Taranto)<sup>63</sup>. Migrants arriving elsewhere were accompanied to the nearest hotspot. Data for 2017<sup>64</sup> show an **increasing role of Calabria harbours** (Reggio Calabria and Vibo Valentia – nearly 14 % in total).

In order to balance their presence on the territories, asylum seekers are often transferred from one centre to another. Until 2013 the main regions providing support to asylum seekers were Sicily (42 %), Latium (15 %), Apulia (14 %) and Calabria (12 %). Then gradually the northern regions were involved and in 2015 Lombardy and Sicily had the same share of asylum seekers<sup>65</sup>.

In order to improve the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees across the country, the Ministry of Interior on 11 October 2016, issued a **Decree envisaging** the phasing out of the previous accommodation system (CAS), and the **consolidation of a uniform reception system** through an expansion of the SPRAR system. Asylum seekers can be placed in **centres all over the territory**, also in small villages, depending on the availability of places. They may also be moved from one centre to another, in order to balance their presence on the territories. These transfers are decided by Prefectures and cannot be appealed. To encourage municipalities to adhere to this new approach, Law 225/2016 provides **financial incentives** for municipalities involved in the reception system, allocating €500 for each asylum seeker hosted by the municipality. However, during 2016 the increasing protests of the local population prevented the relocation of immigrants and refugees in some municipalities<sup>66</sup>.

In **Greece**, five **hotspots** were inaugurated in 2015. Most arrivals in the first 6 months of 2017 have been to the islands of Chios (33 %), followed by Lesbos (29 %), Samos (18 %) and the South Dodecanese islands (16 %).

In **Hungary**, asylum seekers are concentrated in the **transit zones** built into the border fence, and are not entitled to enter Hungary until their application has been accepted. There are two transit zones: Horgoş-Röszke and Kelebija-Tompa. Those who are entitled to refugee or subsidiary protection status are then admitted to the **reception centre** in Vámoszabadi for 30 days, while waiting for their documents. Afterwards most of them either go to **Budapest or to other EU Member States**.

As to the **EU relocation procedure**, the **number of relocated asylum applicants from Greece and Italy remains quite low** compared to what was agreed, due to the opposition of many Member States, and particularly Eastern Europe, who refuse to fulfil the agreement:

- According to national data of the Ministry for Home Affairs, by 14 July 2017 only 7,621 persons had been relocated from **Italy**, compared to the 34,953 agreed upon.
- In **Greece** by 12 June 2017 only 14,709 asylum seekers had been relocated, much less than the agreed 63,302 persons and the 23,189 applications for relocation sent by the Greek authorities to other European states. By the end of the programme on 26 September 2017 another 8,500 asylum seekers should be relocated. As for the Dublin

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<sup>63</sup> European Commission, Ninth report on relocation and resettlement, February 2017, p. 9.

<sup>64</sup> Ministry for Home Affairs, Civil Liberties and Immigration Department, Cruscotto statistico data covering the period from 1/1/17 to 31/7/17.

<sup>65</sup> Migration Policy Centre, From Refugees to Workers Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States Volume II: Literature Review and Country Case Studies, 2016 <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/>.

<sup>66</sup> For example in the municipality of *Gorino* (in the Emilia Romagna region) on 24 October 2016, 20 asylum seekers, 12 women and 8 children, were blocked on their arrival, and the Prefecture had to find temporary accommodation in a nearby town.



Regulation, the Asylum Service has sent to other Member States 12,924 requests, mostly for family reunification (including requests for the review of negative decisions). Of these, only 7,251 have been accepted so far<sup>67</sup>.

### 3.4 Attempts to simplify and accelerate recognition procedures

The main problem for the management of asylum seekers is the **time needed for the recognition of refugee status**, as in this period asylum seekers usually cannot work, are not eligible for full integration measures and have to stay in reception or detention centres. Effective pathways for refugees' integration encompass the rapid processing of applications and the implementation of early integration measures, granting access to accommodation, health care and social protection, but also providing for rapid procedures for skills assessment and qualification recognition, as well as language, cultural and ICT training, work experience, personalised guidance and counselling, and job search assistance.

As detailed below, in **Italy and Greece recent developments show a move towards a simplification of the recognition procedures** in order to reduce the time needed for a decision to be taken (although with rising concerns on the capacity of fast-track procedures to fully consider the specific conditions of applicants). On the contrary in **Hungary**, recognition procedures have been made more difficult, in order to discourage the arrival of new asylum seekers.

In **Italy** on 12 April 2017, a **new law aimed at accelerating asylum procedures and returns was approved**. The law provides for cuts in the time needed for asylum requests to be examined from 6 months to 60 days, the elimination of a layer of justice for appeals, the option for asylum seekers to do socially useful work, the creation of new reception centres for repatriation and an allocation of EUR 19 million for carrying out expulsions.

The new law also creates **specialised immigration chambers to hear asylum appeals**. In order to speed up the process, these chambers are competent to decide on asylum appeal cases under a single judge; they have to decide within 4 months instead of the previous 6 months, and the decision can no longer be appealed to the Court of Appeal. The reform also limits the possibility to be heard in such appeals. Besides the elimination of the second instance, the structure of the examination itself has changed from a summary proceeding to a full chamber proceeding without a hearing but only a video recording of the asylum seeker's interview before the Territorial Commission. In addition, there is no obligation on the part of the judge to listen to the asylum seeker.

As for **repatriation**, Identification and Expulsion Centres (CIE) are renamed Return Detention Centres (CPR), and new closed detention centres will be located across the Italian territory on the basis of 'easily accessible' sites and structures, e.g. small-scale centres, hosting 80–100 persons and located close to airports or highways to facilitate returns.

In **Greece**, EASO, Frontex, Europol and Eurojust worked together with the Greek authorities for the identification, registration and fingerprinting of the incoming migrants to process the asylum claims and arrange returns. A specific Reception and Identification Service (RIS) was established by Law 4375/2016 following the EU–Turkey Statement. RIS is responsible for:

- registration, identification and data verification procedures, medical screening, identification of vulnerable persons, the provision of information, and the temporary

<sup>67</sup> Asylum Service, Press Release: Four years since the Asylum Service became operational <http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?p=2569>.

stay of third-country nationals or stateless persons entering the country without complying with the legal formalities and their further referral to the appropriate reception or temporary accommodation structures;

- the establishment, operation and supervision of centres implementing these procedures and open Temporary Reception Facilities for third-country nationals or stateless persons who have requested international protection;
- the establishment, operation and supervision of Open Temporary Accommodation Structures for third-country nationals or stateless persons who are under a return, removal or readmission procedure or whose removal has been postponed.

The **time limit set in law to take a decision on the asylum application at first instance is 6 months**. Fast-track border procedures have been applied to arrivals after 20 March 2016, following the EU–Turkey Statement. These procedures are implemented in the Reception and Identification Centres (RIC) or the hotspots of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros and Kos. The government’s plans to create new hotspots were met with resistance by the local population<sup>68</sup>.

Under the **fast-track border procedure**, which does not apply to family cases and vulnerable cases, interviews are also conducted by the EASO staff. The entire procedure at first and second instance has to be completed **within 14 days**. The procedure is now largely an admissibility procedure to examine whether applications may be dismissed on the ground that **Turkey is a safe third country or a first country of asylum**<sup>69</sup>. The fast-track procedure has increased the Asylum Service’s capacity to register and examine asylum applications; however, there are **concerns whether a proper assessment of vulnerabilities is carried out**, given that in several islands, the Reception and Identification Services (RIS) procedure could be completed without the registered person having been assessed for potential vulnerabilities.

In **Hungary** increasing restrictions were introduced in the last decade, following the 2007 Law on Asylum transposing the EU asylum-related directives<sup>70</sup>. Under this legislation, until the decision on eligibility for international protection is taken asylum seekers may stay in the country and have a right to care and support according to EU rules and guidance. If the refugee status or subsidiary protection is not granted, the authority will check whether the *principle of non-refoulement* applies<sup>71</sup>. In this case the applicant will be given temporary protection. In the case of rejection, applicants may appeal to the court within 8 days and can request a personal hearing. If the court rejects the appeal and agrees with the Asylum Office, the applicant can still submit a new asylum application presenting any new facts.

In 2010 Act CXXXV introduced some restrictions. The Act provided for the detention of asylum seekers while their cases were pending, and **increased the maximum length of administrative detention from 6 to 12 months**, while the detention of families with children was up to 30 days. In addition, the amendments introduced the concept of manifestly unfounded applications.

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<sup>68</sup> European Commission (2016), Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?, European Migration Network, November 2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00\\_resettlement\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_resettlement_synthesis_report_final_en.pdf).

<sup>69</sup> See above.

<sup>70</sup> Act LXXX of 2007 (in force since 1 January 2008).

<sup>71</sup> The principle of non-refoulement was officially enshrined in Article 33 of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Further restrictions were introduced in September 2015, when the number of asylum seekers permitted to enter each transit zone at one time had been gradually reduced<sup>72</sup>. From 28 March 2017 – with the entering into force of the **reinforced legal border closure – transit zones** are the only places where it is possible to ask for asylum and *to wait for resolution*. As anticipated in the previous section, all asylum seekers including families with small children and unaccompanied children between the ages of 14 and 18 have to stay in the transit zone **during the entire asylum procedure**, although in a separated sector. The procedures in the transit zones are monitored by UNHCR and its NGO partners. The living conditions in the transit zones are critical particularly due to the restrictions on people moving and the insecurity of how much time must be spent there<sup>73</sup>. Those who are entitled to **refugee or subsidiary protection** status are then admitted to the **reception centre in Vámoszabadi for 30 days**, while waiting for their documents.

### 3.5 Towards integration: pathways into employment, and access to education, social protection and health care

#### 3.5.1 Background: main challenges and national approaches for the integration of refugees in the EU

Eligibility for national integration measures in most EU countries depends on the status of non-EU citizens. **Integration measures are targeted towards regular immigrants and/or persons with a refugee status**. Asylum seekers, instead, in most EU countries have restricted access or no access at all to education and training, employment, and social protection benefits<sup>74</sup>.

In most EU countries these measures show a move towards an **‘activation’ approach**, as access to citizenship is increasingly made conditional on participation in introduction programmes and language courses, and tests mainly aimed at newly arrived immigrants.

The **recognition and certification of qualifications** is particularly relevant for the labour market integration of third-country nationals, but in many cases, their formal and informal qualification and educational levels are not recognised in receiving countries.

In order to be employed, asylum seekers and third-country migrants have to obtain **work permits, employment licences**, etc., and generate an ‘administrative burden’ when seeking employment, which deters some employers from hiring them. The time period from lodging the application to when an applicant can access the labour market goes from no time restriction in EL, NO, PT, SE, to a maximum of 12 months in the UK and to a period of between 2 and 9 months in the other Member States. In most countries, the following legal restrictions can also apply to asylum seekers:

- limitations on the number of hours/months they can work (Netherlands, Austria);
- restrictions on eligible occupations (Cyprus, Hungary, Austria);
- age-specific restrictions (Austria);
- thresholds on wages earned (Denmark, Cyprus, Netherlands);

<sup>72</sup> Magyar Helsinki Bizottság (2017).

<sup>73</sup> There are critical voices on the conditions in transit zones. ‘The people kept in the transit zones feel as though they live in a prison, not a camp. The situation grows worse in that no one knows just how long they will be locked up.’ Tímea Kovács – Hungarian Helsinki Committee (Index (2017)).

<sup>74</sup> European Commission (May 2016), European Employment Policy Observatory Synthesis: Challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees in successfully integrating into the labour market.

- obligation to undergo a labour market test (Germany, France, Luxembourg, Hungary and Austria);
- a lack of coordination between integration agencies and employment services in several countries.

Given these limitations, institutional **support for the labour market integration** of refugees and asylum seekers is insufficient in several Member States.

**Long-term resident immigrants are usually eligible for social benefits** on the basis of their socio-economic situation; only in some countries there are social benefits specifically assigned to asylum seekers.

The role of **local governments and stakeholders** is another important issue. With their proximity to the population, local public and private stakeholders are directly involved in the provision of adequate shelter, food, health care, education and health facilities, as well as in skills assessment and employment to enable refugees and other arriving migrants to become self-supporting.

According to the available evidence, among the measures to be taken at the local level, **promoting fast-track inclusion of newly arrived children into the education system** is a priority, given the importance of education for medium to long-term integration.

Providing **affordable housing for refugees is also extremely challenging** for local authorities, as **competition** between recognised refugees and the native population is particularly problematic. The rising numbers of refugees and migrants and the shortage of housing could trigger segregation and social conflict, and hinder their integration into local society. Finding suitable housing for unaccompanied minors and single women with children has also proved to be a real challenge.

**National differences in policy approaches remain considerable**, reflecting the specific characteristics and dimension of the residing immigrants, the legal framework and the specificities of national welfare regimes and integration models. The latest release of the **MIPEX Integration Policy Index** (<http://www.mipex.eu/>) provides a synthetic indication of differences in national policy approaches in receiving countries in 2014 (Niessen et al., 2017)<sup>75</sup>. According to the index, Sweden is the European country presenting the highest value, with a score considered 'favourable' to promoting integration (78/100). Another seven countries have integration policies partially favourable to integration (i.e. above 60/100): Finland, Portugal and Spain, the Benelux countries and Germany, while the lowest index (below 40/100) are to be found in Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Slovakia. Among the considered three countries, only **Italy** shows an index above the EU average (59 compared to 51 for the EU28 in 2014), which ranks this country in 8th place among the EU28 MSs. **Hungary and Greece** show instead indexes well below the EU average (45 and 44 respectively in 2014), ranking in 16th and 20th place respectively.

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<sup>75</sup> The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) project calculates 167 policy indicators which allow for the evaluation and comparison of public policies targeting the integration of migrants in 37 countries (including the EU28 Member States) in eight key areas. It is important to underline that the index is based on the policy approaches adopted and does not consider outcomes, although correlations between policy approaches and outcomes have been recently analysed. In addition, referring to 2014, it shows similarities/differences across countries before the large influx of arrivals since 2015. See also Konle-Seidl, Regina; Schreyer, Franziska; Bauer, Angela (2015): Arbeitsmarktintegration von Asylbewerbern und Flüchtlingen in Schweden, Dänemark und Großbritannien. (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung. Aktuelle Berichte, 18/2015), Nürnberg, 15 S. (<http://www.mipex.eu/>)

### 3.5.2 Differences in integration strategies in Greece, Hungary and Italy

**Italy and Greece** have **supported measures to improve integration** in the education system and to improve migrants' language skills, as well as for the labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection and asylum seekers. However, the **effective implementation of these measures has been difficult**, due to these countries' little experience in the handling of asylum seekers and refugees, and the large inflows of asylum seekers in a period of difficult economic and labour market situations.

**Hungary**, on the contrary, restricted its integration support for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. For example, a mandatory and automatic revision of the refugee status at least every three years was introduced. The maximum period of stay in open reception centres after recognition was reduced from 60 to 30 days<sup>76</sup>. Cash benefits as monthly pocket money, educational allowances and financial support for housing were stopped<sup>77</sup>. On 31 March 2016 the government's list of 'safe countries of origin' and 'safe third countries' was expanded to include Turkey<sup>78</sup>.

In **Italy** support to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees is increasingly provided by the mentioned **SPRAR system** managed by municipalities and funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs. As described in the box below, SPRAR is formed by small reception structures where assistance and integrated reception services are provided through **targeted integration projects**, usually run by NGOs.

In **Greece** recognised refugees have to move from support and assistance schemes for asylum seekers to national schemes to start their integration process. There are two types of national schemes:

1. National schemes offering a **safety-net coverage of basic needs** to disadvantaged groups, including refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. The Social Solidarity Income (which inter alia offers a monthly cash allowance to persons falling under the poverty threshold) is one example;
2. **'Affirmative action' schemes** providing support to beneficiaries of international protection in accessing mandatory Greek language courses for adults, vocational training and professional orientation schemes, validation of professional/academic qualifications of refugees.

In **Hungary** the approach towards integration has changed considerably since 2010/2011 in a far more restrictive way. The possibility to conclude an **Integration Agreement**<sup>79</sup> providing a financial allowance and access to integration measures introduced in 2014, was **abolished on 1 June 2016**, to be substituted by projects managed by civil and ecclesiastical organisations and mainly financed by the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF). In June 2016 the government also provided special support –HUF 50 million (approximately EUR 159000) – to five member organisations of the Charity Council operating at the

<sup>76</sup> In May, the National Assembly passed a set of amendments significantly cutting access to housing, health care and integration programmes for people with protection status. (Amnesty International, 2017).

<sup>77</sup> Government Decree 62/2016 (III.31) amending Government Decree 301/2007 (XI.9) on the implementation of Asylum Act.

<sup>78</sup> Government Decree 63/2016 (III.31) amending Government Decree 191/2015 (VII/21) on national designation of safe countries of origin and safe third countries.

<sup>79</sup> In 2015 60 % of those receiving refugee or subsidiary protected status – 306 persons – asked to conclude such a statement, which indicates the popularity of the tool. In the same year the central budget had to spend for this purpose HUF 186 million (around EUR 390000). Source:

[http://index.hu/belfold/2017/03/16/abcug\\_menekultvalsag\\_civil\\_szervezetek\\_civlek\\_integracio/](http://index.hu/belfold/2017/03/16/abcug_menekultvalsag_civil_szervezetek_civlek_integracio/).

southern border and other refugee centres to provide food, tents and medical instruments primarily for families, children, elderly and sick people. Civil, ecclesiastical and local government organisations also help refugees to find *private accommodation*. Accommodation is financed in the first period (one to two years) by programmes under the AMIF.

### BOX 3.2: The Italian SPRAR system

The **SPRAR system** consists of a network of managing entities that set-up and run local reception projects for asylum seekers. At a local level the managing entity, with the valued support of the third sector (non-profit organisations, NGOs), ensures an 'integrated reception' that, according to the 2016 guidelines of the Ministry of Interior, must go well beyond the mere provision of board and lodging, and include orientation measures, legal and social assistance as well as the development of personalised programmes for the social-economic integration of the beneficiaries. SPRAR's main objective is to take responsibility for those beneficiaries accepted into the scheme and to provide them with personalised programmes to help them (re)acquire self-autonomy, and to take part in and integrate effectively into Italian society, in terms of finding employment and housing, access to local services, social life and education. SPRAR projects offer cultural and linguistic mediation, accommodation, access to local services, language education and access to schools for minors, vocational training and traineeships, legal advice and health care. SPRAR projects should also provide assistance in accessing employment, housing and social integration.

According to available data on the SPRAR system<sup>80</sup>, the number of beneficiaries of integration programmes increased exponentially between 2012 and 2016. While in 2003 SPRAR had only 1,365 places across the national territory, they reached over 10,000 in 2013, when the Ministry funded 16,000 additional places for the three-year period 2014–2016. In 2016, 26,012 places were available, covering around one quarter of the total reception capacity in Italy. Data also show an increasing turnover in the available places. In 2016, 652 integration projects were implemented by 555 local governments, mainly municipalities (491). Nearly 60 % of beneficiaries were supported in the four southern regions (Sicily, Calabria, Puglia, Campania) and in Latium. Among the support services provided by the SPRAR, 20.9 % were related to health assistance and support, followed by cultural mediation services (17 %), social assistance services (14.9 %), labour market insertion (10.5 %) and legal assistance (8.2 %).

**Source:** Country expert and <http://www.sprar.it/>

These schemes and the overall National Strategy on the Integration of Third Country Nationals have however only been partially implemented so far, also due to budgetary constraints and delays in the implementation of AMIF-related actions.

Regarding the **governance system**, in all the three considered countries a multi-actor and multi-level governance system has been set up to face the refugee crisis, with coordination problems particularly in **Italy and Greece**.

This is particularly evident in **Italy**, where the overall activities concerning reception and integration measures are implemented at the local level by regions (with competence on employment and training policies) and municipalities (with competence on reception and social inclusion policies). Coordination is ensured by National and Regional Working Groups (*Tavolo di coordinamento nazionale e tavoli regionali*)<sup>81</sup>. The Ministry of Interior is in charge of the control and monitoring activities in the first and second reception facilities. To this

<sup>80</sup> SPRAR 2016 Annual Report, Ministry of Home Affairs, April 2017.

<sup>81</sup> LD 142/2015, Article 9 (1).



end, the Prefectures may make use of the municipality's social services, in charge of the implementation of integration measures<sup>82</sup>. The coordination of integration bodies across local and sub-national levels represent one of the criticalities of the Italian system.

In **Greece** the management and coordination of the actions for the transport, accommodation, food and health care of refugees and migrants is under the *Central Coordinating Body for the Management of the Refugee Crisis* that reports directly to the Chief of the Hellenic National Defence General Staff, in cooperation with the Asylum Service and the RIS. However, there is still a fragmentation and an overlap of competences on these measures between the Ministry of Migration Policy, the Ministry of Defence, local municipalities and humanitarian organisations<sup>83</sup>.

In **Hungary** the role of **NGOs** is particularly important: **churches and their institutions** compensate for the absence of national and local public authorities.

### 3.5.3 Early labour market access and labour integration policies

Despite the fact that in most EU MSs, refugees, and in particular women, have higher chances of becoming citizens of the host country compared to other migrants, they remain one of the most vulnerable groups in the labour market. According to a recent study for the European Parliament<sup>84</sup>: *'On EU average, it took **between five and six years to integrate more than 50 % of humanitarian migrants into the workplace and as many as 15 years to reach a 70 % employment rate converging towards the outcomes for labour migrants**'* (p. 22).

Employed migrants and refugees, and particularly migrant women, are also more likely than native-born to have low pay and irregular jobs. The crisis and the recent terroristic attacks have increased prejudices and reinforced discriminations, especially in Baltic, Central and South-East Europe. Policy changes have further penalised immigrants. Quotas and work permits have been reduced, restrictions have been introduced to family reunification, and 'voluntary' return schemes have been increasingly supported.

A major obstacle to the labour market integration of asylum seekers and migrants is the **length of time required for the asylum and work permit procedures**, as it is not possible for asylum seekers to have access to the labour market without a work permit.

**According to EU legislation, asylum seekers should have access to the labour market no later than 9 months after filing their application for international protection.** However, the conditions for granting access to the labour market for asylum applicants are defined by the Member States. As a result, the timing and conditions of effective access to the labour market are very different across countries. Furthermore, in some countries, asylum seekers and those whose applications are being processed are stuck in an ambiguous legal status. The time period from lodging the application to when applicant can access the labour market goes from no time restriction in EL, NO, PT, SE, to a maximum of 12 months in the UK, and a period between 6 and 9 months in the other Member States.

**Greece and Italy reduced the waiting time during 2016 to support early labour market access for asylum seekers**, and introduced new legal provisions to support the labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection providing language

<sup>82</sup> LD 142/2015, Article 20 (1).

<sup>83</sup> Ombudsman, Migration flows and refugee protection: Administrative challenges and human rights issues, April 2017.

<sup>84</sup> Konle-Seidl, R. and Bolits, G., Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices, study for the Employment Committee (2016): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/studies>.

training, employment services and adult education programmes to refugees. As shown in Table 3.1, in **Greece**, legal changes allowed applicants for international protection to **access employment as soon as they get the asylum seekers card**, which is used automatically as a work permit, while in **Italy** the **waiting time was reduced from 6 months to 60 days**<sup>85</sup>.

**Hungary** instead maintained its restrictive regulation, as it is not possible for asylum seekers to access the Public Employment Services (PES) and to work in the regular labour market. **Only recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection** can access the labour market. The procedures for recognition take on average 9 months.

**Administrative delays in processing work permits** postpone access to the labour market in practice. In addition, asylum seekers generate an 'administrative burden' when seeking employment, which deters some employers from hiring them. The **lack of coordination between integration agencies and employment services**, the negative attitudes of some employers, and **the legal/administrative obstacles to legal employment** often push refugees and asylum seekers into the **shadow economy**, where they can be at risk of exploitation and abuse. In this respect, the high unemployment rates and the large size of the shadow economy in **Greece and Italy** hamper refugees and asylum seekers in accessing the regular labour market.

Besides legal provisions, the three countries are implementing specific policy measures to support the **labour market integration of asylum seekers (in Greece and Italy)** and **recognised refugees (in all the three countries)**. Table 3.2 below presents a summary of the main measures, with indication of eligibility conditions, intervention duration and, when available, estimated costs and funding, according to information provided by the country experts in the case studies. The classification of labour market integration measures follows the one adopted in the cited 2016 study for the European Parliament<sup>86</sup>.

Among the three considered countries, only **Italy** has developed comprehensive integration measures, while **Greece** is at a very initial stage, and **Hungary** only supports recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection.

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<sup>85</sup> The recent Legislative Decree 142/2015 (Article 22) allows asylum applicants to start work 60 days after the initial submission of their asylum application. The stay permit 'for asylum application' allows the applicant to work until the application procedure is settled, and cannot be converted into a regular stay permit for work reasons. However, in practice, asylum seekers face difficulties in obtaining a residence permit allowing them to work, due to the delays in the registration of their asylum claims and administrative requirements.

<sup>86</sup> Konle-Seidl, R. and G. Bolits (2016), *Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices*, European Parliament Study.

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)578956\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf).



**Table 3.2: Labour market Integration measures for asylum seekers/refugees**

Measures	Eligibility	Duration of intervention	Estimated costs (EUR)	EU funding involved (AMIF, ESF, etc.)
<b>GREECE</b>				
Quality guidance for individual integration plan	Persons granted asylum	(*)	(*)	(*)
Skills assessment, and recognition/validation of qualifications	18+ asylum seekers and refugees	New project to be implemented	New project to be implemented	AMIF
Language courses	18+ asylum seekers and refugees	(*)	(*)	(*)
Early labour market support for those more likely to get international protection	Asylum seekers and refugees	(*)	(*)	(*)
ALMP and job search assistance	Asylum seekers and refugees	(*)	(*)	AMIF and ESF
Social networks and mentoring	no	no	no	no
<b>HUNGARY</b>				
Quality guidance for individual integration plan	Persons granted asylum		213,000	AMIF
Skills assessment, and recognition/validation of qualifications	Persons granted asylum			
Language courses	Persons granted asylum – refugees and persons with subsidiary status	1–2 years	467,000	AMIF
Early labour market support for those more likely to get international protection	Asylum seekers		1,550,000	AMIF
Bridging courses to develop country specific skills	Persons granted asylum – refugees and persons with subsidiary status	1–2 years	993,000	AMIF
ALMP and job search assistance	Persons granted asylum – refugees and persons with subsidiary status	1–2 years	235,000	AMIF. Additional support to assist recognised refugees to integrate into the labour market and society further to the EU funds came from charity and NGO (civil, ecclesiastical and international) organisations.

<b>Social networks and mentoring</b>	Persons granted asylum – refugees and persons with subsidiary status	1–2 years	560,000	AMIF
<b>ITALY</b>				
<b>Quality guidance for individual integration plan</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)		201,458,682 National funds in 2014 + 126,500,000 estimated AMIF funds for reintegration measures	National funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell’asilo – FNPSA) + AMIF funds (no monitoring and evaluation reports are available so not possible to say AMIF is already contributing to SPRAR activities)
<b>Skills assessment, recognition/validation of qualifications</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)	See below		National funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell’asilo – FNPSA) + AMIF funds (no monitoring and evaluation reports available)
<b>Language courses</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)	Over 83 % of the SPRAR projects in 2016 have carried out courses for learning the Italian language of 10 hours or more per week. There were 19,263 beneficiaries of these courses with a total of 7,553 people who have obtained frequency certification valid at national and/or regional level.	(*)	National funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell’asilo – FNPSA) + AMIF funds (no monitoring and evaluation reports are available )
<b>Early labour market support</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)		(*)	
<b>Bridging course to develop country-specific skills</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)	Around 92 % of the projects have activated at least one traineeship with a total of 5,673 traineeships and an additional 895 labour insertions following the traineeship.	(*)	National funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell’asilo – FNPSA) + AMIF funds (no monitoring and evaluation reports )
<b>ALMP and job search assistance</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)	See above	(*)	National funds (Fondo nazionale per le politiche e i servizi dell’asilo – FNPSA) + AMIF funds (no monitoring and evaluation reports)
<b>Social networks and mentoring</b>	Asylum seekers in SPRAR structures (second-line reception structures)	SPRAR beneficiaries participate to events held by local communities.	(*)	

**Note:** (\*) Data not available  
**Source:** Country case studies

### 3.5.3.1 Labour market support and role of early intervention in the Italian SPRAR system

In **Italy** measures supporting the labour market integration are implemented at an early stage, and are already in the second phase of the reception process under the SPRAR system for asylum applicants.

Decree 251/2007, transposing the Council Directive 2004/83/EC, establishes that **foreign nationals who have been granted refugee status or the status of beneficiary of subsidiary protection** 'are entitled to the same treatment provided for Italian nationals regarding paid employment, self-employment, and inclusion on professional registers, vocational training and on-the-job training' (Article 25). Refugees and asylum seekers with residence permits may freely **register with PES** under the same conditions as national citizens and other migrants. Registration with PES is not mandatory, but it facilitates gaining access to some services and being entitled to some benefits. Once registered with PES, asylum seekers, refugees and third-country nationals can in principle access all job-related PES services under the same conditions as national citizens and may benefit from measures aimed at the integration of third-country migrants in general.

Migrants losing their job are also eligible to **unemployment benefits** and assistance under the same conditions as Italian citizens, if they accumulate a sufficient amount of contributions during their working life.

Some PESs, especially in large cities, have set up **desks dedicated to immigrants** and third-country nationals in order to solve job-related issues and inform people about job placement opportunities with the help of language and cultural mediators. Employment Centres, managed by Regions and Provinces, provide information on the labour market, carry out skills assessments, provide counselling and indicate the most appropriate training courses organised by the local governments for migrants. Foreigners can also apply for a training period in a firm. **Municipalities also may have a migrant desk**, providing support on language training (at least an A2 level is required for the release of residence permits), employment or accommodation. Trade unions and NGOs have also promoted offices with similar purposes in order to assist migrants in coping with procedures to renew residence permits and other bureaucratic procedures<sup>87</sup>.

**No systematic mentorship schemes and employers' incentive schemes** are implemented specifically aimed at integrating asylum seekers and refugees into the labour market.

While there are no specific measures targeted to the labour market inclusion of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection, **targeted support is provided to asylum seekers under the SPRAR system during the second phase of the reception policies**. SPRAR projects are good examples of **early intervention measures for the labour market integration of asylum seekers**.

As illustrated in Box 3.2, SPRAR projects besides accommodation, health assistance, legal and/or psychological support and food, provide **language courses, skill screening, training courses and knowledge and skills for social integration**. The projects usually last 6 months and can be extended for another 6 months.

SPRAR has implemented **standardised integration programmes** to support the integration of asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection within the SPRAR system by means of **individualised projects that include vocational training and internships**.

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<sup>87</sup> Ciccarone G. (2016), Labour Market Integration of asylum seekers and refugees – Italy, European Commission -ICF.

**Vocational training**, which may include residential courses, is aimed at helping them to gradually leave reception centres, as well providing courses aimed at fulfilling mandatory education obligations (for minors under 18 years of age). According to the Italian Council for Refugees (2015)<sup>88</sup>, training usually requires 20, 25 or 30 hours of attendance per week, for a period of between 3 and 6 months. Vocational training or other integration programmes can be funded by national public funds (e.g. the so-called *8xmille*) or the AMIF. In this case, the Ministry of Interior can finance specific integration projects of NGOs at national level. The projects financed under AMIF are, however, very limited in terms of the period of activity and number of beneficiaries. Municipalities can finance vocational training, internships and specific employment scholarships (*borse lavoro*) with support of AMIF and the European Structural Investments Funds (ESIF) and, in particular, the European Social Fund (ESF) which is targeted to both natives and immigrants, including refugees and beneficiaries of international protection.

Although there are no in-depth evaluations of these programmes, the available evidence is rather positive. Over 83 % of the SPRAR projects in 2016 have implemented **intensive Italian language** courses of 10 hours or more per week, for 19,263 beneficiaries. A total of 7,553 beneficiaries obtained a certification of attendance valid at national and/or regional level. In addition, around 92 % of the projects have activated at least one **traineeship**, for a total of 5,673 traineeships and 895 labour insertions following the traineeship. In addition, **2,842 job placements** were recorded, with an average of 10 labour insertions per project mainly in the sectors of tourism and retail. According to a recent comparative study produced by the Migration Policy Centre of the European University Institute in Florence in 2016<sup>89</sup>, the success of the SPRAR projects, compared to other integration projects, can be explained by their being tailored both to the needs of the destination municipality and those of the asylum seekers. Another possible explanation is that migrants that enter the SPRAR system are self-selected, being people in search of the recognition of their status as refugees.

Moving from the SPRAR experience the government is currently implementing some pilot projects for the labour market integration of refugees, illustrated in Box 3.3. below.

Although SPRAR integration projects **currently involve only a minority of asylum seekers and their long-term sustainability is uncertain**, they represent a new approach to integration policies in Italy, considered rather successful and a good practice to be further developed in order to double the number of asylum seekers accommodated in its structures and involved in its integration projects. According to the latest data of the Ministry of Interior<sup>90</sup>, as of July 2017 the SPRAR system was implementing 768 projects involving 31,313 asylum seekers.

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<sup>88</sup> Italian Council for Refugees (2015) Country Report: Italy, Fourth update (December 2015).

<http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy> reported in the Ciccarone paper cited in footnote 87.

<sup>89</sup> From Refugees to Workers. Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States Volume I: Comparative Analysis and Policy Findings; Vol II: [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/43504/Study\\_fromRefugeesToWorkers\\_2016\\_Vol\\_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/43504/Study_fromRefugeesToWorkers_2016_Vol_1.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y).

<sup>90</sup> <http://www.sprar.it/i-numeri-dello-sprar>.

### BOX 3.3: Examples of pilot project for the labour market integration of refugees in Italy

The project **INSIDE** is aimed at supporting the labour market integration of beneficiaries of international protection in the SPRAR system. The pilot project supports **672** personalised employment integration programmes (*doti individuali di inserimento socio-lavorativo*) providing personalised measures for skills upgrading and employment support. The project is co-financed by the ESF and AMIF under the coordination of the Ministry of Interior. During its implementation 684 traineeships were activated. Most of them involved men (there were only 93 women) and almost 50 % was implemented in firms located in southern Italy: Calabria, Sicilia and Marche (57).

The project **Percorsi**, funded by the Migration Policy National Fund (*Fondo Nazionale per le politiche migratory*), aims to finance the social and employment integration of unaccompanied minors and young migrants. The project, launched in February 2016 on a national scale, will end on 31 December 2017, and consists of the creation of integrated paths for social work, addressed to:

- **unaccompanied minors**, including applicants and recipients of international protection or applicants, transitioning to adulthood, who at the start of the internship have reached the age of 16 and are inactive or unemployed;
- **young migrants** arrived in Italy as unaccompanied minors, who have not reached the age of 23 at the date of the internship, including applicants and recipients of humanitarian or international protection, in a state of unemployment.

The socio-occupational integration paths are based on vouchers ('doti individuali') guaranteeing the provision of a range of services to support the development and the upgrading of skills, social and labour market integration (training on the job, internship), through the construction of customised intervention plans. The 8-month long-term integration paths include a 5-month internship period within project-related companies.

**Source:** <http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/Progetti-e-azioni/Pagine/Percorsi-di-integrazione-socio-lavorativa-per-minori-non-accompagnati-e-giovani-migranti-.aspx>  
<https://www.programmaintegra.it/wp/2016/10/giovani-migranti-e-impres-avviso-per-il-finanziamento-di-percorsi-di-integrazione-socio-lavorativa/>

There are however a **number of drawbacks in the Italian labour market integration system**, which hinder asylum seeker and refugee access to the labour market.

One is **shortage of concrete integration programmes addressed to them**, so that in practice labour market integration measures are often not available. **Another is the wide differences in integration programmes**, according to the services provided by the reception centres where asylum seekers are accommodated, and PES centres where foreigners register. Although the Government implements a 'long-term programme on immigration policy and foreigners on state territory' every three years, setting out the implementation of policies on immigration is left to reception centres, PES and municipalities. A third issue is the **lack of coordination** among employment services and institutions in charge of asylum seeker and refugee integration policies. **Delays in the registration procedure** is a further problem. The **gravity of the crisis** affecting Italy is another factor reducing employment opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees.

#### 3.5.3.2 *The difficult implementation of labour integration programmes in Greece*

In **Greece, Law 4375/2016 largely improved the legal framework for the labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees**, removing previous obstacles to obtaining a work permit. The new law abolished the requirement for asylum seekers to have a work permit as a precondition for labour market access, making it easier for them to

work legally. Beneficiaries of international protection holding a valid residence permit have access to paid employment, services or work or are able to exercise independent economic activity, under the same conditions as nationals. Applicants for international protection – after completing the application procedure and if in possession of the **‘international protection applicant card’ or ‘asylum seeker’s card’** – have access to salaried employment or to the provision of services<sup>91</sup>. Asylum seekers may also have access to the labour market where the completion of the application procedure is delayed for reasons which are not the applicant’s fault. In addition the law has abolished the labour test that was required to obtain a work permit. The law also provides that unemployed refugees or asylum seekers have the same rights as natives in access to unemployment benefits and support towards labour market reintegration.

However, these provisions have remained largely on paper. **Measures supporting labour market access, including language courses, training and recognition of skills are not sufficiently developed** and are fragmented over a number of projects implemented **by NGOs with the support of EU funds**.

Although the National Strategy for the inclusion of third-country nationals of April 2013 emphasises the role of information, training and employment services (including support to self-employment) its implementation is hindered by the lack of a developed system of active labour market policies and PES. The crisis aggravated the situation, with PES registering a 50 % decline in their workforce<sup>92</sup>. For these reasons, vocational training, language courses and supportive services targeting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are mainly provided by international organisations and civil society institutions, which however mainly focus on humanitarian support<sup>93</sup>. For example there are no free public courses on the Greek language for adults; free Greek language courses are offered at the moment only by NGOs.

In addition, it is **extremely difficult for newly recognised refugees to find employment or to enrol in VET**, due to priority awarded to Greek and EU citizens in hirings and the extremely difficult labour market conditions in Greece since the crisis<sup>94</sup>. Additionally, refugees face obstacles in enrolling in vocational training programmes as the majority of them cannot provide evidence (high school degrees, diplomas etc.) of their educational background, which is a prerequisite for participating.

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<sup>91</sup> European Commission (2016), Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?, European Migration Network, November 2016.

[https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00\\_resettlement\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_resettlement_synthesis_report_final_en.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> Dimitris Karantinos (2016), Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, European Commission.

<sup>93</sup> For a description of the vocational training and language projects implemented by NGOs see Dimitris Konstatinos, 2016 cited.

<sup>94</sup> Dimitris Karantinos (2016), Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Greece, European Commission.

### 3.5.3.3 Downsizing of public intervention and role of NGOs in Hungary

In **Hungary**, as anticipated, only recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection have access to the labour market and integration measures, while no services are provided for asylum seekers to prepare them for labour market integration.

Integration measures for asylum seekers and refugees rely mostly on **civil and ecclesiastical organisations**, activating a large number of volunteers. Most of the interventions are supported by the AMIF funds.

Nearly half of the projects (46 %) target labour market integration. Examples are the *Diaconal Service of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* job search programme, and the *Maltese Care Nonprofit Ltd* programme promoting labour market integration (Job to You!) financed until March 2018. Their services include, among others, individual labour market counselling, vocational and language training, and job search assistance. These services are targeted to third-country nationals holding an official residence permit (including beneficiaries of international protection). Besides labour market integration, a large number of projects (21 %) promote cultural and community integration, and accommodation (9 % of projects). However, the **majority of the asylum seekers/refugees tend to leave the country** during the support period due to the difficult socio-economic conditions in Hungary.

### 3.5.4 Access to social assistance

Migrants and refugees experience **high risks of social exclusion and poverty** as their integration is usually a long process hampered by many barriers, including discrimination. Women, unaccompanied minors and irregular immigrants are more at risk than others and require tailored integration measures.

As reported in Table 3.1, recognised beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to welfare benefits and healthcare provisions as for natives. Asylum seekers are usually also entitled to small monetary allowances during their stay in reception centres in all the three considered countries. As for other integration measures, while in **Italy and Greece** recent measures have improved support to social assistance, in **Hungary** a more restrictive approach has been recently adopted.

As already anticipated, in **Italy**, recent developments in social integration strategies are moving towards small-scale, local projects in SPRAR centres providing integrated social and economic support. In SPRAR centres asylum seekers receive linguistic and cultural mediation services, legal counselling, Italian language courses and access to schools for minors, health assistance and socio-psychological support, training and employment services, as well as information on recreational, sport and cultural activities, and information on (assisted) voluntary return programmes. During their stay in SPRAR centres, asylum applicants also receive a very small monetary allowance for personal needs<sup>95</sup>.

In **Greece**, national schemes provide for small monetary allowance to cover some asylum seekers and refugee needs (e.g. a monthly cash allowance through Social Solidarity Income). However, housing needs remain largely unaddressed. In addition, although

<sup>95</sup> Asylum seekers hosted in first reception centres receive €2.50 per day per person as pocket money for personal needs. In CAS centres, pocket money is agreed with the competent Prefecture but according to the Ministry of Interior Circular issued 20 March 2014, the amount received by applicants hosted in CAS should be €2.50 per day per person and up to €7.50 for families. In the SPRAR structures, pocket money varies depending on the individual project from €1.50 to €3 with up to 20 % reduction for families exceeding two people.



Greece does not adopt restrictive legislation, it is the implementation of the law that in practice restricts access to social assistance. Social integration measures are mainly implemented by NGOs with support of AMIF. For example, there is no social support for vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, such as victims of torture, and measures for the identification and rehabilitation of torture victims in Greece are offered only by three NGOs, with risks to the continuity of the programme. In principle, Law 4387/2016 Article 93 also provides for pension rights for uninsured seniors, but the requirement of 15 years of residence in Greece in practice excludes seniors who are newly recognised refugees.

In **Hungary**, recognised refugees and persons admitted for subsidiary protection are entitled to social aid and support provided for by law and local regulations under the same terms as to Hungarian citizens. They have right to social benefits if they do not have assets available in Hungary to support themselves and the per capita monthly income does not exceed 150 % of the minimum old-age pension benefits in the case of single persons, or the minimum of full old-age pension benefits in the case of a person with family. However, **cash benefits** (pocket money, educational allowances and financial support for housing) **were stopped in 2016**<sup>96</sup> when legal amendments submitted by Ministry of Interior to the Parliament proposed that beneficiaries of international protection should not have more advantages than Hungarian nationals. In the case of eligibility for social assistance, recognised refugees can remain in reception centres for up to thirty additional days after the qualification resolution is delivered (including room and board at the reception centre and travel allowances). They also have the right to reimbursement of the costs of learning and education, and to financial support for leaving the country permanently. Refugees and persons admitted for subsidiary protection placed in a private accommodation (after the reception centre) are also entitled to receive financial support for leaving the country permanently.

Asylum seekers in **transit zones** may contact social workers, and charity organisations (civil and ecclesiastical) visit them regularly to provide additional assistance. They also organise activities for the children. Upon a written request to the Asylum Office a lawyer working with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee or state lawyer can be asked for, free of charge.

### 3.5.5 Access to health care

**In all three countries** beneficiaries of international protection have access to health care in the same terms as natives. However, in **Hungary** free access to primary health care is available only for 6 months.

Both **Italy and Greece** took steps to improve **access to health care** for asylum seekers and refugees. However administrative, language and cultural barriers, as well as the costs of some specialised services makes access difficult in practice.

**In Italy**, SPRAR projects provide cultural mediators for dealing with health assistance, and support asylum seekers in access to health care with interpretation and translation services<sup>97</sup>. According to Italian legislation, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection must enrol in the universal National Health Service. Formally, they enjoy equal treatment and full equality of rights and obligations with Italian citizens. There is no distinction between asylum seekers benefitting from material reception conditions and

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<sup>96</sup> Government Decree 62/2016 (III.31) amending Government Decree 301/2007 (XI.9) on the implementation of the Asylum Act.

<sup>97</sup> One of the most relevant obstacles to accessing health services is the language barrier. Usually medical operators only speak Italian. Therefore asylum seekers and refugees often do not consult their general doctor and go to the hospital only when their disease gets worse.



those who are out of the reception system, since **all asylum seekers benefit from the National Health System**<sup>98</sup>. The right to medical assistance is acquired at the moment of the registration of the asylum request. Asylum seekers benefit from free of charge health services on the basis of a self-declaration of destitution submitted to the competent local healthcare agency. The medical ticket exemption is for asylum seekers that cannot work because they are waiting for their application to be recognised. Thus, asylum seekers are treated under the same rules as unemployed Italian citizens<sup>99</sup>, although the practice varies throughout the country<sup>100</sup>. However, very often the exercise of this right is hindered and delayed, depending upon the attribution of the tax code, assigned by police offices when formalising the asylum application. Pending enrolment, asylum seekers only have access to health treatment ensured to irregular migrants<sup>101</sup>. They have access to emergency care and essential treatments, and they benefit from preventive medical treatment programmes aimed at safeguarding individual and collective health.

According to the **Greek** national legislation, asylum seekers are entitled to necessary health, pharmaceutical and hospital care, free of charge, on condition that they have no health insurance and no financial means (means tested). Such health care includes: (a) clinical and medical examinations in public hospitals, health centres or regional medical centres; (b) medication provided on prescription by a medical doctor; (c) hospital assistance in public hospitals. In all cases, emergency aid is provided to applicants free of charge. Applicants who have special needs receive special medical assistance. However, there are **no translators or cultural mediators in public hospitals**. Additionally, administrative barriers may occur, due to difficulties in the issuance of a Social Security Number or the fact that staff in hospitals or healthcare centres are not always aware of the 2016 law<sup>102</sup>.

In **Hungary**, asylum seekers, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection status are also entitled to **primary health care**, including screenings, examinations, medical treatment provided under general medicine and specialised care in cases of emergency. The healthcare expenses are covered by the Immigration and Asylum Office. Health services are also available to refugees and persons with subsidiary protection status, as well as to minors with refugee or subsidiary protection status if residing in Hungary.

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<sup>98</sup> Asylum seekers have to register with the national sanitary service in the Offices of the Health Board (ASL) competent for the place they declare to have a domicile. Once registered, they are provided with the European Health Insurance Card, *tessera sanitaria* (TEAM), with a validity related to that of the permit of stay. Registration entitles the asylum seeker to the following health services: (i) free choice of a general doctor from the list presented by the ASL and choice of a paediatrician for children (free medical visits, home visits, prescriptions, certification for access to nursery and maternal schools, obligatory primary, middle and secondary schools); (ii) special medical assistance through a general doctor or paediatrician's request and on presentation of the health card; (iii) midwifery and gynaecological visits at the family counselling (*consultorio familiare*) to which access is direct and does not require a doctor's request; and (iv) free hospitalisation in public hospitals and some private subsidised structures.

<sup>99</sup> Ministry of Health Circular no 5, 24 March 2000.

<sup>100</sup> In all regions, the exemption is valid for the period of time in which applicants are unable to work, by law corresponding to 2 months from the submission of the asylum application. During this period they are assimilated to unemployed people and granted with the same exemption code. For the next period, in some regions asylum seekers are no longer exempt from the health ticket because they are considered inactive and not unemployed. In other regions, the exemption is extended until asylum seekers cannot actually find a job. In order to maintain the ticket exemption, asylum seekers need to register at job centres (*centri per l'impiego*) attesting their unemployment. AIDA, Asylum Information Database, Italy.

<sup>101</sup> According to Article 35 of the Consolidated Act on Immigration (TUI).

<sup>102</sup> Solidarity Now, 'Issues in the issuance of AMKA', 10 November 2016, available in Greek at: <http://bit.ly/2ltg9QI>; MSF, *Greece in 2016: Vulnerable People Left Behind*, 20 October 2016, available at: <http://bit.ly/2kPFBG1>, AIDA, Greece, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/28-03-2017/aida-2016-update-greece>.

**Entitlement to free primary health care however covers only a period of 6 months** after the recognition for refugees or person admitted for subsidiary protections not covered by the social insurance system.

### 3.5.6 The shortage of accommodation facilities

**In all the three considered countries, accommodation is one of the main challenges** in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

**The adopted measures depend on the individual status.** Asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres for the time needed for the application procedures to be completed and are limited in their mobility. In the three considered countries most first reception centres are often overcrowded and do not provide decent living conditions. Recognised refugees usually have instead the right to be supported in the search for affordable accommodation and to be free to move across the countries, either through the provision of a financial allowance or accommodation services.

**The role of NGOs in the provision of accommodation support** is highly relevant in all the three countries. This is because the three considered countries are only recently dealing with refugees, and the capacity of municipalities in supporting accommodation is usually limited and varies considerably across the territory. Providing affordable housing for refugees is indeed extremely challenging for local authorities, especially in cities already facing housing shortages, with waiting lists for social housing and difficulties for vulnerable groups to access the private rental market. In addition, in these countries the crisis has forced municipalities to operate in the context of budget cuts.

In **Italy**, as anticipated in the previous sections, second-line reception is provided largely by municipalities. According to the 2005 Reception Decree<sup>103</sup>, for the period needed until a place is found in one of the accommodation centres, the Prefecture has to grant the applicant a financial allowance. Nevertheless, this provision has never been applied in practice. The Legislative Decree 142/2015 does not provide for any financial allowance for asylum applicants needing accommodation, does not provide a definition of 'adequate standard of living and subsistence', and does not envisage specific financial support for different groups, such as people with special needs.

In addition, although the Italian legislation does not establish a limitation on the **freedom of movement of asylum seekers**, the competent Prefect may limit the freedom of movement of asylum seekers<sup>104</sup>, delimiting a specific place of residence or a geographic area where asylum seekers may circulate freely.

*Asylum seekers in reception centres* cannot leave the reception centre temporarily without prior authorisation, and are only allowed to leave the facilities during the day with the obligation to return in the evening hours<sup>105</sup>. In CAS or in SPRAR rules concerning the entry to/exit from the centre are laid down in a joint statement signed by the institution running the facility and the asylum seeker at the beginning of the accommodation period. Asylum seekers *out of the SPRAR system* can find accommodation in private centres normally provided by charities. There are measures aimed at providing autonomy in terms of housing. For example, around 51 % of the SPRAR projects in 2016 supported 10 housing insertions in a total of 2,600 apartments spread across the territory.

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<sup>103</sup> LD 140/2005, Article 6 (7).

<sup>104</sup> LD 142/2015, Article 5 (4).

<sup>105</sup> LD 142/2015, Article 10 (2).

In **Greece**, Law 4375/2016 provided a legal basis for the establishment of different accommodation facilities. As anticipated in the previous section, *asylum seekers* may stay in RICs, or in Temporary Reception Facilities for asylum seekers as well as Temporary Accommodation Facilities for persons under return procedures or whose return has been suspended. Notwithstanding these provisions, most temporary accommodation centres and emergency facilities operate without a prior Ministerial Decision and the requisite legal basis. Regarding *recognised refugees* there is not a national scheme for social housing tailored to the needs of the refugees, so the only alternatives are either the **temporary shelter facilities for the homeless or ad hoc solutions**. As of 22 August 2017, a total of 1,214 persons on the UNHCR-managed accommodation scheme were recognised as refugees and had to initiate the transition to some sort of alternative housing solution after the expiry of an extension period (currently for a maximum of six months). Several hundred more were estimated to be in other (e.g. 'camp-like') accommodation sites established by the Greek authorities.

In **Hungary**, accommodation facilities for asylum seekers in transit zones previously planned for 50 persons, were enlarged in spring 2017 to accommodate 250 persons. Here the asylum seekers are entitled to spend three months. There are separate sectors for single men, single women, unaccompanied minors over the age of 14 and families. Families are assigned private accommodation units. In case of health problems a health service can be requested. Social workers are available and charity organisations (civil and ecclesiastical) visit the transit zones regularly to provide additional assistance to asylum seekers. Activities for children are also organised. Upon a written request to the Asylum Office, a lawyer working with the Hungarian Helsinki Committee or state lawyer can be requested for free legal counselling. Recognised refugees have no public support for housing. Even if they are employed, due to their low wage level, **renting independent housing is very difficult**. As financial support was stopped in 2016, refugees can only rely on **civil and ecclesiastical organisations** to receive accommodation support.

An example of the support provided by NGOs is the BMSZKI run by the Budapest municipality, described in Box 3.4 below.

#### **Box 3.4: Budapest Methodological Centre of Social Policy and its Institutions (BMSZKI)**

The goal of the Budapest Methodological Centre (BMSZKI) is to support migrants/persons with refugee and subsidiary protection status in accessing independent housing, and providing other social help. Projects are mainly financed by the AMIF.

Every entitled person has the right to receive a financial support of 800,000 HUF (around EUR 2,600). To be entitled the person's income should not be higher than 1.5 times the minimum wage. Another criterion is the willingness to remain in Hungary. BMSZKI allocates the available resources between single persons and persons with family equally.

BMSZKI also provides social services to those entitled to the housing support. When the refugees occupy the apartment, the social worker carries out a needs assessment: help in obtaining documents, finding a school for children and enrolling them, looking for jobs, help in family reunification, etc. The social worker provides the needed services through a network of service providers (e.g. the health service, family support centre, employers, owners of apartments, interpreters). Four social workers are working in the project: two of them are employed full time by BMSZKI and two work part-time on a voluntary basis.

At the end of the period of supported housing, the district level family support and children's welfare services help to find accommodation. The integration services run by churches also have an important role in accommodation measures. For example, Baptist Aid runs five temporary accommodation units, three for single persons and two for families with a possibility to remain there for a maximum of two years.

**Source:** Country case study

### 3.5.7 Measures for children and unaccompanied minors

The EC's reform packages on the CEAS include measures to strengthen the guarantees for vulnerable persons, including children in general and, particularly, unaccompanied minors (UAMs) seeking international protection in Europe. The proposals aim to provide secure accommodation in suitable reception facilities, prompt and effective guardianship for unaccompanied children, as well as to ensure full compliance with the principles of the best interests of the child and of family unity.

As anticipated in Section 2, **all the three countries** reported a sharp increase in the number of UAMs either in 2015 (Hungary), or in 2016 (Italy and Greece), with consequent shortages of reception facilities tailored to their special needs. **All adopted new legislative/policy measures in recent years are to safeguard the rights and welfare of unaccompanied minors.** However, **their application is still at a very initial stage** and the number of UAMs disappearing from reception centres is causing growing concerns.

According to EUROSTAT data, in 2016 **Italy** with 6,020 applications, is the second highest Member State for number of asylum applications from UAMs after Germany<sup>106</sup>. In order to face the increase in UAMs, a special unit was set up at the Ministry of Interior. In addition, additional funding was provided to Municipalities and NGOs for the reception of UAMs, and the SPRAR system<sup>107</sup> provided an additional 2,039 places specifically for UAMs.

The legal framework was also improved in March 2017 with a law on the 'Provision of Protection Measures' reinforcing the protection of UAMs with the prohibition to reject unaccompanied and separate refugee children and to detain unaccompanied minors. The law also provides for a reduction of the time UAMs spend in first-line reception centres; the establishment of a structured and streamlined national reception system with minimum standards, as well as the promotion of guardianship for children, foster care and host families for children; and the harmonisation and improvement of age assessment in a child-sensitive manner.

The Italian legislation also provides that all minors, both Italian and foreigners, have the right and the obligation until the age of 16 to be enrolled into the national education system. Under LD 142/2015, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and children of asylum seekers have access to the same public schools as Italian citizens and are entitled to the same assistance and arrangements if they have special needs. They are automatically integrated in the mandatory National Educational System. No preparatory classes are foreseen at national level, however, as it is possible that some educational institutions organise additional courses for the integration of foreign children. Asylum-seeking children are also admitted to the Italian language courses. Available data show that in 2016 nearly 3,000 minors attended an Italian language course and 92.8 % of the SPRAR projects addressed to minors supported a total of 1,310 enrolled students. Extra schooling and educational activities involved 90 % of minors<sup>108</sup>. In Italy measures have also been taken to facilitate the participation of refugees in tertiary education, through the activation of protocols with universities and the provision of scholarships and tax/tuition exemptions.

<sup>106</sup> EUROSTAT News Release, 80/2017, 11 May 2017

<http://www.europeanmigrationlaw.eu/documents/Asylum%20applicants%20considered%20to%20be%20unaccompanied%20minors.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> European Commission (2016), Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?, European Migration Network, November 2016. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00\\_resettlement\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_resettlement_synthesis_report_final_en.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Box 3.5 provides an example of a voluntary training course carried out by the Bologna Municipality to support the integration of UAMs.

### Box 3.5: Volunteer guardian training course

In 2001, the Ministry of Home Affairs – Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration – signed an agreement with the National Association of the Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for implementing a '**national project on asylum**'. The protocol set up the first Italian public system for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees spread all over the country. Such reception measures were later institutionalised by Law no 189/2002, which called for the development of the SPRAR system and established the **central service** for information, promotion, consulting, monitoring and technical support, in charge of coordinating the whole system.

Within this context, Italian local municipalities can implement projects for an integrated reception. In particular, the local project of the town of Bologna in 2016 has welcomed 253 persons and organised in 2013 an innovative pilot experience with the aim of **training voluntary legal protectors for UAMs**.

The project intends to identify in civil society persons willing to acquire the necessary skills to exercise the delicate role of legal protector for unaccompanied minors who are asylum seekers.

**Source:** country case study

In **Greece**, new measures were taken for the reception of unaccompanied minors, ensuring that interviewers have the necessary knowledge of their special needs and carry out the interviews in a way which takes account of the child's age and level of maturity, as well as any psychological effects of past trauma. In addition, they established an obligation to appoint, at the earliest opportunity, a guardian to separated child asylum seekers<sup>109</sup>.

As for integration measures, children of third-country nationals can enrol in public schools with incomplete documentation if they (a) are granted refugee status; (b) come from regions where the situation is turbulent; (c) have filed an asylum claim; and (d) are third-country nationals residing in Greece, even if their legal residence has not been settled yet.

In order to facilitate access to the education system, registration procedures cannot take longer than three months. In addition, a Ministerial programme issued in August 2016 (*Reception/Preparatory Classes for the Education of Refugees*) provides for the establishment of *preparatory classes for all school-age children aged 4 to 15 in public schools, neighbouring camps or places of residence of asylum seekers*. Children living in open temporary facilities are to be enrolled in afternoon preparatory classes in neighbouring public schools identified by the Ministry in order to ensure a balanced distribution of children across selected schools and preparatory classes for migrants and refugees. The aim of this educational programme is to facilitate the integration of refugee and migrant children into the educational process in a way that should gradually allow them to join mainstream classes in Greek schools. It is estimated that in the school year 2016/17 2,643 children joined 145 afternoon classes in 111 public schools.

Children living in dispersed urban settings (e.g. relocation accommodation, squats, apartments, hotels, and reception centres for asylum seekers and unaccompanied

<sup>109</sup> European Commission (2016), Resettlement and Humanitarian Admission Programmes in Europe – what works?, European Migration Network, November 2016, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00\\_resettlement\\_synthesis\\_report\\_final\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/emn-studies-00_resettlement_synthesis_report_final_en.pdf).



children), may go to schools near their place of residence, and enrol in *morning reception classes* alongside Greek children. Reception classes have been in operation in some public school since 2010. According to the Ministry of Education, approximately 2,000 refugee and migrant children attended such morning reception classes in the school year 2016/17. Furthermore non-formal educational activities have also been taken place in the official refugee sites. These are mainly funded by the UNHCR and implemented by NGOs<sup>110</sup>.

In **Hungary too**, as reported by a 2015 EMN study<sup>111</sup>, in response to the intensifying migration flow of UAMs, **policy and legislative changes have been introduced in connection with the identification, reception, guardianship and age assessment of asylum-seeking and non-asylum-seeking UAMs**. However some **difficulties in the implementation** and some general issues remain.

Since May 2011, asylum-seeker UAMs and UAM beneficiaries of international protection have fallen within the scope of the general child protection regime (Child Protection Act) and therefore considered firstly as children and secondly as migrants. **A child protection facility**<sup>112</sup> has also been designated to host UAMs and they have to be appointed a guardian, who is legally responsible for the care, property management and legal representation of the minor.

In 2014, a legislative change was undertaken in the general child protection scheme, affecting UAMs as well. To prevent potential conflicts of interest, a **child protection guardian** has taken over the guardianship previously identified in the head of the child protection facility, for children without parental care. However, delays in the appointment of case guardians in charge of representing UAMs in the asylum procedure and the lack of the necessary legal expertise, resulted in lengthy asylum procedures: as a result it can occur that a confirmed asylum-seeking UAM turns 18 before a decision has been rendered, with the consequence of being excluded from aftercare arrangements.

Some **improvements** can be observed regarding the **reception arrangements** provided to **non-asylum-seeking UAMs** in 2013, they have been accommodated in a child protection facility run by the Catholic Church within the framework of a contract concluded with the Social and Child Protection Directorate. However, the limited capacity of the facility remains an issue.

With the modification of the Third Country Nationals' Act, the obligation to identify **UAMs as persons with special needs has been clarified**, enabling the authorities to recognise such foreigners at the initial stages of procedures and to provide adequate accommodation and assistance. **However, the efficient application of this provision by the authorities in practice remains challenging**, in particular for what concerns the age assessment, due to the lack of uniform age-assessment procedures that may lead to the detention of UAMs.

Furthermore, the **Hungarian child protection system is still not prepared to receive** these minors due to the lack of financial resources and capacity allocated in this regard. The limited availability of **interpretation** arrangements for UAMs especially in relation to

<sup>110</sup> Ministry of Education, *Q&A for access to education for refugee children*, 1 February 2017, available at: <http://bit.ly/2malzAv>, AIDA, Greece, <http://www.asylumineurope.org/news/28-03-2017/aida-2016-update-greece>.

[ESPN Flash Report 2017/67 - Greece - Integrating refugee and migrant children into the educational system in Greece.](#)

<sup>111</sup> Source: EMN, Policies, practices and data on unaccompanied minors in 2014 [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/unaccompanied-minors/13a\\_hungary\\_unaccompanied\\_minors\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/unaccompanied-minors/13a_hungary_unaccompanied_minors_en.pdf).

<sup>112</sup> Károlyi István Child Home located in Fót.

health care and legal representation remains an issue. Moreover, in the provision of reception and integration arrangements, the system relies too much on the contribution of NGOs and international organisation (UNHCR, IOM), which makes the sustainability of these projects uncertain and limited in the number of beneficiaries. As stressed in the EMN (2015) report, there is also a urgent need to introduce a regular **training curriculum** for every professional working with UAMs , in particular for those providing **psychological supervision**.

Finally, other issues are the growing number of UAMs **absconding** from Hungary within approximately 10 days of arrival and the identification of UAM victims of trafficking.

## 4. THE COSTS OF RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION, AND THE ROLE OF EU SUPPORT

### KEY FINDINGS

- **The three countries are more likely to incur high short-term fiscal costs, without being able to get the returns in the longer run** as they are transit countries, and most of the asylum seekers that arrive tend to move to other destinations. The long-term costs of integration are lower than in final destination countries, but also the possibility to get the long-term returns from investment is lower.
- According to IMF estimates, **both Italy (in 2016) and Greece (in 2015) showed a sharp increase in short-term costs** as a percentage of GDP to a level well above the EU average, while **costs estimates for Hungary (2015) remain below the EU average**.
- **The AMIF** is the main EU fund used in the first stage of the integration process of asylum seekers and refugee integration in all the three countries. In **Italy** its use is focused on strengthening the reception system of asylum seekers, with specific emphasis on the first reception actions. In **Hungary** AMIF supports access to education, language and training courses, activation and social inclusion measures for vulnerable persons, access to housing, etc. **Greece** registered delays in the implementation of AMIF-related actions.
- The **ESI Funds** and particularly the ESF and ERDF play an important role in supporting longer-term integration policies, covering education, employment, housing and non-discrimination policies. They are however, not specifically targeted to asylum seekers and refugees, but to all migrants and disadvantaged groups.
- **ESF** measures have been targeted to third-country nationals and migrants especially in **Italy and Greece**.

### 4.1 The estimated costs of reception and integration measures

The reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees is to be considered an investment, as its high costs in the short run may produce positive returns in the long run depending on the effectiveness of the implemented measures<sup>113</sup>.

**The existing evidence is increasingly acknowledging that migrants can make a positive contribution both to the destination and to countries of origin/return.** However, this critically depends on the capacity of the hosting countries/territories to design and implement successful measures ensuring the socio-economic integration of migrants and asylum seekers in the local community, as well as to their labour market conditions. These measures are also necessary to avoid the upsurge of negative attitudes among the native population and the radicalisation of immigrants.

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<sup>113</sup> According to available evidence from Australia, Canada and Sweden (OECD, 2015)<sup>113</sup>, the net direct fiscal impact of receiving refugees can be relatively high in the short term, but that it will also decrease rapidly over time as their labour market integration improves and they contribute to the production of goods and services and to tax revenues.



The effects on the host country's labour markets, however, build up only progressively over time, especially in the case of refugees, due to the time taken by asylum procedures and integration into the labour market.

According to a recent OECD report (OECD, 2015) monthly allowances provided to asylum seekers can range from about EUR 10 for single adults housed in reception centres to more than EUR 300 for those without accommodation. **The total cost for processing and accommodating asylum seekers can be in the range of EUR 8,000 to EUR 12,000 per application for the first year**, although the figure may be lower for fast-track processing.

To this amount, one should add the costs for measures to support the integration of asylum seekers/refugees into the labour market and society. **Economic costs** should also include estimates of those associated with the potential negative effects of mass arrivals on the tourism sector in border regions, often the main driver for local development in the case of Italy and Greece. **Social costs** are instead related to the cultural and social tensions resulting from the mass arrival of persons with a different cultural and religious background in relatively homogeneous contexts less accustomed to large and swift demographic and cultural changes.

**The considered countries are more likely to incur high short-term fiscal costs, avoiding the long-term costs** associated with integration measures. **However, this also implies that they are not able to get the returns of the sustained costs in the longer run.** Tentative estimates of the short-term fiscal costs of caring for the asylum seekers have been produced by the International Monetary Fund<sup>114</sup>. These estimates suggest that the costs are sizeable in Member States who record the highest inflow of asylum seekers and/or provide intensive care. Average budgetary expenses for asylum seekers in EU countries could increase by 0.05 % and 0.1 % of GDP in 2015 and 2016 respectively, compared to 2014. Among the three considered countries, **Italy** shows a very sharp estimated increase in short-term costs that in 2016 reached a level well above the EU average (0.24 % of GDP compared to an EU GDP weighted average of 0.19 %). **Greece** shows a spike in 2015, also higher than the EU average (0.17 % compared to 0.13 %), while the 2015 **Hungarian estimate is much lower** (0.1 %).

**There are no estimates for the long-term costs of integration in the three considered countries.** Due to the limited extent of integration programmes, the long-term fiscal costs of integration programmes are likely to be lower than those registered by other EU MSs such as the Nordic countries, Germany and Austria which are investing in extensive integration programmes. However, we expect that the long-term costs of integration are higher in **Italy** compared to **Greece and Hungary**, due to its higher investment in integration measures, as shown in Chapter 3. Another problem is that asylum seekers, if rejected, often do not return to the home country, but enter the informal labour market.

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<sup>114</sup> IMF (2016), The Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges, IMF Staff Discussion Note, January 2016, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/sdn/2016/sdn1602.pdf>.

## 4.2 The use of EU support and funding for migrant and refugee integration

### 4.2.1 Background: EU financial instruments supporting the integration of migrants and refugees

Targeted EU **financial instruments** have been created to support the integration of migrants and refugees.

The 2015 European Agenda of Migration foresees that funding for integration policies is to be provided mainly by the **AMIF**. Other available funds supporting disadvantaged groups, and particularly **the ESIF and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)**<sup>115</sup>, have instead to strengthen their focus on the refugee target.

**AMIF** is set to play a major role in the first stage of the integration process of third-country nationals after arrival, e.g. supporting the improvement of accommodation and reception services, as well as information measures and campaigns in non-EU countries, education and language training, assistance to vulnerable persons, information exchange and cooperation between EU Member States, and training for staff<sup>116</sup>.

Long-term integration is instead best promoted by the **ESIF (European Social Fund - ESF and European Regional Development Fund – ERDF** in particular), which can support effective integration policies covering education, employment, housing and non-discrimination policies. The **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)**, with an overall allocation of EUR 3.8 billion, may also include refugees and migrants among its beneficiaries.

However, only AMIF is targeted to migrants and asylum seekers, while the other funds include these target groups among other disadvantaged groups. Given the upsurge of arrivals and the concentration of costs for their reception and integration in a few MSs, the European Policy Centre (EPC) has suggested the creation of a **Common European Refugee Integration Fund**<sup>117</sup> to support the integration of refugees at the level of accommodation.

Between 2014 and 2020, **AMIF** will allocate EUR 3.1 billion to the reception and early integration of migrants and refugees. Member States have an obligation to allocate at least 20 % of the total basic allocation for their national programme to the specific objective on asylum, and at least 20 % to the specific objective on legal migration/integration as requested by the Parliament. Actions supported by AMIF include, for instance, improvement of accommodation and reception services for asylum seekers or information campaigns in non-EU countries for education and language training or staff training on relevant topics. Furthermore, AMIF foresees that 6 % of the overall budget can be granted by the Commission to countries under high migratory pressure<sup>118</sup>. Under the current Multi-annual Financial Framework 2014–2020, EUR 765 million has been earmarked by Member States for integration under their AMIF national programmes, a figure slightly lower than in the

<sup>115</sup> Additional programmes that can be used for social inclusion are the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme addressing issues relevant to migrants, such as discrimination, racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of intolerance; the research projects under Horizon 2020 in the area of 'societal challenges' also include issues such as migration, border controls and security. See the EP Briefing 'Labour Market Integration of Refugees: EU Funding Instruments', by Susanne Kraatz and Magdalena Dimova,

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/570005/IPOL\\_BRI%282016%29570005\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/570005/IPOL_BRI%282016%29570005_EN.pdf).

<sup>116</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/570005/IPOL\\_BRI%282016%29570005\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/570005/IPOL_BRI%282016%29570005_EN.pdf)

<sup>117</sup> 29 [http://www.epc.eu/pub\\_details.php?cat\\_id=4&pub\\_id=6035](http://www.epc.eu/pub_details.php?cat_id=4&pub_id=6035).

<sup>118</sup> As set out in Article 2(2) of the FEAD regulation.

previous period and inadequate to support the investments Member States have to make to address the growing inflows of asylum seekers.

Turning to the **ESIF**'s Common Provision Regulations, these cite migration as one of the major societal challenges which should be taken into consideration in the Member States' Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Operational Programmes (OPs). With the intensification of the refugee and migration crisis in 2015, the Commission called upon MSs to systematically use the possibility of re-programming existing OPs to better manage the changed circumstances. Among the ESIFs, the ESF and ERDF are particularly important to support the integration of migrants and refugees.

Within the ESI Funds, the **ESF** has a long-standing record of interventions supporting social inclusion through labour market related measures (e.g. training, language courses, counselling, coaching and vocational training). For the 2014–2020 period, the ESF role for social inclusion has been strengthened. However, given the ESF specificities, third-country nationals can receive limited support from the ESF before being granted access to the labour market. They may be involved in educational measures for children and vocational training when allowed by the national legislation. In the case of asylum seekers, eligibility for labour market integration measures occurs only when they are legally able to access the labour market, which depends on national rules. Vocational training and children's education are an exception, as asylum seekers may be eligible soon after arrival, depending on national conditions<sup>119</sup>. For the **ERDF**, the Commission<sup>120</sup> agreed to the possibility of amending existing programmes in order to better accommodate measures that support the integration of refugees with investments in social and health infrastructure developments (e.g. community centres and primary care health services); education and childcare (e.g. kindergartens and vocational schools); social housing; urban regeneration for areas in which migrants are concentrated; and business start-ups. The **EAFRD** (European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) provides medium-term assistance under the priority 'promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas', which amounts to EUR 14.4 billion including possibilities of investing in housing, health care, education and employment. The EAFRD can take into account the specific needs of disadvantaged groups, such as refugees, and be used for instance for vocational training and skills acquisition initiatives in the different sectors of activities in rural areas. Similarly, the **EMFF** (European Maritime and Fishery Fund) can provide professional training, start-up support and reception of asylum seekers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector.

#### 4.2.2 The use of AMIF in the selected countries

As anticipated in the background section, **AMIF** is the main EU fund set to play a major role in the first stage of the integration process of asylum seekers and refugee integration.

Table 4.1 reports the updated figures for AMIF allocations in the three considered countries together with AMIF emergency assistance and the amount of payments received as of October 2017. As shown in the table, **Greece and Italy** hold a similar share of financial allocations (9.5 % and 11.2 % respectively), while **Hungary** accounts for 1 % of the total budget, due to the drop in arrivals after 2015. Italy and Greece also concentrated a substantial share of emergency funding (29.4 % and 21 % respectively) in order to deal with the massive increase in disembarkations.

<sup>119</sup> European Commission (2015) Support to asylum seekers under the European Social Fund and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived, Background Note. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=14499&langId=en>.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

**Table 4.1: AMIF long-term (allocation 2014–2020) and emergency funding and payments in Greece, Hungary and Italy, (absolute values and percentages), 2017 update**

	Long-term Funding 2014–2020: AMIF Allocation		Emergency Funding (Awarded): AMIF Emergency Assistance		Payments Long-term Funding 2014–2020 + Emergency Funding: AMIF	
	Absolute value (EUR)	% over total EU AMIF budget	Absolute value (EUR)	% over total EU AMIF budget	Absolute value (EUR)	% over total EU* AMIF payments
Greece	322 844 472	9.5 %	125 842 706	29.4 %	161 774 222	12.0 %
Hungary	34 455 028	1.0 %	5 251 687	1.2 %	9 259 958	0.7 %
Italy	381 488 100	11.2 %	89 688 319	21.0 %	140 623 592	10.4 %
EU*	3 401 383 495	100.0 %	427 465 708	100.0 %	1 348 688 450	100.0 %

(\*) The EU total does not include UNHCR, EASO, EUROPOL and IOM's allocation and payments (see updated ANNEX 8 (18.10.2017) of COM(2015) 510).

**Source:** Updated ANNEX 8 (18.10.2017) of COM(2015) 510. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/financial\\_support\\_to\\_mss\\_under\\_amif\\_and\\_isf\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/press-material/financial_support_to_mss_under_amif_and_isf_en.pdf)

The current national plan for **AMIF** in **Italy**<sup>121</sup> focuses on strengthening the reception system of asylum seekers, with specific emphasis on the first reception actions. A second goal is to promote measures for autonomy, empowerment and socio-economic inclusion of migrants, as well as to create structures dedicated to the second reception phase and integration. At the moment, no monitoring and/or evaluation reports are available.

**FEAD** is another important funding source in Italy to provide food and basic material assistance to the most deprived, including asylum seekers and refugees. The programme dedicates about 60 % of its resources to food aid, delivered through an extensive network of about 11,000 local NGOs. However, it also aims to provide a strategic contribution to social inclusion, by providing school materials for children from deprived families, school meals at schools in deprived neighbourhoods, and basic material assistance for homeless people and deprived families. At the moment, no information is available on the nature of the final beneficiaries of the food distribution supported by the FEAD funds. A research on the nature of the final beneficiaries was awarded in July 2017.

In **Greece** the National Strategy on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals has only been partially implemented so far, mainly due to budgetary constraints and delays in the implementation of **AMIF**- (national envelope) related actions. Part of AMIF allocations go to international organisations such as UNHCR and NGOs as emergency funding. Greece received EUR 259.4 million under AMIF to increase its reception capacity to 2,500 places by the end of 2015, to improve the quality and speed of the asylum decision-making process, and to implement a comprehensive policy on the integration of immigrants. However, Greece could not absorb the biggest part of the funding. For example, only EUR 1.9 million was absorbed from the EU-AMIF funding of EUR 86.5 million, while the absorption of the Internal Security Fund (ISF) was much higher.

In **Hungary** too, the main source to support the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees is **AMIF**. Additional support to assist recognised refugees to integrate

<sup>121</sup> European Commission (2015), EU funding for migration and security: how it works, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/publications/eu-funding-for-migration-and-security-how-it-works\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/e-library/multimedia/publications/eu-funding-for-migration-and-security-how-it-works_en).

into the labour market and society came from charity and NGO (civil, ecclesiastical, international) organisations. The projects helping reception are mostly run by the Asylum and Migration Office and its institutions; the projects promoting integration are run only by civil organisations.

The Hungarian Migration Strategy and the seven-year strategy developed for the AMIF are based on two funds run by the Ministry of Interior, which have to manage the AMIF resources: they are the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the ISF<sup>122</sup>. According to the revised National Programme of Hungary, approved by the Commission on 14 December 2015 (C (2015) 9397 final), Hungary can spend around EUR 31.8 million within the framework of the AMIF and an additional amount of around EUR 7.8 million for the relocation of applicants for international protection from Greece and Italy would be available<sup>123</sup>. Yet before this, in February 2015 the Commission transferred an extraordinary support – EUR 1.2 million – from AMIF to increase the capacity to meet the growing number of asylum seekers in Hungary.

The AMIF 2014–2020 gave the possibility to apply for funds to finance projects helping ‘first steps’ realised by authorities running transit zones and asylum centres, and promoting the integration process.

#### 4.2.3 The role and use of ESI Funds in the selected countries

The **ESI Funds** (and particularly the ESF and ERDF) can play an important role in supporting integration policies covering education, employment, housing and non-discrimination policies. These funds are managed by MSs and/or regional authorities, which decide how to allocate resources. With the intensification of the refugee and migration crisis in 2015, the Commission called upon MSs to use the possibility of re-programming existing OPs to address the changed circumstances. Concerning the ERDF, the Commission<sup>124</sup> agreed on the possibility to amend existing programmes in order to better accommodate measures that support the integration of refugees. Both ESF and ERDF under Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10 can support measures targeted to vulnerable groups, including migrants, refugees and third-country nationals. Available comparative data on beneficiaries do not distinguish refugees from migrants, and thus it is not possible to assess whether the ESF and ERDF OPs have supported measures specifically targeted to refugees.

Table 4.2 reports ESF and ERDF 2014–2020 programmes providing support to migrants and refugees in the three countries, and Table 4.3 the number of beneficiaries of **ESF measures** targeted to migrants and individuals with a foreign background in 2015, according to the data available in the Cohesion database. Unfortunately, this source does not distinguish refugees from other migrants.

While **Italy and Greece** show a widespread implementation of measures for the integration of migrants and third-country nationals, **Hungary** shows only a few measures.

<sup>122</sup> See: Government Decree 1691/2013. (X. 2.) on accepting a seven-year strategy connected to Internal Security Fund and the Government Decree 1698/2013. (X. 4.) on accepting a seven-year strategy connected to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

<sup>123</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regdoc/rep/3/2015/EN/C-2015-9397-F1-EN-MAIN-PART-1.PDF>.

<sup>124</sup> Statement of 23 September 2015, the Commissioner Corina Cretu. Two days later, the Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs hosted a meeting with the Managing Authorities of the ESF to discuss revisions of their programmes and synergies between ESF, AMIF and FEAD.

**Table 4.2: ESF and ERDF 2014–2020 operational programmes including measures targeted to migrants and refugees in Greece, Hungary and Italy**

<b>Greece</b>	<p>At the end of 2015, interventions targeted to migrants, foreigners and minorities had been implemented under all the 13 ESF and ERDF regional programmes, as well as under human resources development education and lifelong learning, covering Thematic Objectives 8, 9 and 10.</p> <p>All the <u>13 regional programmes</u> include ERDF support for building/refurbishment of open reception centres for migrants. Under the regional programmes, there is no earmarked amount for migrants; thus, we cannot provide specific amounts at this stage (information provided by the European Commission).</p>
<b>Italy</b>	<p>At the end of 2015, interventions targeted to migrants, foreigners and minorities had been implemented under 12 ESF regional programmes and under the National Operative Programmes social inclusion, education, legality, metropolitan cities and systems for active employment policies. All the ESF thematic objectives had been covered.</p> <p>ERDF can co-finance measures in favour of legal immigrants and asylum seekers in synergy with the AMIF. Support from the ERDF should always be accompanied by other social integration measures, funded by the ESF.</p> <p>The Regional <u>OP in Puglia</u> supports the rehabilitation of social infrastructures in favour of marginalised communities including, inter alia, immigrants. The overall allocation is EUR 88.5 million. These actions will be complemented by the ESF that will support active inclusion measures.</p> <p>The Regional <u>OP in Calabria</u> supports the rehabilitation of social housing in favour of marginalised communities, including immigrants and asylum seekers (total allocation: EUR 11 million). The ERDF will also support the rehabilitation of social infrastructures in favour of marginalised communities including immigrants (total allocation EUR 64.7 million). This action includes the creation and rehabilitation of first aid and sanitary services for specific target groups including asylum seekers and the rehabilitation of confiscated assets that can be used, inter alia, as centres for the accommodation of legal immigrants.</p> <p>The Regional <u>ESF OP in Sardinia</u> is financing with EURO 2 million eight projects for start-ups specifically addressed to non-EU immigrants, in particular holders and applicants for international protection (Diamant project).</p> <p>Four other Regional OPs support the rehabilitation of social housing targeting, in general, deprived communities, including immigrants. The overall allocation for this action is around EUR 25 million in <u>Lombardia</u>, around EUR 14.5 million in <u>Veneto</u>, around EUR 10.2 million in <u>Sardegna</u> and around EUR 7 million in <u>Basilicata</u>. (information provided by the European Commission)</p> <p>The <u>National Programme Legalità</u> co-founded by the ESF and the ERDF, on the promotion of legality in the less developed regions, includes specific actions in favour of legal immigrants and/or asylum seekers, while in other programmes these target groups are mentioned as possible beneficiaries of measures targeting marginalised groups. It will allocate around EUR 41 million for the restructuring and rehabilitation of assets confiscated from the Mafia, with a view to using them primarily as centres for the accommodation of legal immigrants, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international and humanitarian assistance. In these centres, regular immigrants will be accompanied with social and working inclusion support measures to be funded by the ESF.</p> <p>The National OP <u>Metropolitan areas</u> will support the physical regeneration of social housing in favour of marginalised communities, including legal immigrants and asylum seekers, provided they are regularly registered in the lists for the allocation of social housing. The action of the ERDF will be part of integrated social inclusion measures supported together with the ESF in order to promote active inclusion of the marginalised groups. The overall allocation is around EUR 88 million.</p> <p>The <u>National OP Governance and System actions (ESF)</u> is financing the project RELAR that implements active policy pathways through the realisation of traineeships addressed to non-EU immigrants, in particular holders and applicants for international protection, present in the Convergence Regions of Campania, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. For this project a total of EUR 2.2 million was programmed.</p>
<b>Hungary</b>	<p>Interventions for migrants, foreigners and minorities had been foreseen under the TO9 in the human resource development operational programme. The RISZTOP – operational programme supporting the persons in need and EFOP – operational programme developing human resources.</p>

**Source:** Ionescu, S. (2016), Cohesion Policy support for migrants and refugees, <https://epthinktank.eu/2016/05/06/cohesion-policy-support-for-migrants-and-refugees/> and country experts



This difference is also reflected in the data on the beneficiaries of ESF measures: migrants and people with a foreign background have been involved in ESF measures especially in **Italy**, that with 28,574 beneficiaries ranks 6th among the Member States with the highest number of migrants and foreigners involved in ESF measures, after France, Germany, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Spain. **Greece** also shows a relatively high share of beneficiaries with a foreign background, while **Hungary** did not have migrants and foreigners registered as participants in ESF measures by the end of 2015.

**Table 4.3: Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma) participating in ESF measures in EU countries.**

	Migrants, participants with a foreign background, minorities (including marginalised communities such as the Roma). Implemented values [Participants] (2015)	
	Obs.	%
AT	0	0.00 %
<b>HU</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.00 %</b>
DK	14	0.00 %
LT	110	0.03 %
CZ	299	0.08 %
PL	589	0.15 %
EE	560	0.15 %
SE	2 326	0.61 %
FI	1 690	0.44 %
BG	1 930	0.51 %
LV	7 827	2.05 %
<b>EL</b>	<b>7 777</b>	<b>2.03 %</b>
IE	14 433	3.78 %
<b>IT</b>	<b>28 574</b>	<b>7.48 %</b>
ES	31 164	8.15 %
BE	35 558	9.30 %
NL	38 395	10.05 %
DE	72 451	18.96 %
FR	138 473	36.23 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>382 170</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

**Source:** Open Cohesion Data, <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/>, Update September 2017



## 5. EVOLUTION OF THE POLITICAL CLIMATE/DISOURSE

### KEY FINDINGS

- In all the three countries, the topic of refugees is **highly prominent in media campaigns and in the political debate, with a rise of negative public attitudes** towards the reception of asylum seekers, and migrants more in general, fuelled by anti-immigration political parties. The share of respondents with negative feelings towards immigration from third countries is higher than the EU28 average, ranging from 81 % in **Hungary**, to 70 % in **Greece** and 69 % in **Italy**.
- The deterioration in public attitudes and political opinion emerged from the present analysis poses the **risk of very negative long-run consequences** in terms of social cohesion and political climate.
- These countries also share a **growing public opinion favouring a common European policy on migration**, which is often reflected in the perception of being 'left alone' in handling the refugee crisis.
- Differences however emerge in the content of the **media campaigns and of the political debate** as well as in the role played by **anti-immigrant parties** in the government (e.g. Hungary).
- In **Greece**, the concentration of refugees and migrants on the islands is increasing tensions there. As a result, the 77 % of Greek respondents are in favour of a common European policy on migration.
- In **Hungary**, **the proportion of Hungarians against immigrants and foreigners has increased since 2010**. Notwithstanding these attitudes, a part of **civil society** is still active in supporting a more open attitude towards migrants and played a major role in handling and mitigating the migration crisis in 2015.
- In **Italy**, **a divisive public and political debate is growing** especially in view of the incoming political elections (due in the spring of 2018). This debate is also affecting the sea rescue activities of humanitarian and non-governmental organisations. According to Eurobarometer, the share of respondents with negative feelings towards immigration from outside the EU has increased by 4 p.p. during 2016.

In all the three countries the topic of refugees is **highly prominent in media campaigns and in the political debate**.

As shown in Table 5.1, in the three countries the unprecedented dimension of the increase in arrivals in recent years, is providing **grounds for the rise of negative public attitudes towards the reception of asylum seekers, and migrants more in general**. This is notwithstanding the evidence provided by experts of the immigrants' potential contribution to the socio-economic and demographic conditions of receiving countries and territories.

**Table 5.1: Public opinion and political discourse on migrants**

	Public opinion	Political debate and policy strategies
<b>Italy</b>	<p>The attitude of Italians towards immigrants is becoming less and less tolerant due to the labour market situation and the recent terrorist attacks.</p> <p>Public opinion believes that Italy has been left alone in handling the refugee crisis.</p>	<p>Immigrants are at the core of the political debate especially in view of the incoming political elections (due in the spring of 2018).</p> <p>A divisive debate is also growing within the centre-left political parties supporting the current government.</p> <p>A code of conduct for NGOs operating in Italian waters was issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2017.</p> <p>Bilateral statements with Libya were signed to reduce the number of departures from Libyan harbours.</p>
<b>Greece</b>	<p>Following the EU–Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016, the general welcoming attitude began to change.</p> <p>The concentration of refugees and migrants on the islands is increasing tensions.</p>	<p>Political leaders and other influential actors are suggesting that the country does not bear the same legal obligations as for refugees.</p>
<b>Hungary</b>	<p>Since the crisis of the summer/early autumn 2015, asylum seekers and refugees became a daily feature in news and increasingly treated as a security threat issue, suggesting the need to maintain an emergency situation.</p> <p>Only politically independent and left-wing media are dealing with the humanitarian side of the refugee crisis.</p> <p>However, a part of civil society is supporting a more open attitude towards migrants, playing a major role in handling and mitigating the migration crisis as well as providing support to asylum seekers and recognised refugees.</p>	<p>In May 2015 the government launched a National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism.</p> <p>The referendum of 2 October 2016 on migrant quotas registered a victory of 'no quotas'.</p> <p>The ruling party stands for the closing of borders and the rejection of the EU relocation and resettlement policy.</p>

**Source:** Country case studies

As shown in Table 5.2, reporting the results of a 2016 Eurobarometer Survey on immigration, in all the three considered countries the share of respondents with negative feelings towards immigration from third countries is much higher than the EU28 average, ranging from 81 % in **Hungary**, to 70 % in **Greece**, and 69 % in **Italy**.

In all the three countries, the **share of respondents in favour for a common European policy on migration increased**. The increase is particularly high in Hungary and Greece.

In **Italy** the share of respondents with negative feelings towards immigration increased to 51 % in 2016 and 49 % were against refugees' support. In **Hungary** a large majority was already presenting negative attitudes towards foreigners even before the 2015 mass arrivals, and attitudes further worsened in 2016.

**Table 5.2: Public opinion on immigration (2016)**

Country	Immigration first or second most important issue		Negative feeling towards immigration from outside the EU		Against refugees' support		In favour for a common European policy on migration	
	Percentage of respondents	Diff. to spring 2016	Percentage of respondents	Diff. to spring 2016	Percentage of respondents	Diff. to spring 2016	Percentage of respondents	Diff. to spring 2016
EU	45 %	-3	56 %	-2	28 %	-2	69 %	+2
Italy	49 %	+5	69 %	+4	49 %	+1	68 %	+1
Greece	41 %	+1	70 %	-3	25 %	-6	77 %	+3
Hungary	65 %	-2	81 %	-2	67 %	-1	54 %	+5

Source: Eurobarometer Survey 86 Autumn 2016, Annex <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2137>; Eurobarometer Survey 85 Spring 2016

### 5.1 Greece: growing difficulties in the management of refugees

In **Greece** too, persons of foreign origin *xenoi* increasingly monopolise discussions in the media in a negative perspective. Following the EU–Turkey Statement on 18 March 2016, the general welcoming attitude began to change. Terms such as ‘migration’ and ‘migrants’ instead of ‘refugees’ reappeared in the terminology used by political leaders and other influential actors, thus suggesting that the country does not bear the same legal obligations as for refugees.

As shown in Table 5.2, according to the Eurobarometer survey<sup>125</sup> 41 % of Greek respondents believe that immigration is among the first two political issues, and 77 % asked for a common European policy on migration.

The concentration of refugees and migrants on the islands is increasing tensions there, as thousands of asylum seekers started to realise that they were ‘trapped’, while local communities started to note the difficulties in the management of the situation and its impact on daily life and tourism. The **media report on a number of attacks** against small groups of refugees on the islands, the ill treatment of unaccompanied minors in places of detention, as well as attacks against humanitarian staff and accommodation sites<sup>126</sup>.

### 5.2 Hungary: high and growing negative attitudes towards foreigners

In **Hungary** since the crisis of the summer/early autumn 2015, asylum seekers and refugees became an everyday topic in news media, particularly in the public media (public service TV channel M1) which treat this topic mainly as a security threat issue, suggesting the need to maintain an emergency situation. Only politically independent and left-wing media also deal with the *humanitarian side* of the refugee crisis. An example is the **National Consultation on Immigration and Terrorism** launched by the government in May 2015. The questionnaire sent by post to the population contained questions linking migration with terrorism and the resources spent on migrants with reduced welfare spending for Hungarians.

As the public opinion is mostly formed by public media (television) and the government campaigns, the **proportion of Hungarians against immigrants and foreigners increased from 29 % in 2010 to 58 % at the end of 2016**, while the proportion of

<sup>125</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 86, Autumn 2016. Annex.

<sup>126</sup> RACIST VIOLENCE RECORDING NETWORK 2016 ANNUAL REPORT, [http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report\\_2016eng.pdf](http://rvrn.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Report_2016eng.pdf).

those open to foreigners dropped from 12 % in 2010 to a mere 1 % in 2016<sup>127</sup>. A large number of opinion polls also show a majority of Hungarians perceiving migrants as a threat to Hungary and asking that they should not be allowed to enter the country.

In 2016 a media campaign introduced the **referendum of 2 October 2016** on whether the EU should have the right to settle migrants in Hungary without the consent of Parliament. The overwhelming majority of voters – 3,233,000 persons (98.34 %) voted ‘no’ and only 1.6 % voted in favour of quotas<sup>128</sup>. The referendum results reflect the position of most political parties, including the **ruling party (FIDESZ – Hungarian Civic Alliance) which stands for the closing of borders** and the rejection of the EU relocation and resettlement policy.

Notwithstanding these attitudes, a **part of civil society is still active** in supporting a more open attitude towards migrants and played a major role in handling and mitigating the migration crisis in 2015 through NGOs (civil and ecclesiastical). In August and September 2015 when increasing numbers of refugees gathered at Budapest Keleti train station and trains to Austria were suspended, it was thanks to volunteers that the humanitarian crisis was handled. Around 3 % of the population took part in the aid work and 7 % claimed to have an acquaintance who had participated (Tárki (2016, p. 101). Civil and ecclesiastical organisations are also the main providers of support to asylum seekers in the transit zones and recognised refugees in reception centres.

### 5.3 Italy: a divisive political and public debate

The climate/discourse around migration in **Italy** has been deteriorating since 2014, when the steadily increase of mass arrivals has made this a hot topic in the media and in political discourse. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey<sup>129</sup>, 49 % of Italians believe that immigration is the main political issue facing the European Union, well above terrorism (by 8 % of Italians) and the economic situation (24 %).

The attitude of Italians towards immigrants is becoming less and less tolerant. Mistrust and, in some cases, hostility is increasing. According to a recent national survey<sup>130</sup> the share of Italians who agree with ‘accepting only a pre-defined quota and not more’ rapidly increased from 46.% in September 2016 to 50 % in January 2017, while the ‘open’ position ‘we need to host everybody’ decreased from 26 % in September 2016 to 19 % in January 2017.

Behind these changing attitudes is also the difficult Italian labour market situation and the belief that immigrants can ‘steal jobs’ from Italians. However, the major cause is the reaction to the recent terrorist episodes carried out by immigrants of Islamic culture in Europe. The emotional impact on the population of these events has been enormous and affected the collective perception of immigrants in general, especially among older people and the less educated. An interesting initiative is the work of the Association Carta di Roma, founded in 2011 with the goal of implementing the Journalist’s Code of Conduct<sup>131</sup> on immigration and to become a stable reference point for those who work with media and

<sup>127</sup> Tárki Omnibusz (1992–2016).

<sup>128</sup> See articles: Viktor Orbán explains what the October 2nd referendum was really about, OCTOBER 18, 2016, <http://budapestbeacon.com/politics/viktor-orban-explains-what-the-october-2nd-referendum-was-really-about/41157>.

<sup>129</sup> Standard Eurobarometer 86, Autumn 2016. Annex.

<sup>130</sup> Eumetra Monterosa, January 2017.

<sup>131</sup> The Code was signed by the National Council of Journalists (CNOG) and the National Federation of the Italian Press (FNSI) in June 2008.

minorities issues (journalists, media operators, as well as various institutions, associations and activists, etc.).

For all these reasons, the issue is at the core of the political debate especially in view of the incoming political elections (due in the spring of 2018) and it is likely to affect their results. The spike in migration has indeed inflamed one of the most divisive debates in Italian politics, and worsened the attitudes towards the European Union. **Public opinion believes that Italy has been left alone in handling the refugee crisis**, with border countries sealing their borders. Right-wing parties have latched on to the climbing number of asylum seekers as a vote-getter arguing that the centre-left government is incapable of stanching the flow of migrants. This debate is also affecting the sea rescue activities of humanitarian and non-governmental organisations

A **divisive debate** is also growing within the centre-left political parties supporting the current government. The Italian government is increasingly divided over the country's immigration policies and the war against human smugglers. The latest point of divide has been the code of conduct for NGOs operating in Italian waters issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and, more recently, the statements with Libya to reduce the number of departures from their harbours. Both decisions have also been stirring controversy among politicians and citizens supporting the government coalition and NGOs.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### KEY FINDINGS

- **Being arrival and transit countries** rather than destination countries, the three countries' main efforts have been **focused on reception rather than integration measures**. The approach adopted is however very different. While **Italy and Greece** are struggling with the management of huge numbers of arrivals at their harbours without closing their frontiers and trying to implement integration measures (particularly in Italy), **Hungary** has shifted towards a rather restrictive approach, closing its borders on the Balkan route.
- **Access to integration measures** depends on the status of asylum seekers. In all the three countries, **recognised refugees and beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to labour market and social support under the same terms as natives**, including access to employment services, language and professional training, traineeships and unemployment benefits. Apart from some pilot projects, there are however **no targeted labour market measures** (e.g. mentoring, hiring subsidies for employers, career support, etc.), and the implemented interventions reflect the overall weaknesses of employment policies and labour market conditions in these countries.
- **Greece and especially Italy** have also implemented measures to improve the **integration of asylum seekers since the early stages of the reception process**. **Hungary**, instead, drastically reduced public support, both in terms of financial aid and public services.
- All countries show a growing role of **municipalities and local communities, and NGOs** in the reception and integration of migrants and asylum seekers.
- **In addition to financial costs**, largely covered with EU funding, the unprecedented and massive concentration of arrivals has ignited **anti-immigrant attitudes in the public opinion of these countries**, fomented by right-wing and anti-Europe movements. This deterioration in public attitudes is likely to have very negative long-run consequences in terms of these countries' social cohesion and political climate.
- These countries also share a **growing perception in the public opinion of being left alone** in handling the refugee crisis.
- The main **policy challenges** relate to i) the need to reduce the pressure on border areas through a fairer redistribution of asylum seekers and refugees among the EU28 MSs; ii) how to support these countries in improving their capacity to implement effective reception and integration measures and to reduce territorial disparities; iii) how to contrast anti-immigration attitudes and involve local communities and the private sector in supporting the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

### 6.1 Main findings and lessons learned

The three countries show **common difficulties** in addressing the unprecedented and highly fluctuating inflows of asylum seekers at their borders.

All three had to **rapidly set up a reception and integration system from scratch**, as none of them had a previous consolidated experience in dealing with asylum seekers and refugees.

**Being arrival and transit countries rather than destination countries, their main efforts have been focused on reception rather than integration measures.** They have to manage an emergency situation in a context characterised by difficult socio-economic conditions and weak institutional and administrative capacity, as well as uncertainty regarding the final destination of asylum seekers. These developments and the difficult economic conditions resulting from the crisis, have moved to the background those issues relating to integration measures which are instead at the forefront of the policy debate in destination countries. This has also meant **incurring high short-term economic and social costs, which are not likely to produce returns in the longer run**, as most of the asylum seekers are not going to remain in these countries once their status is recognised. Within this framework, the labour market and social integration of the (few) recognised refugees is usually dealt with strategies addressing migrants and vulnerable groups in general, without specific measures.

Besides the difficulty of covering rising financial costs in a period of tight public budget constraints, these countries are dealing with the growing **anti-immigrant attitudes in public opinion**, ignited by the unprecedented and massive concentration of arrivals in border territories and fomented by right-wing and anti-Europe movements. This deterioration in public attitudes is likely to have very negative long-run consequences in terms of these countries' social cohesion and political climate.

In the three considered countries, the **main challenges thus mainly regard asylum seekers** and the setting up of reception centres and services; the speeding up of reception and asylum recognition procedures; and the implementation of early-integration measures, in order to improve their integration opportunities, avoid their exploitation in the underground economy, and reduce tensions with local communities.

The capacity to implement effective measures requires well-trained staff able to address the different needs of arriving people, and particularly the most disadvantaged, e.g. women, children, victims of violence and those with health problems. In the case of unaccompanied minors, a specific issue is how to avoid their disappearing from reception centres. As for adult asylum seekers, an issue is how to involve them in training, traineeships and socially useful work during the time needed for their application to be completed. In this respect, the Italian experience of **early-integration measures in the SPRAR system** appears to be a good practice, although still limited.

As for **recognised refugees** settling in the country, the main challenges faced by the considered countries is supporting their **accommodation and labour market integration**, in a context characterised by difficult labour market conditions and housing shortages, as well as weak intervention capacity.

Another issue is the **increased role of municipalities and local communities** in the reception and integration of migrants and asylum seekers (in **Italy and Greece**), and of **NGOs** in the management of the reception and integration services (particularly in **Hungary**). Small islands, municipalities and cities in border regions face dramatic challenges in providing first aid and reception services to large inflows of migrants. In larger cities, instead, concerns are mainly related to housing, access to schools, employment and ethnic segregation. In addition, cities have to deal with the challenges related to the increasing number of undocumented migrants, as they often remain in cities when their asylum applications are rejected.



Notwithstanding these common issues, the **ways these three countries have faced the refugee crisis have been highly diversified**, in part due to the different geographical position and cultural/political contexts.

While **Italy and Greece** are struggling with the management of huge numbers of arrivals at their harbours without closing their frontiers, Hungary has shifted towards a rather restrictive approach, closing its borders on the Balkan route.

In **Italy**, the increased role of the SPRAR system and of municipalities in reception and integration services is showing both positive and negative aspects. On the one hand, it shows the positive effects of an increased involvement of local authorities in the implementation of reception and integration policies all over the Italian territory; on the other hand, however, it increases the level of conflict between the national government and the municipalities, especially where certain political parties are fuelling negative and anti-immigrant attitudes. The high number of inflows also created problems in the first-line reception centres that were not prepared to address this emergency. This contributed to creating differences in the way hospitality and reception took place from one centre to another. Notwithstanding this situation, the SPRAR system has been able to develop very interesting practices even if for a small number of people in comparison to the total number disembarking.

**In Greece**, the lack of administrative capacity is the main problem, aggravated by the lack of dialogue between the Greek authorities and civil society organisations with a consolidated experience in the management of reception and integration measures. Although legislation appears rather advanced, the practical implementation of reception and integration measures is lacking.

The **Hungarian case** shows the importance of having well-established, motivated and cooperating NGOs able to support and integrate migrants and asylum seekers, also in the absence of government intervention. It also shows how governments attitudes towards immigration may influence public opinion through the media.

## 6.2 Policy implications

The analysis has underlined a number of policy issues that have to be tackled both at the EU and national level.

A first issue deals with the **distribution of refugees at different territorial levels and the need for a greater cooperation among EU countries**. Countries like Italy and Greece, due to their geographical position and territorial features, have much greater difficulties in controlling their borders compared to Nordic and Continental European countries. Refugees are mainly transiting through these areas towards more attractive places in Central and Northern Europe. However, the barriers imposed on entry by a number of EU countries have increased the number of stranded migrants in the border countries and regions. The emergency and territorial impact of the refugee crisis is thus highly differentiated across EU countries and territories.

A second issue relates to the **multi-level and multi-actor governance of reception and integration systems within countries**. Reception and integration policies involve a wide number of aspects that ask for the activation and coordination of different government levels, sectors and stakeholders.

It is usually **local governments and stakeholders** (particularly NGOs) that are directly involved in the provision of shelter, food, health care, education, as well as in skills assessment and labour market integration measures to enable asylum seekers and other arriving migrants to become self-supporting.

An effective governance system has to take into account the **challenges faced by local authorities and communities, and provide support both financially and in terms of capacity building**, besides monitoring the measures implemented. In addition, housing availability and labour market conditions should be considered in decisions relating to the territorial distribution of refugees and asylum seekers.

The experience of the three considered countries shows that *small islands and municipalities in border and transit regions* often have difficulties in providing first aid, reception services and registration procedures for unexpected large inflows of migrants with different needs. These areas are more likely to support the economic and social burden of the refugees crisis, without being able to gain the potential benefits, given that the majority of migrants and refugees will not settle in these areas. Economic costs relate not only to the costs of service provision, but also to the negative effects for the tourism sector, often the main driver for local development, particularly in southern Italy and the Greek islands. Social costs are instead due to the cultural and social tensions resulting from the mass arrival of persons with a different cultural and religious background in relatively homogeneous contexts less accustomed to large and swift demographic and cultural changes.

*Final destination cities and regions* have instead to support the social and labour market integration of migrants and refugees that intend to stay in the area. Here concerns relate to housing, access to schools, employment and ethnic segregation. These areas may however benefit from settled migrants that may contribute to reducing demographic imbalances and skills mismatches, and support the local economy.

As for **reception and integration policies**, the empirical evidence underlines the importance of implementing social, educational, health care and language training services already provided to asylum seekers in the reception phase. Early intervention also means providing easier and quicker access to the labour market through vocational training and traineeships opportunities during the asylum process. As for recognised refugees, targeted measures for their labour market integration need to be implemented, such as hiring incentives for employers, mentoring, targeted employment services, support to self-employment. These measures not only support the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees in receiving countries, but may also contribute to reduce negative attitudes in local communities.

The dramatic increase of **anti-migrant attitudes** in the public opinion is indeed a challenge that needs to be rapidly addressed. Among the migrants, women, children (and particularly unaccompanied minors), persons with disabilities and all those with distinctly different racial, ethnic and/or cultural backgrounds are particularly at risk of abuse, hostility and violence.

In order to address these policy challenges the CEAS has to be revised with attention to the aspects listed below.

#### **a) A fairer distribution of asylum seekers across Member States**

How to share the burden of reception and to promote a fairer distribution of asylum seekers across MSs is a crucial issue for the three considered countries. Two forms of sharing could be envisaged: either distribute asylum seekers and refugees between Member States (the so-called physical burden sharing), or share resources, either through 'financial burden sharing', (e.g. European funding) or by pooling administrative resources (e.g. joint processing of asylum claims, or joint removals).

This issue is strictly linked to the debate over the role of EU institutions in immigration and asylum policy, a highly contested policy area showing considerable divergences between Member States and EU institutions.

#### **b) A stronger EU role in migration policy**

The Mediterranean crisis and the experience of Italy, Greece and Hungary call for a stronger role of EU institutions in migration policy, in order to achieve a common approach, with a greater coordination and solidarity among MSs, and to avoid each MSs taking its own decision at the expense of other countries.

A stronger role of EU institutions is also necessary to support the design of a **European asylum and migration system** that takes sufficient account of where individuals wish to apply for asylum, as well as the specific labour market conditions of each country/territory in the selection of the country that will be responsible for their claims. A stronger role of EU institutions **and sharing of responsibilities among MSs** could then better support Member States in dealing with the refugee crisis both financially and operatively.

A **more balanced sharing of arrivals, a greater harmonisation of asylum procedures**, as well as the **mutual recognition of positive asylum decisions** with free movement for protection beneficiaries, would also reduce the administrative burden in Member States in which an asylum claim is determined. This would also **speed up the processing of applications** for international protection, thus guaranteeing the respect of the individual's right to rapid recognition of international protection and ensure early access to social and economic integration measures. The Commission proposal for a reform of the CEAS can be considered a step in this direction.

A stronger EU role in migration policy would also **improve the negotiating power in the stipulation of resettlement and repatriation agreements with non-EU countries**, compared to unilateral negotiations by each MS.

#### **c) A greater support to MSs and local actors in reception and integration measures**

The available evidence shows that besides the immediate humanitarian urgency, effective integration policies include **early support in finding jobs, housing, social services, education and health care**. In order to support MSs and local stakeholders in implementing effective reception and integration policies, the following measures appear important in the experience of the three considered countries:

- a **stronger focus on integration in the European Agenda for Migration**;
- an **effective multi-level governance and improved administrative and institutional capacity** in MSs;
- a **sharing of the costs of integration** across and within MSs and creation of an **ad hoc EU integration fund**;
- **improvement in data collection, creation of an EU coordinated information and monitoring system**;
- **support to community building and awareness-raising measures**.

#### **A stronger focus on integration in the European Agenda for Migration**

Integration needs to be the main priority for action under the European Agenda on Migration. The fact that in many countries asylum seekers cannot have free access to the labour market until their application has been accepted creates loopholes in integration

policies. This lessens their effectiveness, besides inducing asylum seekers to work in the underground economy or to be involved in criminal activity.

Another issue is related to the need to increase efforts in providing personalised support according to the specific needs of different groups of migrants/asylum seekers, with focus on women, children (both accompanied and unaccompanied) and individuals with health problems starting from the initial humanitarian aid phase.

### **Share the costs of integration and create an ad hoc EU integration fund**

Member States are differently prepared to address the needs of refugees and supporting them adequately. Besides difference in experience, infrastructures for service provision and financial resources also vary, as do the perceptions of the civil society. The current funds are not adequate to support long-term investments in integration measures, especially in countries with few financial resources. AMIF is designed on a short-term project base, while the ESI Funds and FEAD are not specifically targeted to asylum seekers, refugees or migrants, but address the more general category of disadvantaged groups. This makes decisions difficult, as increasing the resources allocated to migrants means reducing those allocated to other disadvantaged groups. The creation of a **European Integration Fund** with adequate resources and supporting sustainable long-term investments in the integration of migrants and refugees is thus necessary. The fund could be based on shared management as the ESI Funds, with specific resources allocated to local authorities.

### **Support an effective multi-level governance and improve administrative and institutional capacity**

The institutional and administrative capacity of public institutions and the other policy stakeholders needs to be strengthened through specific intercultural and anti-discrimination training, with the aim to raise professional levels and the sensibility of staff involved in reception and integration measures.

In most European countries, the financial and administrative burden of integrating refugees is largely borne by regional and local authorities, in charge of welfare, housing education services and employment services.

**Difficult labour market conditions, budget cuts and recruitment freezes** have reduced the capacity of national and especially local governments to address massive inflows of migrants and asylum seekers especially in some countries/areas like Italy, Greece and Hungary. National and local governments with a tradition of strong and well-funded public services are better placed to cope with this exceptional situation. These governments are increasing public spending to address the refugee situation by recruiting additional staff (language teachers, social workers, school mediators, tutors for unaccompanied minors and interpreters, trainers and employment counsellors) and enhancing the provision of services, also by involving the private sector and NGOs.

In poorer countries and/or in countries with massive numbers of arrivals concentrated in limited territorial areas with high unemployment as those here considered, economic and institutional capacity is instead often lacking. In these cases, adopting **participatory processes and community building for the integration of refugees** could help reduce rising tensions among the local population towards refugees and issues of public order, and attract additional resources from the private and third sectors<sup>132</sup>. According to Eurocities (2016), positive examples in this respect can be found also Italian and Greek transit cities such as Athens, Budapest, Genoa, Bologna and Milan.

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<sup>132</sup> CEMR, Report from the questionnaire addressed to CEMR member associations concerning local authorities faced with the huge inflows of asylum seekers.

The role of municipalities and local authorities in the management of integration policies should be strengthened, supporting their direct access to EU financial and technical assistance as well as activating mutual learning mechanisms and sharing of practices.

**Improve data collection and create an EU coordinated information and monitoring system**

The information system should trace the presence and movements of asylum seekers and migrants within MSs and across the EU, disaggregated by personal characteristics and regional and local levels, as well as the implementation of reception and integration measures. This would allow for the monitoring of what EU Member States do or fail to do, and the sharing of examples of good practices showing those factors that facilitate/hinder effectiveness, especially in less experienced countries.

**Support community building and awareness raising**

Support for local community building and public communication should be increased, beyond the normative framework set by the common basic principles and the tools indicated in the new Integration Action Plan.

Community building should entail a broad involvement of local authorities, NGOs and civil society organisations (e.g. employers, the social partners). Awareness-raising campaigns could support a greater involvement of civil society organisations and citizens in the implementation of reception and integration measures, as well as fighting the diffusion of anti-immigrant and xenophobic attitudes.

To this end the sharing of good practice examples, as those implemented by municipalities in central and northern Europe, could be useful. These municipalities have mobilised civil society to support local administrations' efforts and have adopted an open and transparent communication with their populations through information sessions, the use of the city websites and social media.

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