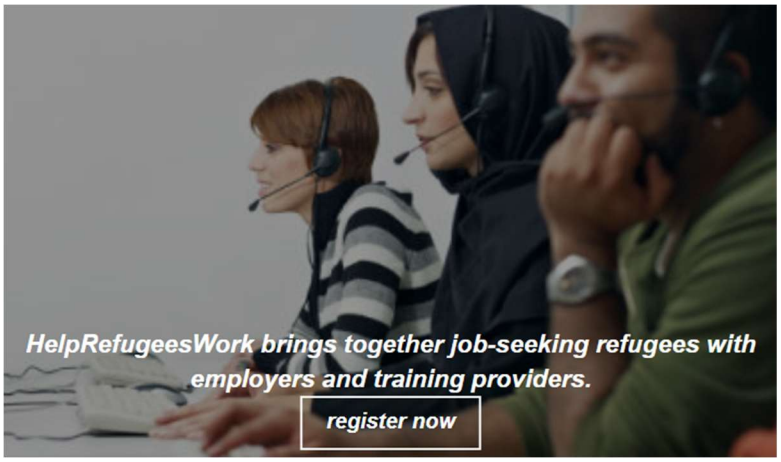
January 2026

Over the years, the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) has been receiving an increasing number of refugees, particularly from neighbouring Syria. From 2002 until December 2025, some **24,000** persons have been registered as having been granted international protection in Cyprus, of whom approximately **5,100** were granted refugee status, and approximately **18,900** subsidiary protection. With significant numbers of people afforded international protection in the RoC in recent years, the need for greater assistance and support to help them integrate has become more apparent.

In 2025, some **2,835 persons** applied for asylum. Approximately **15,800 persons'** applications were pending at the Asylum Service at the end of 2025, and **7,400 persons'** appeals were pending at the International Protection Administrative Court (IPAC), as at end November 2025.

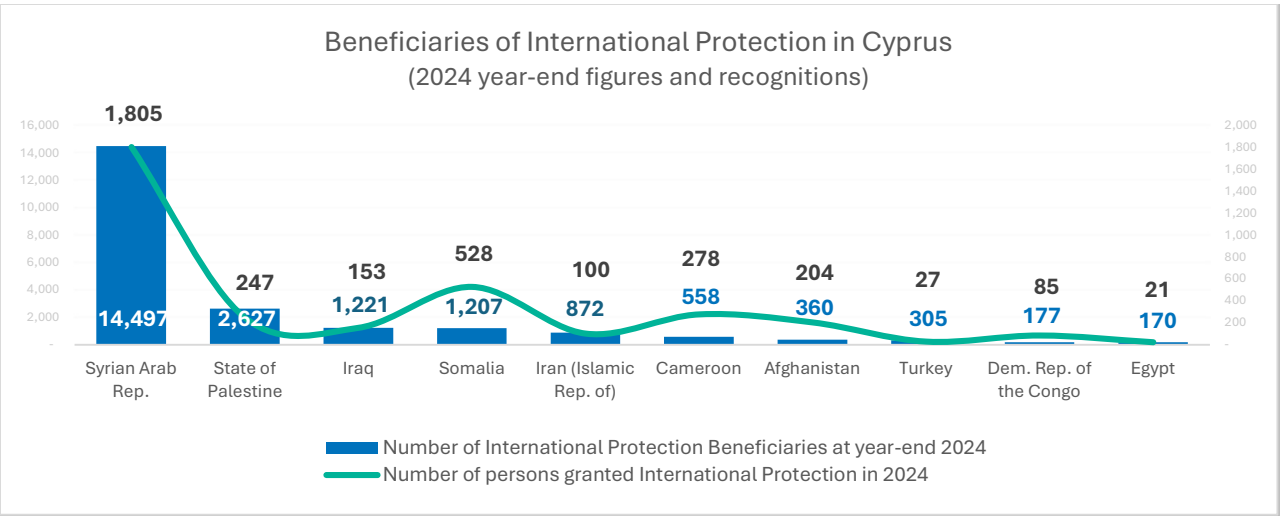
Up until end November 2025, some **24,620 refugees from Ukraine** have applied for Temporary Protection in the RoC.

Education, training and employment opportunities are keys to refugee integration



HELP/REFUGEES/WORK

The empowerment of refugees through information provision, education, training and access to employment opportunities enables them to quickly become self-sufficient, integrated and valuable members of their host society. The **HelpRefugeesWork** (HRW) platform, that is managed by UNHCR's partner NGO, the Cyprus Refugee Council (CyRC), with our support, brings motivated refugee jobs-seekers in contact with potential employers and training providers in Cyprus. A growing number of employers are investing in the refugee population, enriching their businesses with new talents and capacities, shaping a more tolerant and inclusive society. The HRW platform in Cyprus was the first Refugee Employment Platform created by UNHCR and its partners in Europe. Find out more from the UNHCR Europe Bureau about Refugee Employment Platforms.



Integration in Cyprus remains one of the most challenging areas of the national asylum system. The obstacles international protection beneficiaries face result from the lack of a comprehensive integration strategy that would provide: knowledge of the local language; greater understanding of differences in cultures and habits; a bolstered understanding within the host society of the circumstances faced by refugees and assistance in gaining access to employment.

Cyprus has been developing a **National Integration Strategy** for third-country nationals following the expiry of its first plan in 2012, with renewed efforts culminating in the forthcoming National Integration Strategy and Action Plan 2025–2029. UNHCR actively contributed to the public consultation process for this Plan, providing technical input to strengthen the Strategy's focus on employment, self-reliance, and sustainable integration. UNHCR's recommendations include: measures to enhance access to employment and vocational training; promoting structured employment counselling; expanding self-reliance initiatives and support for the integration of unaccompanied children. Further proposals submitted by UNHCR aim to: remove structural barriers; align policies with EU and international standards; promote social cohesion—including through improved language and skills training; recognition of qualifications; access to entrepreneurship; childcare support; cultural mediation; dignified housing and strengthened action against discrimination and hate crime.

Integration is affected by the limited possibilities for family reunification, long-term residence and naturalization, which also remain areas of concern. **Family reunification** still remains inaccessible to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. This group makes up the overwhelming majority of international protection beneficiaries in Cyprus, while for recognized refugees, administrative and procedural obstacles towards achieving family reunification persist.

The prospect of being able to obtain **long-term residency** pursuant to five years' legal stay has proved difficult for international protection beneficiaries due to the stringent requirements, which are difficult for persons to meet: tax statements of the past five years; a statement of social insurance contributions for the last five years; health insurance coverage and a Greek language proficiency certificate. In 2021 and 2022, no long-term residency was granted to beneficiaries of international protection.

Since 2023, **access to naturalization of international protection beneficiaries** has become more restrictive following the introduction of stricter eligibility criteria. These include a requirement of seven years of legal residence—rather than the general five-year requirement—with time spent as an asylum seeker or under subsidiary or temporary protection excluded. Additional conditions include Greek language proficiency at B1 level, civics knowledge requirements, enhanced "good character" assessments, and the obligation to demonstrate stable financial resources and suitable accommodation. Even before 2023 very few citizenship applications were granted to international protection holders. UNHCR continues to promote the benefits of naturalization for both refugees and the host community and to call States - in line with Article 34 of the 1951 Convention - to make every effort to facilitate the naturalization of refugees.

UNHCR advocates **for Age, Gender and Diversity Inclusion**. Fleeing persecution and seeking safety across a border does not always mean the end of discrimination against various groups in the countries where they seek asylum—including LGBTIQ+ people and women and girls. Among other initiatives, UNHCR supports the Women Friendly Space at the Kofinou Reception Centre—an initiative created by refugee women for refugee women. The Women Friendly Space empowers refugee women through creativity, skills-development and community building—all vital steps towards their independence and to helping refugee women become valuable members of their host societies.

Artwork from workshops held at the Women Friendly Space in Kofinou that led to an exhibition in October 2025: https://bit.ly/3P2utQj

UNHCR's advocacy work on integration includes the following:

- Through its physical presence at the **Kofinou Reception Centre** UNHCR offers **integration support and individual counselling** to the residents. UNHCR has also established communication with a network of employers eager to hire refugees, leading to employment referrals and jobs for a number of qualified residents, and has also been providing assistance to residents with international protection to secure accommodation. As a result, in 2025, **187 residents** of the Centre were supported to transition to the community.

- The **Help Refugees Work (HRW) Platform** [https://www.helprefugeeswork.org/] was set up by the UNHCR Country Office in Cyprus, in collaboration with our NGO partner, the Cyprus Refugee Council (CyRC), to boost refugee employability. In 2025, there were some 14,000 unique visitors to the Platform. There are currently some 1,160 job-seeking refugees registered on the Platform, and some 415 companies. During 2025, CyRC individually assisted 605 forcibly displaced persons to access employment, educational and language opportunities in Cyprus. They collaborated with more than 70 local and international actors to promote both financial self-reliance of refugees and the adoption of favourable practices and policies as the way forward in efficient local integration.

- UNHCR's partner NGO, the Cyprus Refugee Council (CyRC) coproduced a study report in 2025 with insights and evidence-based suggestions on the integration process of young refugees, following a mapping of their situation. Read the report ***Informing an inclusive strategy for the social integration of young refugees in Cyprus*** here.

- UNHCR and its partner NGO, the Cyprus Refugee Council offered capacity-building opportunities and tailored support to several refugee- and migrant-led groups in 2024 and 2025 to build their capacities for self-representation, become registered organisations and become more informed about funding opportunities.

- UNHCR marks **International Women's Day** and the **International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination** each year with actions and statements, as part of its ongoing advocacy for awareness and inclusion. In March 2025, UNHCR hosted a Roundtable Discussion entitled, Refugee Inclusion: Addressing Gender and Racial Discrimination. The event was co-organised with the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality and the University of Cyprus. UNHCR also gave the floor to a recognized refugee woman from Cameroon to speak on behalf of the refugee and migrant community in Cyprus.

- UNHCR Cyprus has forged important partnerships with academic institutions to enhance education and self-reliance prospects for refugees, including through refugee scholarship programs. UNHCR Cyprus has signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with three Universities**, namely the University of Nicosia [http://bit.ly/2ETD4hu], the European University of Cyprus [http://bit.ly/2nCHLpN] and most recently with the Neapolis University of Pafos [https://bit.ly/3N89fNe]. Additionally, the **Occupational Therapy Programme of the European University of Cyprus** launched a pioneering program for refugees and asylum-seekers in February 2019 aiming at facilitating their integration in the local society. [https://bit.ly/3L6I7LN].

- Since 2015, **UNHCR has commissioned opinion polls** to identify Cypriots' perceptions and attitudes towards refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants. According to the opinion polls in 2015 and 2018, the general feelings of Cypriots towards refugees and migrants were neutral to negative. **The findings of the 2022 study** [https://bit.ly/40G9jIa] however showed a diminished public support towards refugee integration compared to the 2018 poll, with most of the respondents believing that refugees and asylum-seekers are not beneficial to the local economy or culture. Notable was also the increased concern about demographic changes, and criminality and violence that the participants believe are caused by refugees and asylum-seekers.

- UNHCR maintains the **Help Platform in Cyprus** [https://help.unhcr.org/cyprus/], which is an important source of information for refugees and asylum-seekers and therefore a useful tool for their integration. The Help Platform includes information in English, Arabic and French about the rights and duties of refugees and asylum-seekers in Cyprus, as well as information about where to seek help and integration support information, including access to education and other programmes.