

# ADVANCING REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN GREECE

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Charlotte from Gabon and Raissa from Cameroon, both asylum-seekers, during a counselling session at the ADAMA Integration Centre. © UNHCR/Socrates Baltagiannis

## Helping refugees invest in their future in Greece

**57,448**  
Refugees in  
Greece

Source: UNHCR  
estimate as of end June

Successful integration needs a whole-of-society approach. Central, regional and local governments, the private sector, humanitarian actors, civil society, the public and, most importantly, the refugees themselves, all have a role to play. UNHCR uses its experience in integration programmes across the world to help realize solutions for refugees. In support of Greece's National Integration Strategy, UNHCR acts as a catalyst, capitalizing on its cooperation with local and central authorities and designing its programming on the basis of its close relationship with refugees.

### WHAT WE DO

UNHCR's integration programme works at different levels and with diverse actors to enact change and promote integration bottom up, top down and across. Working with refugee communities, UNHCR identifies skills and experience, understands refugees' intentions and needs, and helps create support networks amongst peers. Reaching out to the private sector, the Office contributes to the creation of employment and training opportunities for refugees.

In cooperation with national and regional authorities as well as experienced NGOs, UNHCR:

- identifies practical obstacles in administration and legislation and proposes solutions
- empowers refugees to help themselves and their communities
- works with Municipalities to offer expertise on refugee issues, ensure sustainability of programmes and develop effective and inclusive local coordination mechanisms
- implements pilot integration projects with potential for big impact
- engages with media and the public to overcome stereotypes and see the refugees for who they really are
- engages the corporate world and the private sector in including refugees into the labour market.

## GENERATING LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

### “ADAMA” means together: An integration centre in Athens that helps refugees become self-reliant

The ADAMA centre opened its doors in early 2022 to support refugees and asylum-seekers in finding employment and with other aspects of integrating in Greece. By June, 1,600 services had been provided to 540 refugees and asylum-seekers from the mainland and the islands through the ADAMA early integration centre run by UNHCR’s partners CRS and Caritas Hellas, and more than 80 people had secured a job. Refugees and asylum-seekers get practical help on how to look for a job, write their CV, prepare for an interview, and understand Greek labour law. They also receive counselling, find help to prepare necessary documents to access the labour market and are supported in navigating the different public services. Refugees across the country can attend in-person and remote job coaching sessions in English, Farsi, Arabic, French, Sorani, Kurmanji and Ukrainian.

The centre’s activities are part of the broader UNHCR programme in Greece to support refugee integration in accordance with Greek legislation, the National Integration Strategy and a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Integration signed between UNHCR and the Ministry for Migration and Asylum. You can read more [here](#).

### “Adama” Highlights (as of end June 2022)

**1,600** employability services provided to **540** refugees and asylum-seekers

**99** collaborations with employers all over Greece

**132** refugees participated in job interviews

**82** refugees received job offers

**70%** requests from men and **30%** from women

### ADAMA Centre attracts European interest

On 3 May, Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians visited the ADAMA early integration centre and met with three refugees from DR Congo who found a job thanks to the support of UNHCR’s partners CRS and Caritas.



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## Road safety and driving skills for refugees

Thirty refugee men and women will attend road safety seminars as part of a pilot programme by UNHCR and its partner CRS to boost refugees' integration. Participants will also take driving lessons so that they can sit an exam for a driver's license. Refugees and other beneficiaries of international protection including refugees from Ukraine holding Temporary Protection status, are all eligible to participate in the pilot project.

The project is implemented in cooperation with the Panos Milonas Road Safety Institute within the framework of the Government's National Integration Strategy.

## Refugee employment on the islands

On the islands, UNHCR connects refugees and asylum-seekers looking for work with the ADAMA centre in Athens, and local employment opportunities. To help refugee employability, UNHCR liaises with local authorities and public services, and informs employers and refugees on specific labour issues concerning refugees. UNHCR also helps refugees overcome systemic obstacles by providing for instance interpreters through its partner METAdrasi to help refugees open a bank account.

On Kos, a job fair facilitated by UNHCR and the RIC Director connected refugees with

employment opportunities. On Lesbos, UNHCR and IRC coordinate a Working Group which facilitates access to jobs and social services and assists with the issuance of key documents. Lastly, on Samos, UNHCR is mapping integration prospects, public services and administrative procedures and is connecting refugees with potential employers.

## Language classes for refugees on the islands

In April, UNHCR and its partner METAdrasi launched language classes for adult refugees and asylum-seekers in Samos. During the 2021 UNHCR-led inter-agency participatory assessment, refugees overwhelmingly and unanimously requested access to Greek language classes upon arrival in Greece. In contrast, waiting for Greek language classes to start after receiving refugee status is seen as crippling and not conducive to integration. You can read the full participatory assessment report [here](#).

The language centre in Samos is the latest addition to similar educational centres for adults in Lesbos, Chios and Kos. Refugees can attend language classes in Greek and English, but also find help to write their CVs and prepare for interviews to facilitate their search for employment. By the end May, some 200 refugees and asylum-seekers had enrolled in UNHCR-supported educational centres on the islands.



**"Doctor, my \_\_\_\_\_ hurts."**

An asylum-seeker on Chios learns the different parts of the body in Greek.

In the adult language classes on the islands, refugees and asylum-seekers learn how to communicate in Greek on everyday matters, like a visit to the doctor.

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## MUNICIPALITIES AS CATALYSTS OF LOCAL INTEGRATION

### Working together to maximize impact

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

#### i. Expertise on refugee issues

UNHCR deploys experts in municipalities to support them in pioneering amendments to their policy-making tools (e.g. municipal operations plan, local integration action plan), access EU and private funding to finance innovative actions and lead coordination at local level. UNHCR experts contribute to making municipal services more accessible to refugees, such as language courses or even homeless shelters for those who need them.

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

#### ii. Policy-making and Coordination

Over the years, municipalities have become increasingly involved in hosting refugee populations and have started developing innovative and flexible mechanisms to tailor

services to refugees and develop effective coordination tools.

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

#### iii. Sustainability

UNHCR-deployed experts help partner Municipalities raise funds for their activities. This steers efforts to advance integration at the local level and translates into concrete support for refugees living in the Municipalities.

### UNHCR, IOM and the Athens Municipality cooperate for greater refugee inclusion

UNHCR joined forces with the Municipality of Athens and IOM to support the Athens Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee issues (ACCMR) and the Cities Network for Integration (CNI). This synergy assists the different municipal services build their capacity for the effective integration of third country nationals. These efforts include designing tools, promoting good practices such as in-service provision, local level policy planning and coordination as well as activities to raise awareness.





Outreach volunteers during a training session with UNHCR expert in VIAL site on Chios. © UNHCR/Socrates Baltagiannis

## ENGAGEMENT WITH REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

### Advice from refugees to refugees

A small group of recognized refugees living in Greece form part of an advisory group created by UNHCR who advises other refugees so as to help their integration into the social, economic, and cultural life in Greece. Drawing from their life experience, they also inform UNHCR's advocacy through concrete recommendations on needed policy changes and practical examples of the obstacles that refugees may face along their way to integration.

The members of the Refugee Advisory Group have been selected based on their journey and achievements on the integration front. Some have acquired proficiency in Greek, some have successfully gone through the naturalization

process, while some started their own businesses in Greece.

UNHCR also identifies asylum-seekers who are interested to become outreach volunteers and act as the connecting link between their community on the one hand, and humanitarian agencies and authorities on the other. They help disseminate valuable information including on the regulations of the reception centre, the available services and how to access them, the roles and responsibilities of different actors, and how to get specific types of help.

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

### "Refugees Speaking to Refugees"

#### Exploring Challenges and Successes in Refugee Integration

Members of UNHCR's Refugee Advisory Group speak with other refugees, in their native language, to share their stories and inspire others. The labour market, access to tertiary education, and acquisition of Greek nationality are amongst the most discussed topics. You can read the relevant press release [here](#).





*“For stateless persons, who are de facto invisible, naturalization allows them to become citizens, with rights but also with obligations. For refugees, becoming a citizen of the country where they have found protection, is the ultimate success of integration, and allows the country to better benefit from their skills, knowledge, and enthusiasm.”*

Maria Clara Martin,  
UNHCR Representative in Greece

## Ministry of Interior and UNHCR sign Memorandum of Cooperation on statelessness prevention and citizenship acquisition issues

A Memorandum of Cooperation was signed on 7 April, at the Ministry of Interior between Interior Minister Makis Vouridis, Secretary General for Citizenship Athanasios Balermipas, and UNHCR Representative in Greece Maria Clara Martin. The Memorandum of Cooperation ensures the continuation of cooperation between the Ministry of Interior and UNHCR in relation to acquisition of citizenship by refugees and stateless persons, as well as to the prevention and reduction of statelessness, through legislative or other initiatives. The Memorandum also foresees the exchange of information and know-how, as well as the provision of technical and operational support in the above areas. You can read the press release [here](#).

## How can you support refugees' integration?

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

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