

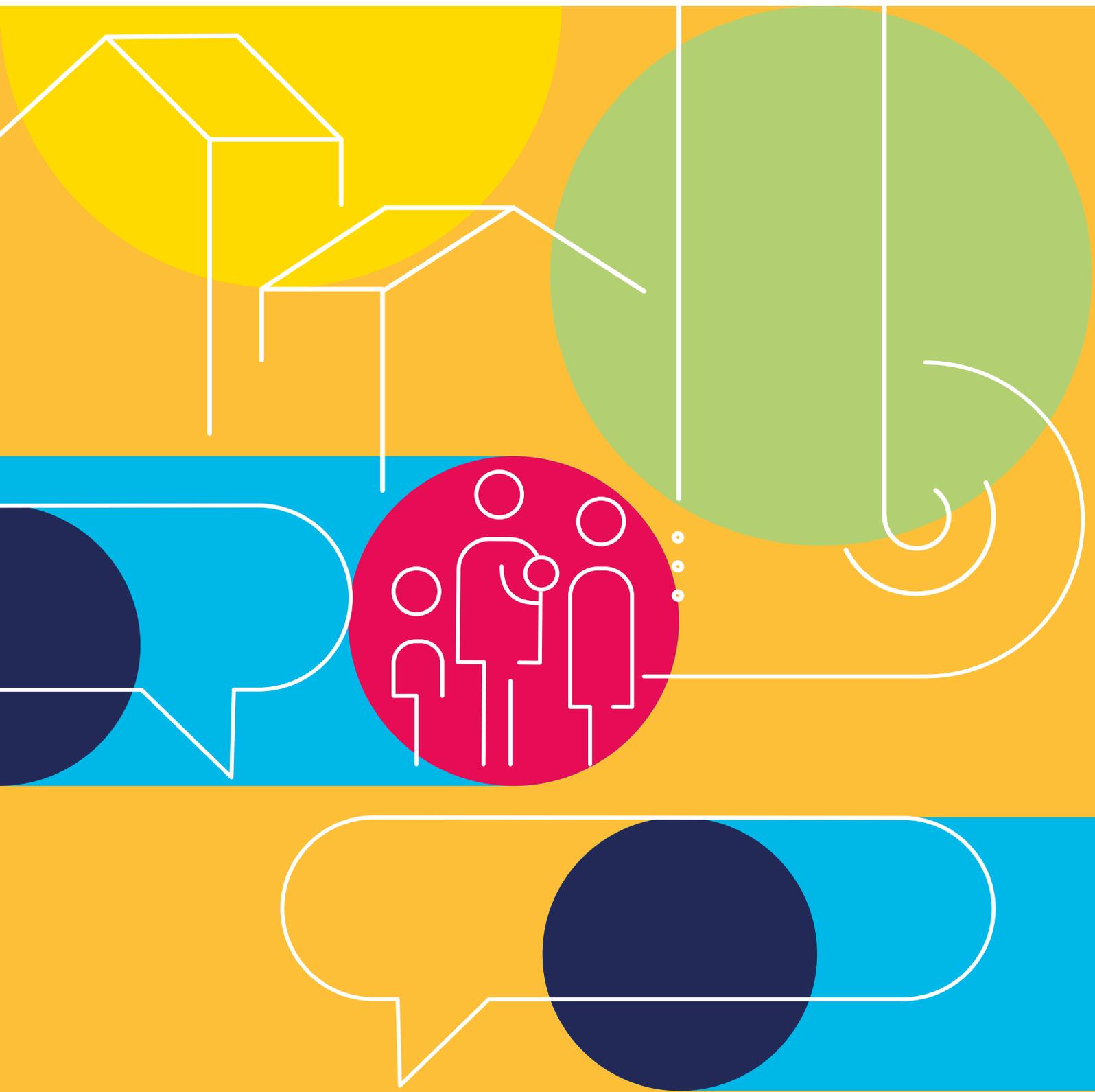
The European benchmark for refugee integration:

A comparative analysis of the National Integration
Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries



NIEM
ALL IN FOR INTEGRATION

Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report



ALEXANDER WOLFFHARDT, CARMINE CONTE
and THOMAS HUDDLESTON

THE EUROPEAN BENCHMARK FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION:

A COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS OF
THE NATIONAL
INTEGRATION
EVALUATION
MECHANISM
IN 14 EU COUNTRIES
EVALUATION 1:
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



INSTITUTE OF
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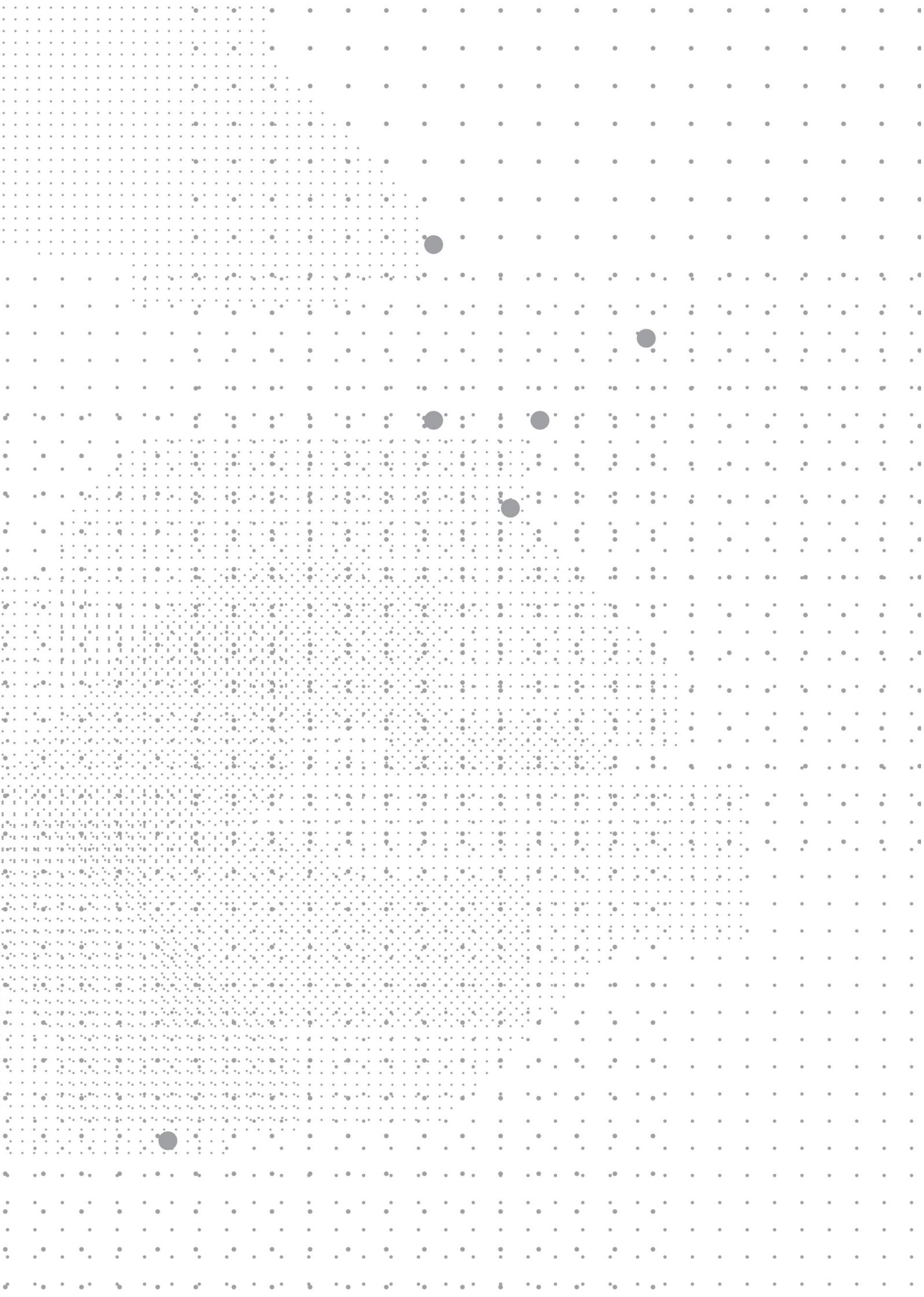
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PART I

Introduction & Key Results



1. NIEM Evaluation 1: Capturing change 2017 to 2019

1.1. Introduction

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) provides evidence on the quality of the frameworks in place to support the long-term integration of beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs) in receiving countries. The research helps governments, civil society and other stakeholders to identify gaps in the refugee integration policies of their country, take inspiration from other EU Member States and improve the integration framework. Based on defined indicators, its results can serve as a roadmap towards comprehensive refugee integration policies in each of the countries involved. The comparative results of NIEM's second round of monitoring presented in this report are intended to inform NIEM's outreach to authorities, civil society and experts and to stimulate debate on how to reform refugee integration based on evidence.

Following the Baseline Report¹ based on 2017 data, the Evaluation 1 Comprehensive Report analyses the situation as of 2019 and highlights key trends. Below, Part I of this report presents key results by way of an executive summary. Detailed results are presented in Part II in 12 chapters relating to the various dimensions of refugee integration analysed in the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism. Each of these chapters

- ▶ presents the key data and developments in the 2017 to 2019 period as they are reflected in the scored outcome of research conducted in the 14 participating countries;
- ▶ details the positive and negative developments in the countries compared, thus providing an insight into the dynamics of refugee integration policies in the assessment period;
- ▶ identifies the best practices in refugee integration, as they become visible in NIEM's indicators, benchmarked against the requirements of EU and international law; and
- ▶ describes in detail numerous examples of good practices from the NIEM countries, often referring to measures and improvements recently introduced.

The countries included in NIEM's Evaluation 1 are Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. With the exception of Bulgaria, results can be compared with the previous NIEM Baseline research, thus allowing for a monitoring of recent changes. More detailed information on the situation in Bulgaria (which is newly included in NIEM's comparative research) can be found in dedicated textboxes throughout this report.

¹ Wolffhardt A., Conte C. and Huddleston T. (2019), The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries. Brussels/Warsaw: MPG and IPA. The Baseline Report further elaborates on the background, objectives and methodology of NIEM.

In addition, in some dimensions, chapters include a newly introduced analysis of early integration provisions for asylum seekers in selected indicators. Access to such measures while applicants await their decision has important consequences on how quickly BIPs can embark on their integration process and for long-term inclusion outcomes of BIPs.

NIEM's current analysis of national refugee integration frameworks focuses on a variety of legal and policy indicators. Other indicators included measure mainstreaming, collaboration across levels of government and with NGOs, as well as efforts aimed at the participation and involvement of the receiving society. Overall, 120 indicators have been assessed and scored in Evaluation 1, listed in the thematic chapters of Part II of this report.

The cross-country comparison covers 12 dimensions, ranging from general conditions to the legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of integration:

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

Results have been scored on a scale from 0 to 100, ranging from least favourable to most favourable provisions. Data presented in this report refer to **recognised refugees** and **beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (BSPs)** throughout. Additional results referring to asylum seekers are presented in dedicated chapters. All data refer to the legal and other provisions in place as of 31 March 2019. The analysis of change between 2017 (Baseline) and 2019 (Evaluation 1) takes into account all dynamics that resulted in a difference of more than two points in the aggregated scores of a single dimension for a given country.

1.2. Depiction of results and methodology

Stepstones towards a comprehensive integration framework

Results are presented in relation to the concrete steps policymakers need to take in order to establish a framework that is in line with the standards required by international and EU law. Due to widespread data gaps and the lack of robust comparable refugee integration outcome data, NIEM's Evaluation 1 remains focused on those step-stones of a comprehensive approach to refugee integration related to the legal, policy and collaboration frameworks:

Step: Setting the Legal Framework: This building block of a comprehensive approach to the integration of BIPs refers to the legal standards which a country needs to comply with to ensure the most supportive frame conditions. Across the various dimensions, the step includes indicators on

- ▶ types and duration of residence permits;
- ▶ conditions for obtaining long-term residence, family reunification and citizenship; and
- ▶ access to rights, services, benefits and entitlements across different policy areas/dimensions.

Step: Building the Policy Framework: This stepstone refers to the policies, rules and arrangements that a country needs to put in place to support the integration of beneficiaries in all relevant policy areas. Across the various dimensions, the step includes indicators on

- ▶ the availability, scope and duration of targeted provisions and services;
- ▶ provisions for special needs groups and needs-based criteria for the allocation of goods and services;
- ▶ administrative barriers;
- ▶ fees for long-term residence, family reunification and citizenship; and
- ▶ awareness-raising/information for stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Step: Implementation & Collaboration: This element of a comprehensive approach to the integration of BIPs refers to the efforts towards developing, coordinating and implementing an all-of-government and all-of-society response. It implies the existence of an overall strategic approach, cooperation within government and with social actors, the fostering of participation and the recognition that integration is also a challenge for the receiving society. Across the various dimensions, the step includes indicators on

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

Comparing countries

Comparative depiction of results also takes into account the different types of countries providing international protection. While not covering the entire EU, the sample of 14 countries participating represents the full scale of experiences and challenges found in the Union with regard to refugee integration. To facilitate comparison between Member States with similar location, frame conditions and starting points, countries are colour coded in the charts used in this report. The visualisation is applied both to show comparative results for the different dimensions as well as to depict results of individual indicators:

| | |
|---|---|
|  | <p>Countries in the north and west of Europe that have a longstanding tradition of receiving refugees. Asylum policies and integration frameworks tend to be well established, accepting of a long-term integration perspective and rooted in domestic policy traditions of dealing with immigration. In the flows of recent years, these Member States primarily figured as countries of final destination.</p> |
|  | <p>Countries in southern Europe that have more recently developed into destinations for people seeking international protection, while also retaining the position of transit countries. Asylum and integration policy frameworks have become more comprehensive over the last decades. In recent years, these countries have mostly found them-selves in a first line position dealing with arrivals to EU territory.</p> |
|  | <p>East-central European countries with rather recent asylum systems adopted in the context of joining the EU and with weaker linkages to longer-term integration frameworks. EU legal provisions and support has often been instrumental in the development of policies. Neither frequent destination countries nor in a transit position during recent refugee flows, the numbers of beneficiaries in these countries are small.</p> |
|  | <p>Countries in central/south-eastern Europe that share most features with the other east-central European countries assessed. Some of them differ in that they have been exposed to significant movements of persons seeking protection in the EU during recent years, leading to challenges for their reception systems. Nevertheless, the numbers of beneficiaries of international protection in these countries have remained comparatively small.</p> |

Assessment and scoring

To achieve a valid and robust evaluation of results that allows for cross-country comparison, NIEM applies a standardised questionnaire and assessment based on a scoring system. Each indicator is formulated as a specific question relating to a different aspect of refugee integration. For most indicators, there are a number of alternative answer options reflecting different policy options. The first option is based on favourable terms, while the successive options generally represent less favourable or unfavourable provisions. Points are assigned to each policy option, with 100 points awarded to the most favourable and 0 to the least favourable options. Depending on the number of alternative answer options, scores are assigned along a scale from 0 to 100 (for example, when there are three options, scores of 0, 50 or 100 are assigned, while when there are six options, scores of 0, 20, 40, 60, 80 and 100 are assigned, respectively). For the remaining indicators analysed (mostly asking for absolute figures or percentages), special scoring rules have been developed based on the available data and benchmarks set against the normative framework in use. The specific **scoring rules** for each indicator are provided, together with the full **questionnaire**, on the **NIEM website (www.forintegration.eu)**.

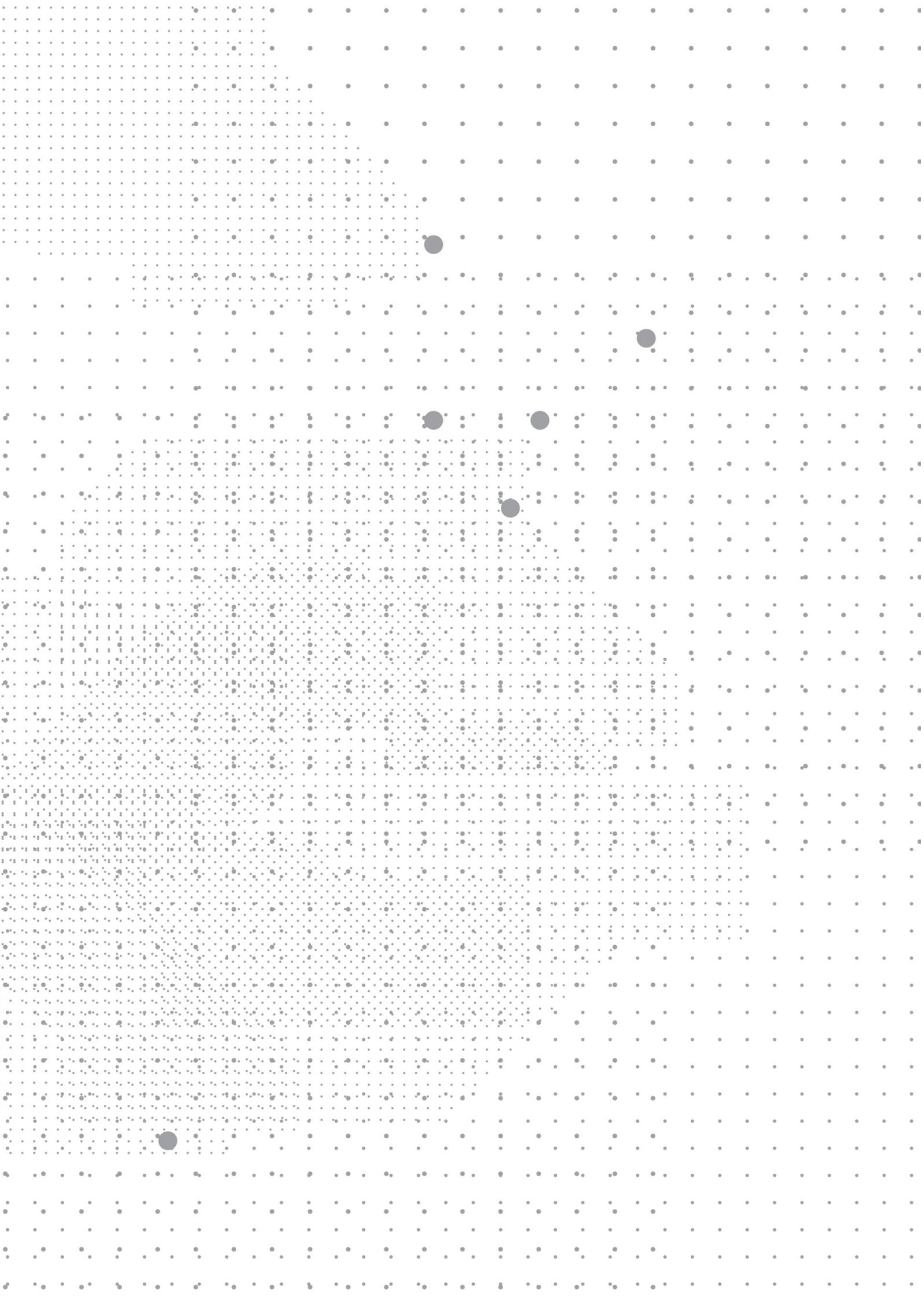
In addition, the NIEM questionnaire differentiates between the various sub-groups of beneficiaries of international protection. This allows for a fine-grained

analysis and comparison of the protections and integration framework in place for

- ▶ recognised refugees,
- ▶ beneficiaries of subsidiary protection,
- ▶ resettled refugees,
- ▶ persons under temporary protection, and
- ▶ persons under humanitarian protection.

For a score to be assigned (to an indicator) and eventually aggregated (for a dimension), simple averages are used. For instance, if a country provides favourable provisions to recognised refugees (score: 100), but only in a limited way to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (score: 50), the overall score for that indicator is 75. For aggregated scores per dimension, the indicator scores are averaged together. The scoring of indicators is presented as part of the analysis of results in Part II of this report.

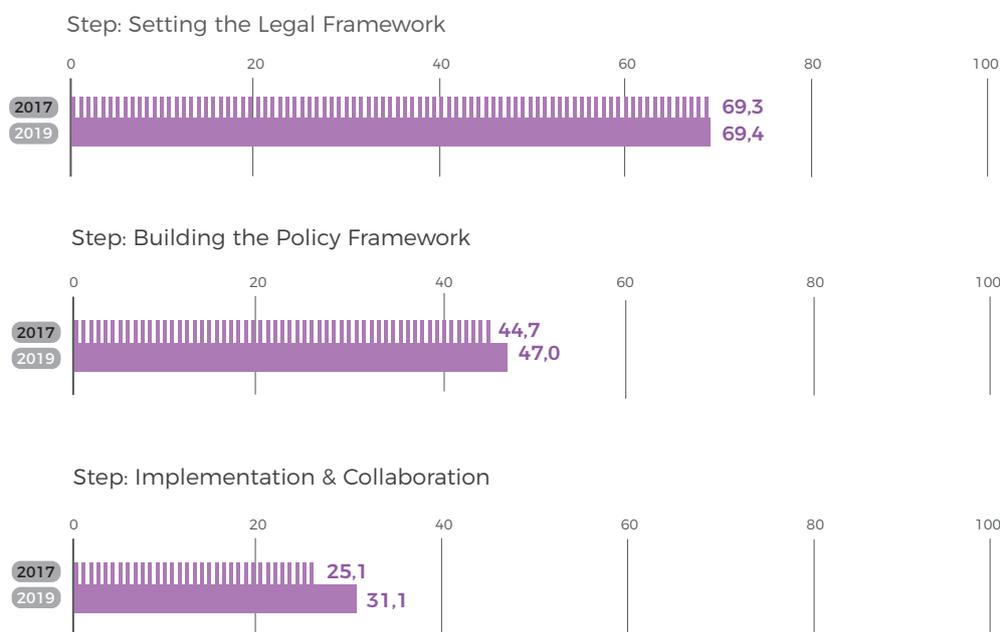
Data gathering involves practitioner interviews in the government and civil society realms, desk research and analysis. Expert focus groups and surveys may be used to gain additional insights. After validation and verification on the national level, the data are submitted and processed by NIEM's transnational research partner. Data are screened from a comparative point of view and further validated in clarification loops with the national researchers before scoring and comparative analysis. The NIEM Baseline Report (available on www.forintegration.eu) further elaborates on the methodology of NIEM.



2. Key results: State of play 2019

- ▶ **Weak dynamics, large gaps prevail:** Few changes occurred in the refugee integration framework of the assessed countries between 2017 and 2019. Overall, refugees rarely experience fully favourable conditions to integrate in any area of life. The widest gaps remain to be in policies which would actively support integration, the mainstreaming of policies for long-term inclusion, as well as multi-level and multi-stakeholder collaboration. Most national governments do not work in partnership with civil society and local and regional authorities to develop and implement their policies. Funding the contributions of these actors is a major weakness. While countries score, on average, better in ensuring access to rights and an adequate legal framework, a narrow interpretation of the equal treatment principle often prevails over responding to specific needs and vulnerabilities.
- ▶ **Improving collaboration driven by only a few countries:** With overall very inert frameworks that are slow to change, the only markedly positive development has taken place with regard to collaboration and implementation. On average among the 13 compared countries, NIEM indicators referring to cross-governmental and sectoral mainstreaming, multi-level implementation as well as the involvement of NGOs and the receiving society improved by more than six points, albeit from a generally disadvantageous level. On closer inspection, the drivers of this development are deliberate efforts to systematically improve refugee integration in France

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step:
Average from 13 compared countries in 12 dimensions, NIEM Baseline **2017**
and Evaluation 1 **2019**

and Lithuania, and to a somewhat lesser extent, in Latvia and Slovenia. In most countries, however, change – if at all – came in a limited and incremental way.

- ▶ **Gaps between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection do not narrow:** The gap between residency, family reunification and citizenship rights for recognised refugees and BSPs remains. It narrowed somewhat only in France and in Poland, while in Italy, the difference in opportunities for long-term integration awarded to these two groups grew even wider. Governments and EU policymakers must consider how this inequality with regard to family unity, permanent residence and access to citizenship negatively impacts their efforts to integrate the more than one million people granted protection in the EU since 2016.
- ▶ **Few countries act, a few countries slip backwards, most countries sit idle:** Countries that have witnessed the strongest positive change across all areas include France, with improved results in ten of the twelve assessed dimensions, and Lithuania, with progress in eight dimensions, followed by Latvia (six) and Slovenia (five dimensions). Countries that saw no improvement in any dimensions are Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden. Romania tops the list of countries with a negative dynamic, having scored worse in five dimensions. Hungary and Italy saw deterioration in three dimensions each. Absence of negative developments across all dimensions is recorded in the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Overall, the Netherlands and Sweden turn out to be the two countries with the steadiest frameworks between 2017 and 2019, with no change at all seen in systems on a rather high level of development.
- ▶ **Diverging integration standards persist across sectors, with gains in some dimensions offset by steps backwards in others:** The dimensions with the strongest positive dynamics between 2017 and 2019 are social security, where eight of the 14 countries improved, followed by employment, health and education, with five improving countries each. Sectors which saw the highest number of countries deteriorating are residency, housing and health, where three countries each scored worse than two years earlier. Zooming in on the dimensions related to socio-economic and socio-cultural integration, health and education are still the sectors with the overall most favourable legal and policy frameworks among the assessed countries, followed by social security. In contrast, the least favourable conditions across countries are still found in housing, employment and vocational training.

3. Key results: Impact of provisions for asylum seekers

In Evaluation 1, for the first time NIEM has assessed provisions for asylum seekers relevant for later integration pathways after status recognition. Across several dimensions in an overall of 31 indicators (or indicator components), data have therefore been analysed for asylum seekers as well. The assessment highlights provisions related to the reception phase in the areas of education (eight indicators), employment and vocational training (seven and three indicators, respectively), health (seven indicators), language learning and social orientation (five indicators) as well as social security (one indicator). While 13 of these indicators relate to the legal framework, mostly concerning access rights, 18 relate to policies. Detailed overviews of countries' compliance with these provisions are included in the corresponding chapters of Part II of this report.

Although non-exhaustive in character and not subject to comparative scoring (after all, NIEM is not an index monitoring reception systems as such), the results allow revealing insights into Member States' acknowledgement of pre-recognition measures as being crucial for successful integration of BIPs. Overall, countries do not provide much integration support for asylum seekers. Most of the assessed Member States do not even come close to complying with all of the 31 indicators included. Only Latvia (with 27) and Spain (with 24) fulfill more than 20 indicators and thus appear as the countries which provide for the highest standards in early integration in the different areas. All other states make positive provision only in roughly half of all indicators, with the worst-scoring countries (Hungary with 12 positive indicators) not far away from the relatively best-scoring country (Sweden with 18) in this large group of states with mediocre levels of integration support in the arrival phase.

Only in the dimensions of health, education and social security, do results suggest that early integration frameworks for asylum seekers are broadly comparable, with similar favourable practices in place across the 14 assessed Member States. By contrast, less advantageous situations with gaps in many countries are identified in employment, vocational training, language learning and social orientation. Comparing results of the legal indicators with those of policy-related indicators, the analysis of provisions for asylum seekers confirms the general finding of the NIEM research that legal indicators achieve better results than those related to policies, and that countries perform better in providing legal access than in developing and implementing active support policies. The key results of the comparison among countries in the various dimensions which include indicators on asylum seekers are the following:

- ▶ **Education** is one of the dimensions enshrining the most favourable legal provisions for asylum seekers, reflecting countries' strong legal obligations in this area. Same access as nationals to pre-school, primary/lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary and tertiary education is secured in most of the assessed countries. Policy-related indicators reveal rather widespread practices of language learning support for pupils and the absence of administrative barriers to accessing education. Out of 11 countries

providing language support, however, only in seven is this underpinned by regular funding. Poor results are found in how countries place children in the school system, where comprehensive assessment procedures and measures are lacking in almost all of the assessed countries.

- ▶ With regard to **employment**, 11 countries ensure access to jobs in the private sector at the latest six months after lodging an asylum application, as stipulated by the 2016 Commission proposal for a recast Reception Conditions Directive.² As of March 2019, earlier access than after six months was granted by Sweden (in principle, on application), Italy (60 days) as well as Bulgaria and Romania (three months). While Hungary and Slovenia provided labour market access after nine months, Lithuania denied asylum seekers the right to work in violation of the Reception Conditions Directive. There is a general lack of job-seeking and entrepreneurship support, exacerbated by administrative barriers to access the job market. Regardless, 12 countries allow procedures to recognize qualifications and validate skills already before status recognition.
- ▶ **Vocational training and employment-related education** is also not accessible for asylum seekers in the majority of countries. Only six countries ensure same access as nationals for asylum seekers to vocational training, and administrative obstacles generally undermine effective access to vocational training in half of the countries assessed.
- ▶ Countries perform better in the **health** dimension; with the exception of Romania, all of them ensure access to healthcare for asylum seekers under conditions which can be met as newcomers. Moreover, in 11 of the 14 countries, health care coverage is generally not restricted to emergency care and essential treatments. But while all countries, with the exception of Italy, provide for assessments identifying asylum seekers with special health needs, only in four countries does this result in regularly monitored or evaluated health care support throughout the reception phase. Administrative barriers to fully enjoying access to healthcare are widespread for asylum seekers, and access to special needs health care for vulnerable groups is arranged in only a few countries.
- ▶ Paradoxically, the weakest framework in place across the assessed countries is in the area of **language learning and social orientation**, as only half of the countries provide for courses that would help asylum seekers to acquire the skills they need first and foremost. Indicators also point to a widespread lack of quality language instruction, needs-based translation and interpretation assistance when dealing with public authorities, and to the prevalence of administrative barriers to access language learning and social orientation courses.
- ▶ On the positive side, in the dimension of **social security**, 11 of the assessed countries provide for information about social security entitlements and use of services already for asylum seekers, six even in individualised form.

² European Commission, COM(2016) 465 final. Reducing the maximum time-limit for access to the labour market from currently no later than nine months to no later than six months from the lodging of the application would align labour market access with the duration of the examination procedure on the merits which is required by EU law.

DURATION OF ASYLUM PROCEDURES TO REACH A FINAL DECISION

Referring to 2018 numbers, out of 12 countries where such evidence was gathered for NIEM, the average duration of the asylum procedure to reach a final decision was less than six months in Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Romania and Slovenia (whereas in Latvia and Romania data are based on informed estimates). These countries were found to be in accordance with the provisions of Art. 31(3) EU Procedure Directive which requires that the overall average duration of an asylum procedure to be below six months, even considering that high-quality decisions in protracted cases will regularly involve longer durations.

Figures for Hungary, however, must be seen in context with the fact that since spring 2017 applicants have to stay in a transit zone for the whole duration of the procedure, including the legal remedy phase. In addition, amendments in force from July 2018 dramatically reduced the access to asylum. Since then nearly all applications have been rejected based on a new inadmissibility ground, consisting of a hybrid between the safe third country and first country of asylum concepts.

In Czechia, France, Greece and Sweden, the average duration of the asylum procedure has been between six and 12 months. On the other side, in Poland and Spain, the average duration of the asylum procedures increased significantly in 2019 and now exceeds 12 months. In Italy, data only were available for first-instance decisions, where procedures in 2018 on average lasted just below six months.

Detailed data on the shares of final decisions taken either in the first six months or in three-month periods thereafter were provided only in Czechia, Poland, Slovenia and Sweden.

In addition to specific indicators related to the various dimensions, the current evaluation research has assessed an underlying indicator related to the impact of the reception phase on ensuing integration pathways. Procedures to identify asylum applicants with special reception needs are fundamental to protect the most vulnerable categories of individuals during the asylum procedure and to identify early on those people in need of targeted measures once recognized as BIPs.

EU law demands Member States to conduct individual assessments in order to identify the special reception needs of vulnerable persons and ensure that reception is specifically designed to meet their special needs. In particular, Member States have to provide vulnerable asylum seekers necessary medical and psychological support throughout the duration of the asylum procedure and continuously monitor their situation.

The analysis reveals that, with the exception of Italy, all the assessed countries require (in compliance with EU law) an individual assessment to identify applicants with special reception needs, which in most cases leads to

more favourable procedural rules than for ordinary beneficiaries of international protection.

Individual assessment established by law to identify applicants with special reception needs



BG, LV, PL, RO, SL: not resulting in more favourable procedural rules

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard

PART II

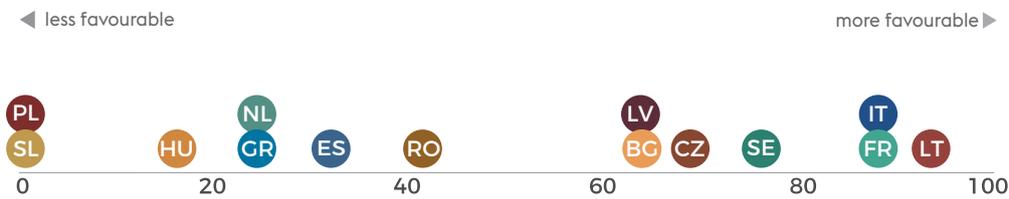
Results in the NIEM
integration dimensions

4. Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming is the development, coordination and implementation of an all-of-government response to the task of integrating beneficiaries of international protection. It starts with the acknowledgment of a special needs group in mainstream legislation and a mandate in all relevant ministries and agencies to make protection and integration part of their work. A national strategy can guide policies and actions implemented across policy fields and commit not only national authorities but also local and regional authorities, social partners and civil society actors. Policies need to be continuously assessed, revised and further developed in a process open to the expertise and contributions of integration stakeholders.

4.1. Results 2019 by country

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



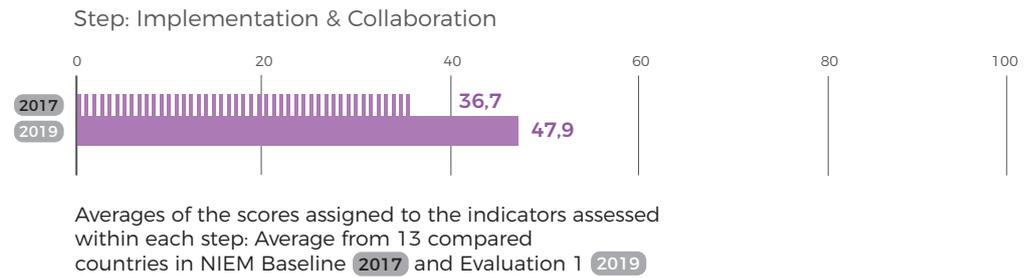
Assessed indicators:

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

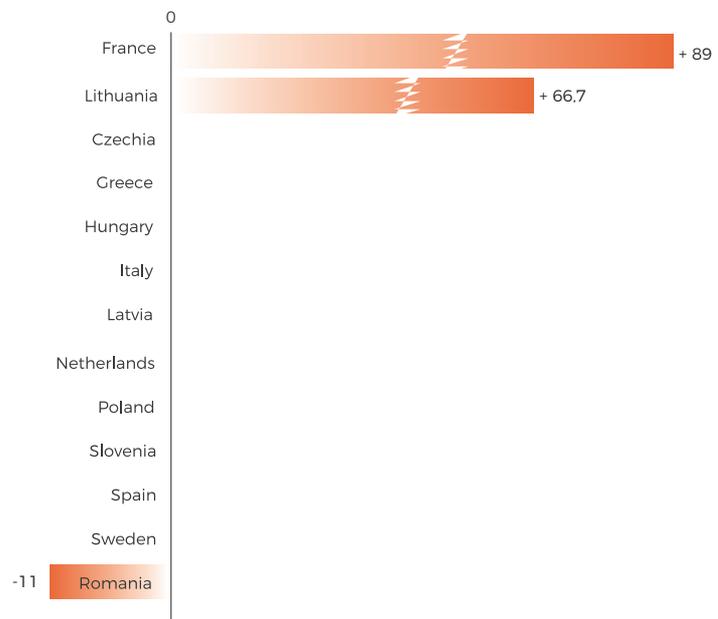
4.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

To address the specific integration needs of BIPs in a comprehensive way, governments require a national strategy to guide policies and actions implemented across all relevant policy fields. In 2017, among the assessed countries only Czechia, Italy, Romania, Spain and Sweden disposed of such a national strategy for the integration of BIPs. As of April 2019, France and Lithuania have also adopted strategies fulfilling high standards (with Slovenia set to adopt one in June 2019), while Romania had yet to implement its strategy with proper cross-ministerial coordination and review.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, the National Strategy for the Reception and Integration of Refugees was adopted in June 2018. It foresees 67 actions between 2018 and 2021 and includes specific responsibilities and commitments, regular mechanisms to monitor integration outcomes as well as implementation reviews in coordination with relevant stakeholders.

- ▶ In **Lithuania**, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society is being implemented since December 2018, including mechanisms to monitor and review policies for the integration of BIPs.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, the implementation of the National Strategy on Immigration 2015-2018 was intended to be the responsibility of an inter-ministerial coordinating group led by the ministry of the interior. However, its activities lacked transparency and there were no official reports on the strategy's implementation. Therefore, the strategy failed to provide for a proper coordination and review mechanism. The adoption of a new National Strategy, covering the period 2019-2022, was discussed at the beginning of 2019, but it has not yet been adopted.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA



The National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015-2020) is intended to foster the integration of BIPs in Bulgaria and is funded from the state budget, as well as from EU financial instruments and other international donor programmes. There is no ministry primarily responsible for integration and no ministerial responsibility for the provision of language classes and housing for BIPs. Local authorities and social partners are mentioned as parties in the integration process without specific guidelines and designated funding. The strategy foresees a yearly action plan including the monitoring and review of policies for the integration of BIPs. However, there is no duty to take into account the advice and recommendations of local authorities and NGOs.

4.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



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



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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

NATIONAL STRATEGY INVOLVING ALL RELEVANT MINISTRIES, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND STAKEHOLDERS

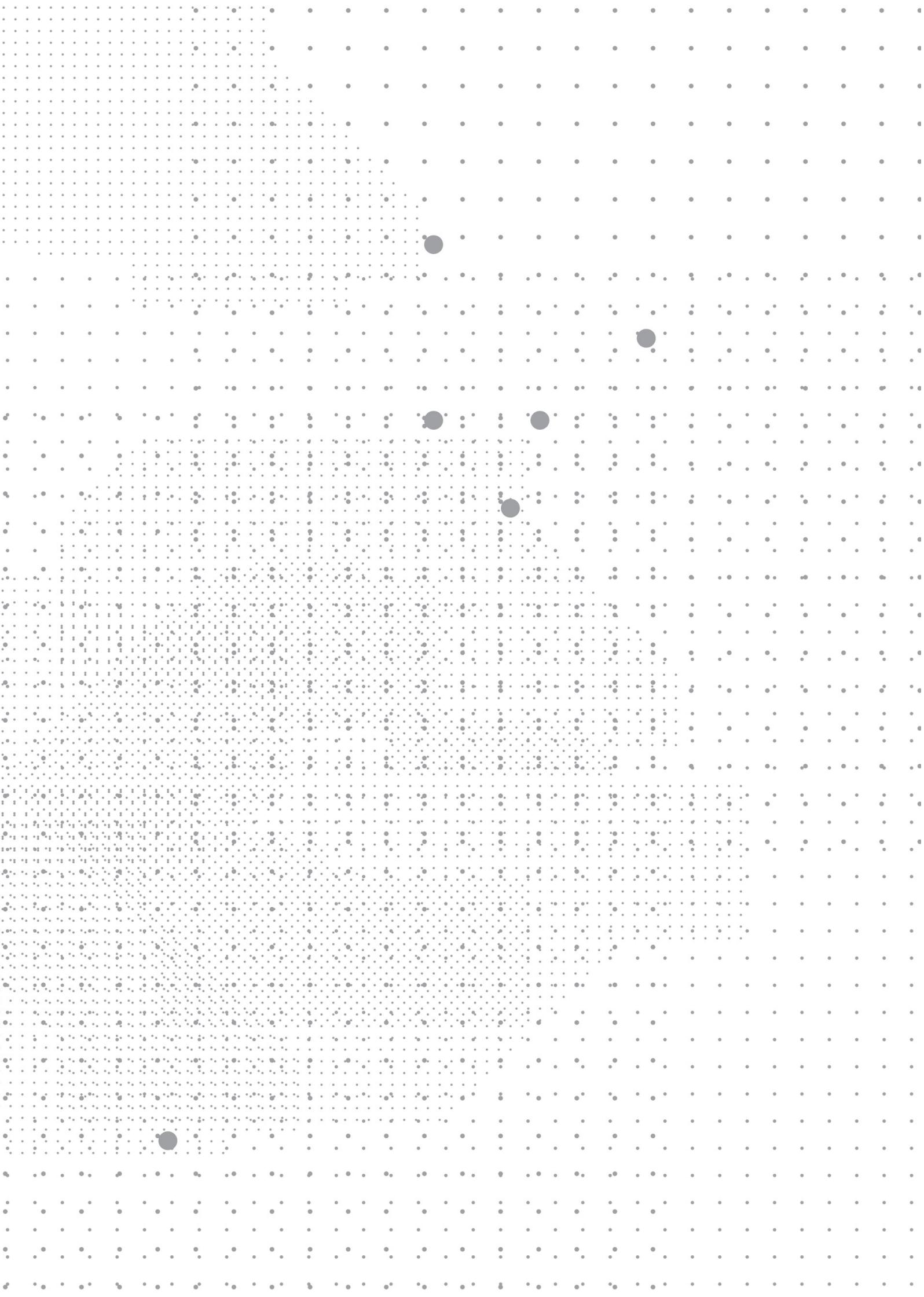


In **France**, the inter-ministerial delegation for the reception and integration of refugees (DiAir) created in January 2018 is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Strategy in close collaboration with all relevant ministries (interior, employment, housing, education and health),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

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



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



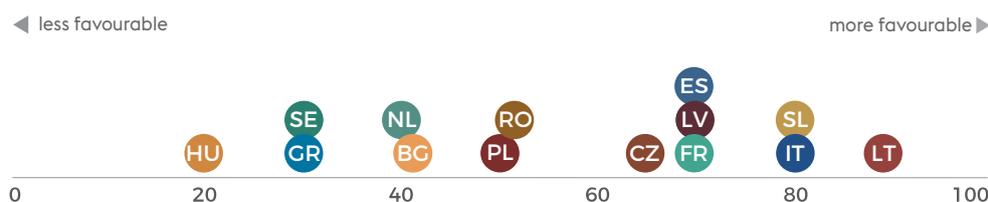
5. Residency

A secure residence status is a precondition of successful integration in all areas of life, as it provides beneficiaries of international protection with a perspective in the new country and ensures equal rights and treatment as national citizens. Acquiring long-term residence further secures the status and additional rights, including the right to free movement within the EU. With a long-term perspective, employers, national and local actors are encouraged to devote time and money to the integration process. Beneficiaries of international protection will be more likely to be hired and trained, will be better protected from exploitation and poor housing as more landlords will be willing to rent to them. Having a secure or long-term permit plays a role in a surprising number of services and transactions, such as opening a bank account, asking for a business loan or acquiring complementary health insurance.

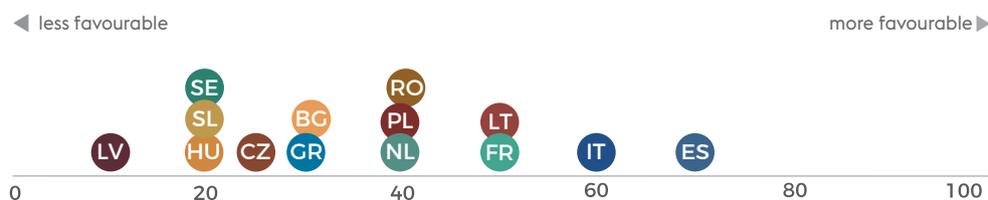
5.1. Results 2019 by country

Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees



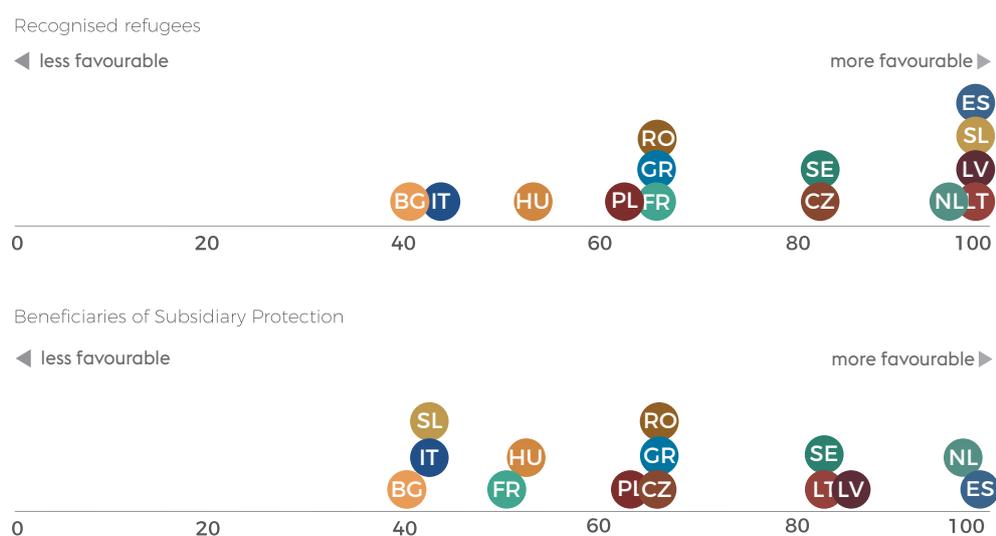
Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

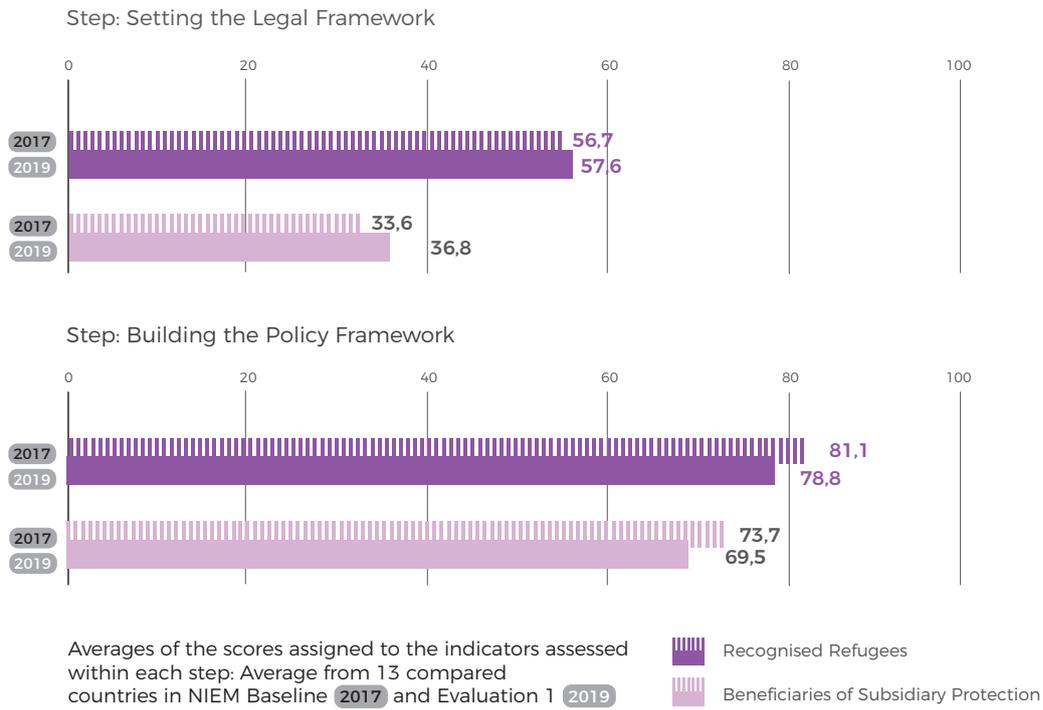
- Administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence
- Fees for obtaining permanent/long term residence

5.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

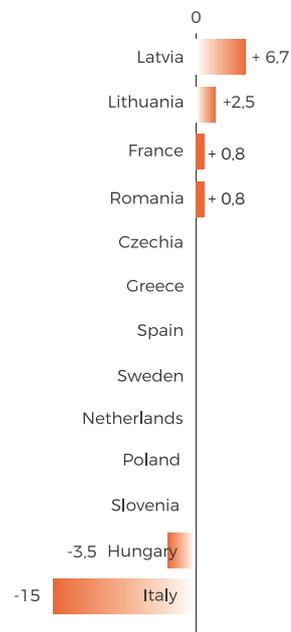
The overall results on residency show a slight improvement of the legal protection of refugees and BSPs in 2019 in comparison with 2017 across all the 13 countries. Some legal developments took place in France, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden. The most dynamic indicators concern the type and duration of residence permit upon recognition and the facilitated conditions for BIPs and vulnerable persons to apply for a residence permit.

Policy-related indicators in the residency dimension refer to administrative barriers and fees for obtaining permanent/long term residence. No relevant improvements can be noted in relation to refugees, and conditions deteriorated for BSPs in some countries. The most significant deterioration relates to a sharp hike in fees in Italy. No changes are seen in Czechia, Greece, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden and Spain.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **Latvia**, beneficiaries are now not required to pay the fees of obtaining the residency permit and therefore can enjoy better conditions.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, vulnerable groups of BIPs benefit from facilitated conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residency, compared to ordinary BIPs. However, this reflects only the situation of recognised refugees and not of BSPs who, upon recognition, receive only temporary residence permits and after five years, need to meet the same conditions as other foreigners in order to apply for permanent residence.
- ▶ In **Lithuania**, facilitated conditions have been introduced for BSPs for acquiring permanent/long-term residence. The period of residence required now includes half of the time which has lapsed from lodging the application for asylum to the issue of a temporary residence permit, or even the entire period if it lasted for more than 18 months.
- ▶ In **France**, positive legal changes apply to BSPs with regard to the residence permit provided and facilitated conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residence. As of March 2019, BSPs are entitled to a ten-year residence permit by right after four years of residence.
- ▶ In **Romania**, conditions for some vulnerable persons applying for permanent/long-term residence have been waived. In particular, requirements concerning previous residence, financial means, health insurance, housing or language knowledge are all waived for unaccompanied minors.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, the legal and policy framework concerning issuing residence permits has not changed in 2019 but there was an increasing resort by BIPs to the EC long term residence permit. Instead of mostly applying for the national permanent residence permit (which is granted after three years of residence and does not allow time awaiting an asylum decision to be considered), BIPs instead apply for an EC long-term residence permit which can be granted after five years of residence and allows for the time awaiting the asylum decision to be counted.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Italy**, the fees for the residency procedure are now higher and may represent an obstacle for both recognised refugees and BSPs to obtain residency.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, policies became more restrictive for both refugees and BSPs, where not only the lack of valid travel documents and a clean criminal record from the country of origin are obstacles to obtain residency. As of January 2019, foreigners in Hungary may only have one residence “purpose”, so BIPs have to renounce their refugee/beneficiary of subsidiary protection status if they want to apply for permanent residence. This provision is manifestly contrary to EU law. In addition, having adequate accommodation and means of subsistence continues to be a challenge for many BIPs, with diverging practice concerning the financial resources considered “adequate”.
- ▶ In **Sweden**, the legal framework slightly deteriorated for refugees and BSPs, because the conditions for vulnerable persons applying for permanent/long-

term residence are now the same as for ordinary beneficiaries of international protection.

- ▶ In **France**, BSPs are now found to encounter several administrative obstacles when applying for residency: BIPs are, indeed, treated as a priority group by the prefecture, and there is a fixed maximum period of three months in which the applicant must receive his/her permit. But in practice, they can wait up to one year to receive their residence permit. Moreover, for a while after March 2019, BSPs were sometimes victims of discretionary decisions by some prefectures which asked them to pay a fee of 250 euros for the issuance of their first residence permit, even though they are exempted from this fee by law.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, conditions deteriorated for BSPs with regard to administrative barriers. In particular, the residency procedures can last very long, and there is always the chance that subsidiary protection is not prolonged and BSPs lose their status. In addition, the fees for recognised refugees to become permanent/long-term residents almost tripled from 2017 to 2019.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA



Overall, the less advantageous results in legal indicators are exacerbated by the differential treatment of recognized refugees and BSPs. The state provides a residence permit valid for at least five years for refugees and three years for BSPs, which is extendable without requirements concerning previous residence, financial means, health insurance, housing or language knowledge. However, the conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residence (i.e., economic resources, language knowledge, housing, integration, fees, etc.) are the same as for TCNs for all beneficiaries of international protection. Facilitated conditions, instead, apply to unaccompanied minors as a result of a new law adopted in 2019 which introduces the possibility to grant “continuous” (for a renewable period of up to one year) residence permits to unaccompanied children of foreign nationality who have not applied for asylum or whose asylum application has been rejected. The indicators related to the policy framework present some obstacles for BIPs. In order to obtain an identity document, applicants must present a certificate on their permanent address issued by the municipality. This certificate is often difficult to obtain because of issues related to access to housing in Bulgaria. In addition, the fees to obtain a residency permit are very high compared to the low amount of the minimum social assistance.

5.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, beneficiaries of international protection have a long-term perspective that is relatively secure and improves quickly over time. Upon

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

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

| In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework | for recognised refugees | for BSPs |
|---|--|---|
| ... provide, upon recognition, a residence permit valid for at least 5 years. |  |  |
| ... renew the residence permit automatically or make renewal not necessary. |  |  |
| ... count, when granting permanent/long-term residence, all time waiting for the asylum decision towards the resident requirement (if not granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition). |  |  |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------|----------------|
| ... waive for BIPs the conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residence (economic resources, language knowledge, housing, integration, fees, etc.) which normally apply for third-country nationals. | ES FR LT LV SL | — |
| ... ensure facilitated conditions for groups of vulnerable BIPs applying for permanent/long-term residence by waiving conditions or by granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition. | LT SL | LT |
| In the Step: Building the Policy Framework ... pose no administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence with regard to required documentation, delays/ waiting periods and discretionary decisions. | CZ ES LT LV PL SL | CZ ES LT LV PL |
| ... ask no fees to obtain a residence permit, renew the residence permit or become permanent/long-term resident which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary). | CZ ES LV LT NL SE SL | ES LT NL SE SL |

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS



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

Italy, Latvia, France and Slovenia, where integration policies for recognized refugees are very favourable, but standards are significantly lower for BSPs.

ABSENCE OF FEES



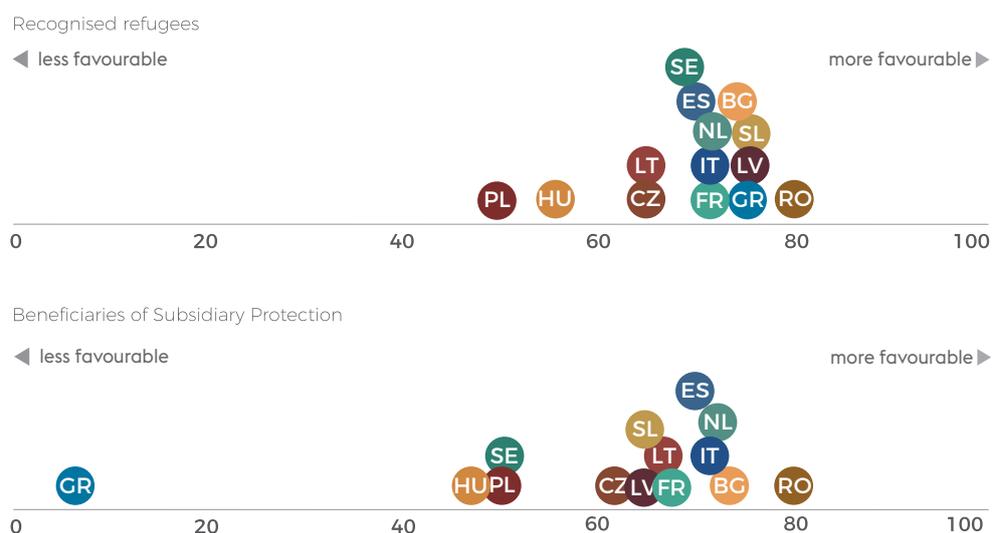
A positive practice can be found in **Latvia** where, since the second half of 2016, if the first application for international protection is successful, beneficiaries are not required to pay the fee of obtaining the residency permit. A small fee is instead provided for BSPs which does not jeopardise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

6. Family reunification

For beneficiaries of international protection forcibly separated from their families, rapid family reunification and a stable family life are a fundamental precondition to start rebuilding their lives. Facilitating the requirements and procedures for family reunification is likely to lead to less irregular migration and smuggling, as refugees will no longer be forced to turn in desperation to unsafe channels to restore family unity. Family reunification is Europe's only major channel for the legal migration of families and children in need of international protection, entailing fewer risks for vulnerable groups, such as women, children and the elderly. It is also in governments' best interest to keep families, authorities and local receiving communities better informed and prepared for their arrival.

6.1. Results 2019 by country

Step: Setting the Legal Framework

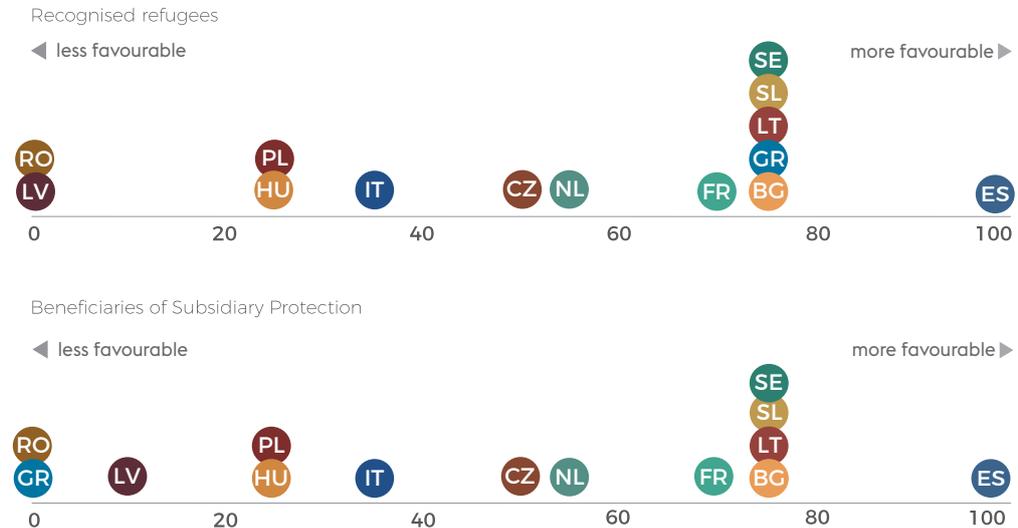


Assessed indicators:

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

- Expedited length of procedure for family reunification
- Status of family members
- Autonomous residence permits for family members
- Access to services for family members

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

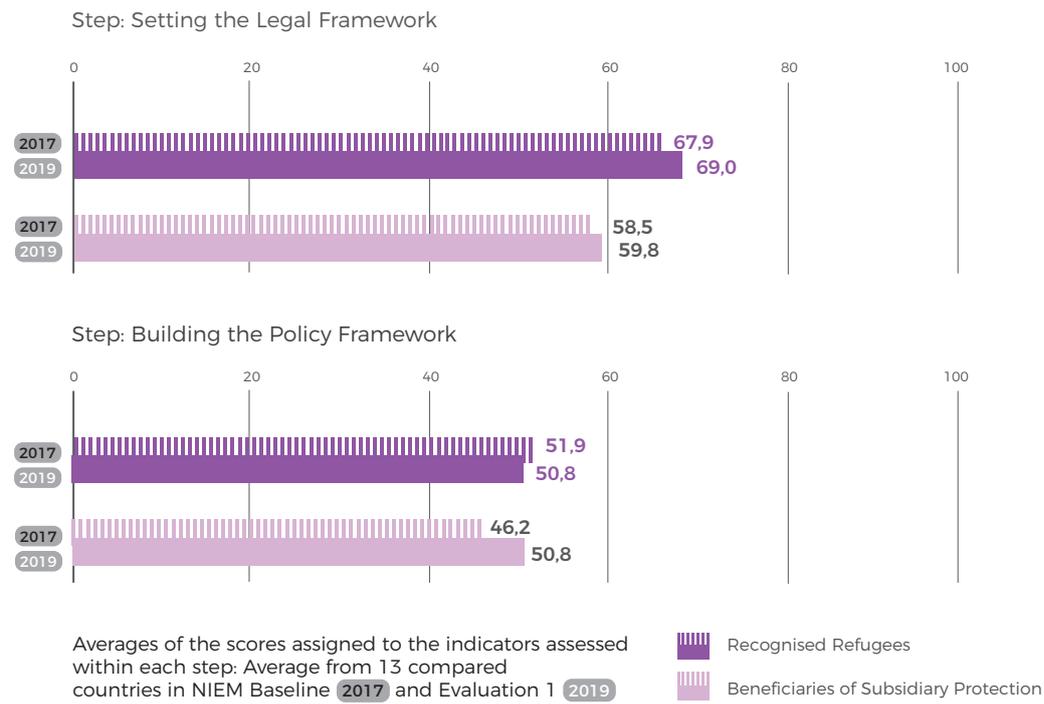
- Family tracing services
- Fees for family reunification

6.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

No significant changes affected the legal framework concerning family reunification across the 13 countries included both in the NIEM baseline and first evaluation. By and large, most national laws are in line with the EU Family Reunification Directive. However, restrictive provisions still affect vulnerable persons, as facilitated conditions are generally not provided in the Member States and only minors are covered by some special provisions.

Policy-related indicators related to fees and the availability of family tracing services do not show any important changes between 2017 and 2019 in most of the assessed countries. Most countries still obtain low scores as their policies do not allow a smooth implementation of the right to family reunion in practice, jeopardising the effectiveness of the provisions enshrined in their legal frameworks. In Italy, a sharp rise in fees represents a major new obstacle for refugees to unify with their family members.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, some improvements for BSPs have been in place since the 1st of March 2019. Family members (spouse/partner and unmarried minor children) of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can now receive a comparative legal status (derivative status) under the principle of family unity. However, spouses and partners have to be married or partners for at least one year if the marriage/partnership was founded after the asylum application of the BIP. Moreover, as of the 1st of January 2019, unaccompanied minors under international protection can be reunited with their first degree parents along with their dependent unmarried minor siblings.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, fees for family reunification have been reduced for BIPs, especially for BSPs. However, fees are still very high in comparison with the minimum social assistance provided to BIPs and, therefore, undermine their possibility to successfully navigate the overall procedure.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Italy**, the fees for family reunification tripled to 207 EUR in 2019 and have become a huge obstacle for BIPs to apply for family reunion. It is also worth noting that the overall procedure is very complex, and applications have diminished due to various factors such as the decrease of international protection permits and the change of the migration flows.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA

BC

Bulgaria's positive scores on family reunification reflect the proper transposition of obligations stemming from EU and international law. Two laws regulate the right to family reunification in the country: the Law on Asylum and Refugees (LAR) and the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria. They provide different conditions, but practice shows that most refugees resort to the LAR because it enshrines more favourable provisions. Equal protection is ensured for recognized refugees and BSPs. A broad definition of family unit is enshrined in the law, including minor children and spouse/partner, the members of the ascending line when beneficiaries are minors or disabled, and dependents who are adult children or members of the ascending line. There is no residency requirement for BIPs to be able to apply for family reunification and no economic, language, integration, health requirements are imposed by the law to obtain family reunification. However, there are no facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification. If refugees apply under the Law on Asylum and Refugees, which is the regular practice, the family reunification service is free. A fee of 105 EUR is, instead, foreseen under the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Bulgaria, which is very high compared to the amount beneficiaries may receive as minimum social assistance. Also, there is no

legal right for family members to access integration, language, education, employment, social security and health care programmes when they receive the status of a continuous residence permit. On the other hand, those who apply under the Law on Asylum and Refugees have access to this type of support to the extent available at all.

6.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

Among the various requirements, integration measures can only be applied for refugees and their family members once family reunification has been granted, meaning that, for example, family members cannot be required to take integration or language tests prior to their arrival. Specific attention should be given to refugees' individual circumstances to assess if they can be exempted from taking language or civic integration tests. This assessment should take into account their age, education level, economic situation and health. The European Commission Guidelines on the Family Reunification Directive stipulate that the purpose of these measures is to verify the willingness of family members to integrate. A disproportionate level of integration measures is considered to be a barrier to this purpose. Language and integration courses should be offered in an accessible manner in several places, for free or for an affordable price, and be tailored to individual needs, taking into account, for example, the vulnerability of the refugees.

Under international law, the right to family life is secured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 16) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 8), establishing a positive obligation on states to render this right

effective. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects family unity and prescribes that a child cannot be separated from his or her parents against their will (Art. 9). The Convention requires States to deal with family reunification requests in a positive, humane and expeditious manner (Art. 10). The Geneva Convention underlines that family unity is an essential right of refugees and makes recommendations for respecting the principle of family unity (Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

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

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| ... not impose a language assessment requirement for family reunification. | BG CZ ES FR GR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL | BG CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL |
| ... not impose a requirement to comply with integration measures for family reunification. | BG CZ ES FR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL | BG CZ ES FR HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL |
| ... not impose a time limit for facilitated requirements for family reunification. | BG ES FR IT LV RO | BG ES FR IT LV RO |
| ... provide for exemptions from the documentation requirement and alternative methods when documents are missing. | GR NL | NL |
| ... not impose DNA/age tests to verify family links. | BG CZ FR GR HU LV NL PL RO SE SL | BG CZ FR HU NL LV PL RO SE SL |
| ... provide for facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification. | — | — |
| ... entitle family members to the same legal status as their sponsor. | BG ES GR NL RO SE | BG ES LT NL RO SE |
| ... allow family members to wait less than three years to obtain a residence permit which is autonomous of their sponsor. | ES FR RO SE | ES FR RO SE |
| ... to provide family members with the same legal right as their sponsor to access services. | BG CZ ES FR GR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL | BG CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL |
| In the Step: Building the Policy Framework | | |
| ... provide for government-sponsored family tracing services. | ES PL | ES PL |
| ... ask no fees to obtain family reunification which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary). | BG CZ ES FR GR LT SL SE | BG CZ ES FR LT SE SL |

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK



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

ABSENCE OF FEES



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

DURATION OF FAMILY REUNIFICATION PROCEDURES



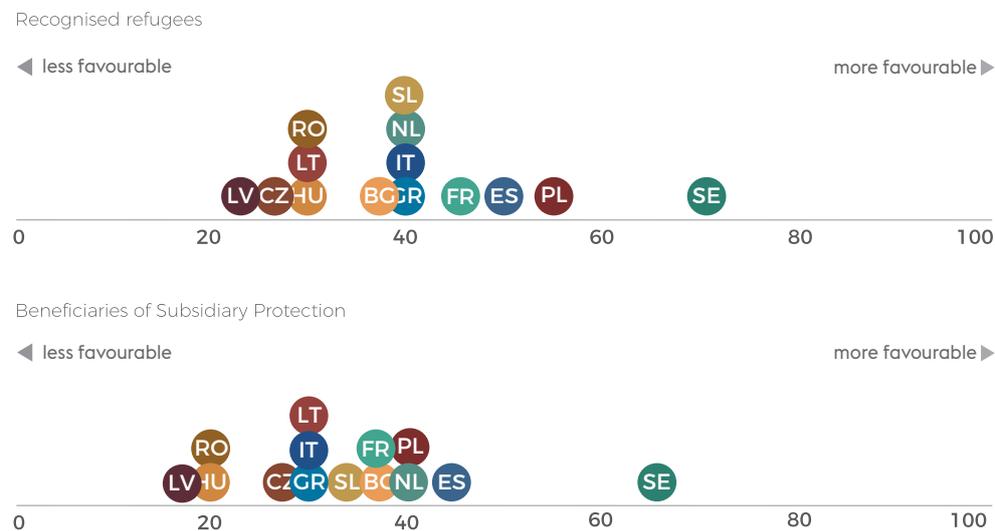
With regard to the duration of family reunification procedures, data gaps in most countries render it impossible to assess this NIEM indicator in a comparative way. However, in **Sweden**, 77% of family reunion cases in 2018, including voluntary migrants, were processed within six months, and 44% of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

7. Citizenship

Access to citizenship enables migrants and beneficiaries of international protection to become full and equal members of society. It confers specific legal rights and duties, such as the right to reside without restriction in the territory of the state of citizenship, the right to vote in elections and the right to hold public office or be employed in selected public sector jobs. Citizenship represents a fundamental prerequisite for exercising political rights, and for developing a sense of identity and belonging to a country. The access to citizenship must not be hindered by discretionary and costly procedures which deter rather than encourage beneficiaries of international protection to apply and succeed as new citizens.

7.1. Results 2019 by country

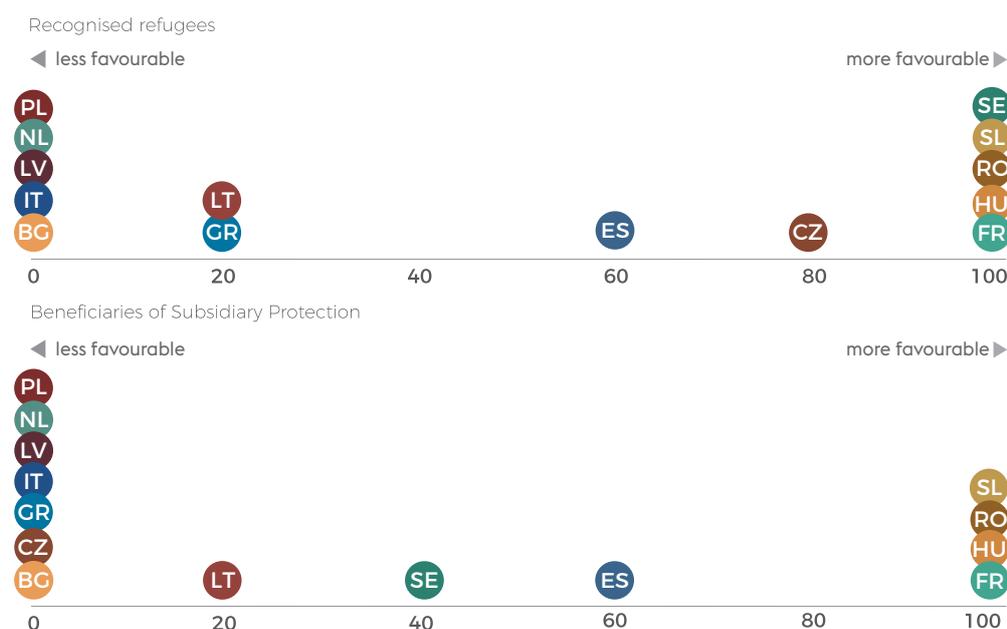
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators

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

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicator:

- Fees for naturalisation

7.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

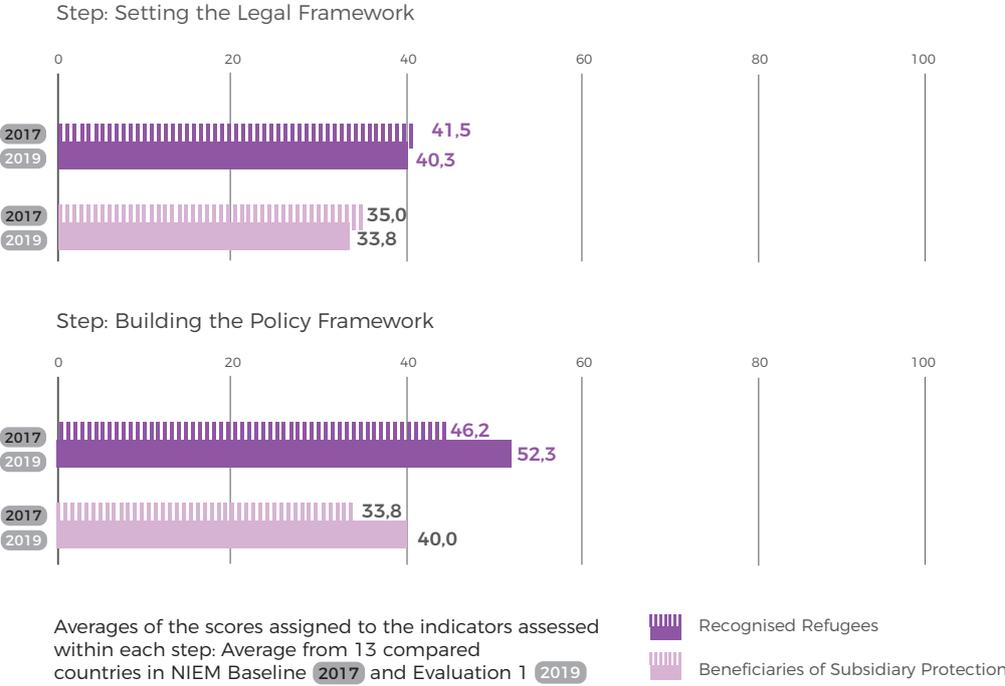
The citizenship dimension appears as a very static area which has seen only few developments. While in Italy, Lithuania and Romania the legal guarantees for BIPs have been reduced on a small scale, significant decreases and increases of naturalisation fees mark citizenship policies in Italy and Romania, respectively.

Overall, insufficient legal practices still hamper the access to naturalisation in all the countries with the few exceptions of Spain and Sweden. BSPs receive in most cases a less favourable treatment when compared with recognised refugees. In most of the countries, the fees can represent an obstacle for BIPs to obtain citizenship.

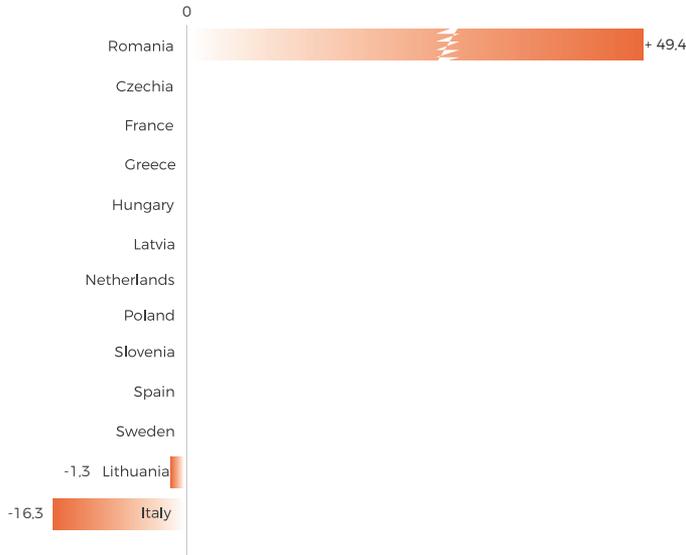
For instance, more favourable residence requirements for naturalisation compared with other third-country nationals are typically provided only for recognised refugees and not for BSPs. It is common practice that recognized refugees receive a longer-term/permanent residence permit upon awarding their status, while persons under subsidiary protection only are eligible for temporary permits and can apply for a permanent residence permit only after five years of prolonged temporary residence in the country. This legal framework implies that the time period for naturalisation for persons under subsidiary protection is twice as long. In addition, the economic, integration and criminal record requirements to apply for citizenship are frequently the same for BIPs as for other TCNs, and may be burdensome, demotivating and detrimental to long-term integration.

With regard to fees for naturalisation, not many developments took place across the assessed countries, with the notable exceptions of Romania where no fees applied in 2019 and Italy, where fees increased. In most of the countries, the fees can represent an obstacle for BIPs to obtain citizenship.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, fees for naturalisation were abolished.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Italy**, the language assessment requirement for BIPs' naturalisation is the same as for ordinary TCNs. A new decree from 2018 has introduced the requirement for BIPs to prove knowledge of the Italian language on at least a B1 level.
- ▶ Also in **Italy**, fees for naturalisation increased significantly as did the maximum time limit of the procedure, which now reaches up to four years.
- ▶ In **Lithuania**, the absence of documents is a reason to refuse an application for naturalization, and there are no alternative procedures provided by the law.
- ▶ In **Romania**, while the Citizenship Law exempts recognised refugees from certain document requirements, in practice, BSPs are exempted only in certain cases, subject to the discretionary decision of the Citizenship Commission.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA

BG

Low scores have been obtained by Bulgaria as regards the legal framework, which does not provide for very favourable conditions to apply for citizenship. The number of years' residence required for recognised refugees to obtain citizenship is only three years, while it is up to five years for BSPs. In this regard, both the years as a long-term resident and the years as a beneficiary of international protection are counted towards the residence requirement. Negatively, the economic, criminal record and language requirements are the same for this group as for other TCNs. By contrast, there is no "integration" assessment necessary for naturalisation. Some alternative methods where documents are not available are provided by law. There are limited facilitated conditions for vulnerable BIPs applying for naturalisation. The average duration of a naturalisation procedure is, in fact, very long – up to 18 months. Also, fees are high and represent more than the 50% of the minimum social assistance.

7.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Art. 34) and the European Convention on Nationality (Art. 6.4 in conjunction with Art. 16) requires states to provide for special acquisition procedures or facilitated naturalisation for recognised refugees. In the EU, every country has the ultimate competence to establish the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality.

Member States therefore retain full control over who can be recognised as a citizen. However, any person who holds the nationality of any EU country is automatically also an EU citizen, and EU citizenship is conferred directly on every EU citizen by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. EU citizenship is additional to and does not replace national citizenship. It also confers a number of additional rights and privileges. For instance, citizens of the Union have a primary and individual right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaty and to the measures adopted to give it effect.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

| In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework | for recognised refugees | for BSPs |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| ... allow for naturalisation after three years of residence or earlier. | BG FR GR HU | — |
| ... count all years as a permanent/long-term resident, as a BIP as well as awaiting an asylum decision towards the residence period required for naturalisation. | ES FR NL PL RO SE SL | ES FR NL PL RO SE SL |
| ... impose no economic resource requirement for naturalisation. | ES NL PL SE | ES NL SE |
| ... impose no language assessment for naturalisation. | SE | SE |
| ... impose no integration/citizenship assessment requirement for naturalisation. | BG IT LT PL SE SL | BG IT LT PL SE SL |
| ... reduce or not foresee a criminal record requirement for naturalisation. | FR PL | FR PL |
| ... provide for exemptions from documentation requirements and for alternative methods where documents are not available. | ES GR SE | ES GR SE |
| ... waive conditions for vulnerable persons applying for naturalisation (UAMs, the elderly, victims of violence and trauma, the disabled). | LT | LT |
| ... provide for the automatic naturalisation of the second generation. | IT SE | IT SE |
| ... commit by law to treat applications for naturalisation as soon as possible, prioritising BIPs. | — | — |

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... exempt BIPs from naturalisation fees or provide for a fee that amounts to less than 20% of the monthly minimum social assistance.

CZ FR HU RO

FR HU RO

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

HIGH OVERALL STANDARDS

SE

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

ABSENCE OF FEES

HU RO SE SL

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

8. Housing

Quality housing is a basic condition for a decent living. Housing offers not merely a shelter, but also a space for personal development and family, a local community and the opportunity for enhanced interaction with locals. Too often, a limited income and lack of knowledge of local circumstances, combined with disproportionate rents and deposits, push beneficiaries of international protection to marginalised areas wanting in employment opportunities, schools, hospitals and medical centres or integration services. Targeted housing support increases the self-sufficiency of beneficiaries of international protection, especially for vulnerable groups, who tend to face more obstacles to becoming financially independent. General housing policies must answer the needs of persons under international protection even where resources are scarce, and coordinate interventions between different levels of government.

8.1. Results 2019 by country

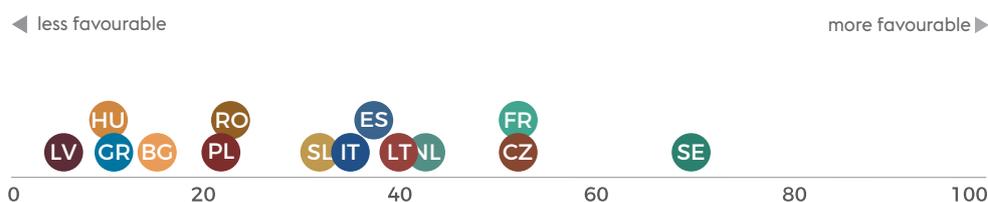
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Building the Policy Framework

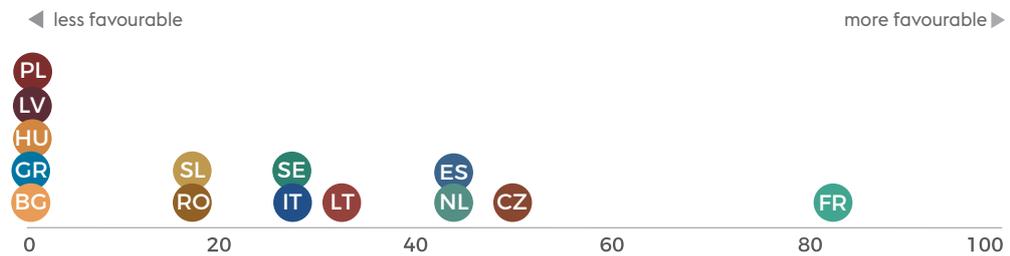


Assessed indicators:

- Access to housing for vulnerable persons
- Awareness raising about the specific challenges of beneficiaries of international protection on the housing market
- Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation
- Provision of targeted temporary housing support
- Provision of targeted long-term housing support

- Period of targeted housing support
- Administrative barriers to accessing public housing
- Housing quality assessment

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

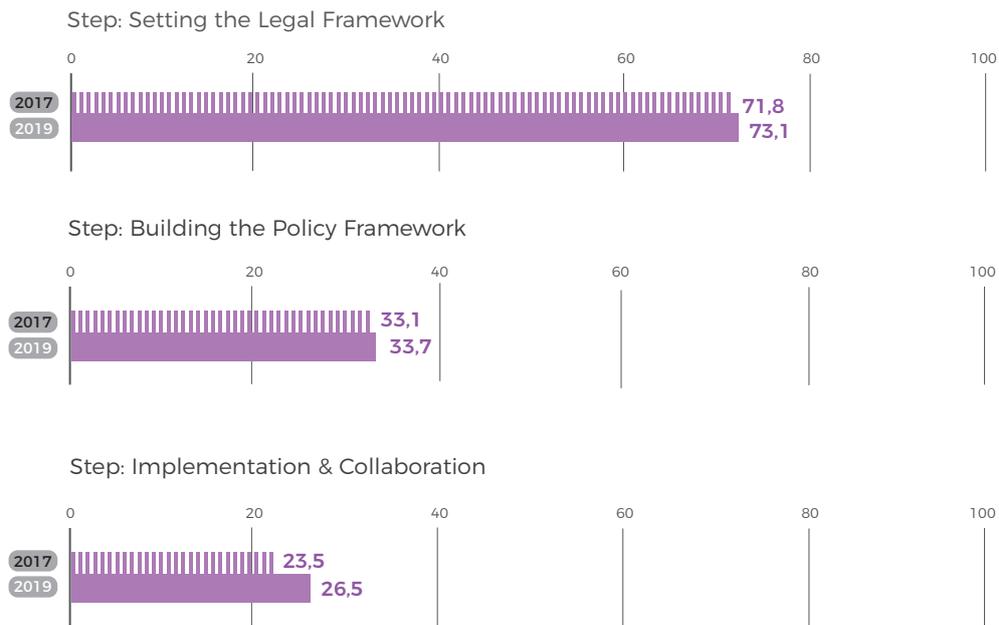
- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into housing policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on housing for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on housing with expert NGOs

8.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

Most of the assessed countries, with the exception of Greece, have favourable laws to ensure access to housing for BIPs. The legal framework has not been affected by any changes in the majority of countries in the 2017 to 2019 period, with the exceptions of Hungary and Romania. On the other side, the majority of countries have deficient policy frameworks which fail to fully ensure actual provision of accommodation, with Czechia, France and Sweden having the most favourable conditions.

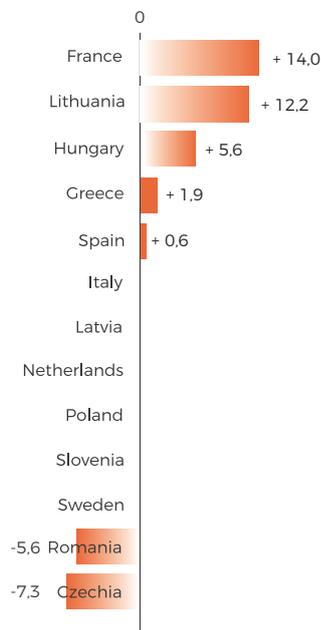
Policy-related indicators show rather minor developments in only six countries, with improvements in France, Greece, Lithuania and Spain. With regard to implementation and collaboration, however, some important positive developments have taken place in France and Lithuania, while Czechia and Hungary witnessed steps backwards. Overall, most of the assessed countries still lack mainstreaming, multi-level-coordination and cooperation with civil society to promote the integration of BIPs in the housing sector.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline 2017 and Evaluation 1 2019

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, the government has made considerable efforts since the end of 2017 to address the housing needs of BIPs in the context of the National Strategy for the Reception and Integration of Refugees, adopted in June 2018. This includes the creation of new accommodation space as well as awareness-raising measures for public housing bodies. Collaboration with regional and local authorities has also been strengthened.
- ▶ In **Lithuania**, the adoption of the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society represents an important step to mainstream the integration of BIPs into housing policies. In addition, a new law foresees accommodation in a reception centre or temporary housing for a full range of vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied minors, the elderly or victims of violence and trauma.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, access to property rights for BIPs improved significantly. The previous unlawful practice that obliged BIPs to apply for a specific authorisation before buying real estate was discontinued and BIPs now have the same rights as Hungarian nationals in this respect.
- ▶ In **Greece**, fewer discretionary decisions are reported as posing barriers to accessing housing.
- ▶ In **Spain**, authorities have to take into account the affordability of housing when allocating in-kind housing assistance for BIPs.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Czechia**, the targeted housing support previously provided to all BIPs for up to 36 months covered by the State Integration Programme is being phased out. For newly recognised BIPs, such support, channelled through the municipalities, is available only for the elderly and people with disabilities.
- ▶ In **Romania**, the legal access to housing has been restricted for BIPs because new provisions adopted by the local councils require them to meet the criteria of “citizenship or domicile” in certain administrative-territorial units in order to have access to social housing. By doing so, the regulations de facto narrows access to housing to nationals alone.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, where indicators on housing support for BIPs already in 2017 highlighted a complete lack of policies, the situation further deteriorated. Legislation on state financial support to families in purchasing or constructing their homes now expressly excludes BIPs. In addition, in January 2018, the government withdrew most of the calls under the AMIF National Programme and has not issued new calls in the field of integration. As a consequence, since July 2018, no projects have been implemented to support any activities facilitating access to housing of BIPs in Hungary.

Bulgaria has a slightly advantageous legal framework on housing. BIPs have the same right for free movement and residence as nationals, as well as the right to equal treatment in housing and housing benefits. However, they have to fulfill general conditions which they cannot be expected to meet as newcomers; and while having the right to acquire real estate, they face restrictions in relation to the ownership of land.

Policy-related indicators show an overall restrictive framework. After receiving their status, BIPs are entitled to benefit from assistance for housing for a period of six months from the entry into force of the decision. However, this limited housing support is not secure, as it depends, *inter alia*, on the discretion of the management of the center. Moreover, targeted housing support is required by law only for unaccompanied minors and not for other vulnerable groups. Each municipality decides autonomously on the order and conditions for providing public housing, with most of them requiring at least five years of local residence and Bulgarian nationality. There are no awareness-raising activities about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market, nor are there targeted measures like housing advice, counselling or representation. Mainstreaming, multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation are non-existent in the housing area.

8.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



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



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



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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

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

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



FR: partially

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



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



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

... provide country-wide housing quality assessment.



In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



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



ES: most BIPs not covered

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

FULL ACCESS TO HOUSING AND HOUSING BENEFITS



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

ACCOMMODATION, CARE AND GUARDIANSHIP FOR UNACCOMPANIED MINORS



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

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



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

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

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

UPGRADING AND LINKING ACCOMMODATION TO COMMUNITY-LEVEL INTEGRATION



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

TARGETED HOUSING SUPPORT



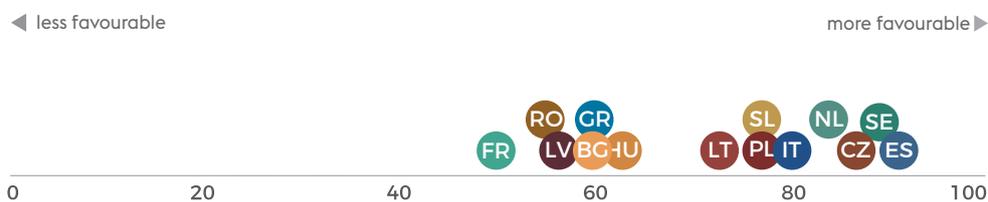
Sweden provides the best conditions among the assessed countries with regard to policy-related indicators in the area of housing. Each region and municipality is allocated a specific number of beneficiaries whom they can accommodate each year and is made responsible for providing public housing. The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

9. Employment

Employment is a key path to a secure income, self-sufficiency and, in some cases, eligibility for long-term residence and citizenship. It allows beneficiaries of international protection to contribute to the economy and add to the prosperity of the receiving society with their skills and qualifications. Parental employment increases family incomes and enables refugee children to attain higher levels of education. Support for the recognition of professional and academic qualifications and alternative assessment methods offer beneficiaries of international protection a better chance of gaining employment in line with their skill level.

9.1. Results 2019 by country

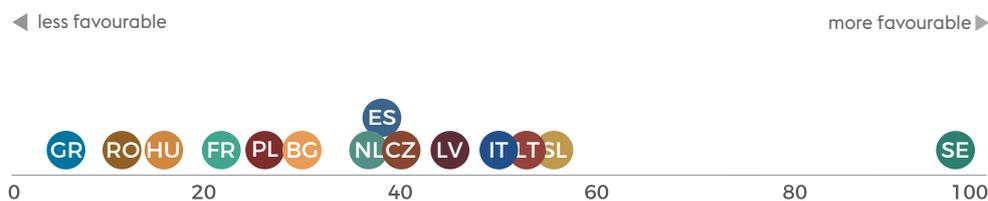
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Building the Policy Framework

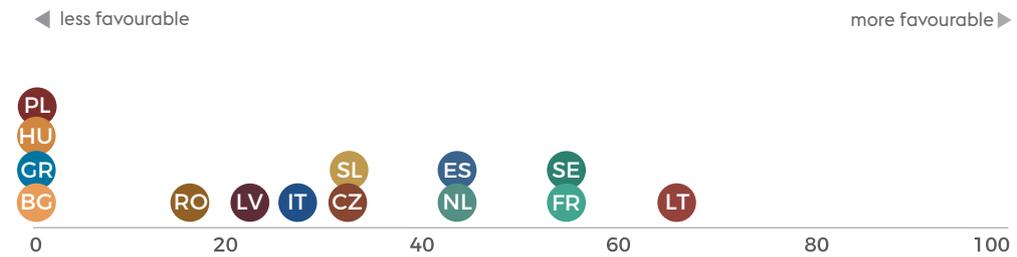


Assessed indicators:

- Access to employment for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to accessing employment
- Awareness raising about the specific labour market situation of beneficiaries of international protection
- Assessment of skills

- Job-seeking counselling and positive action
- Targeted support for entrepreneurs

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

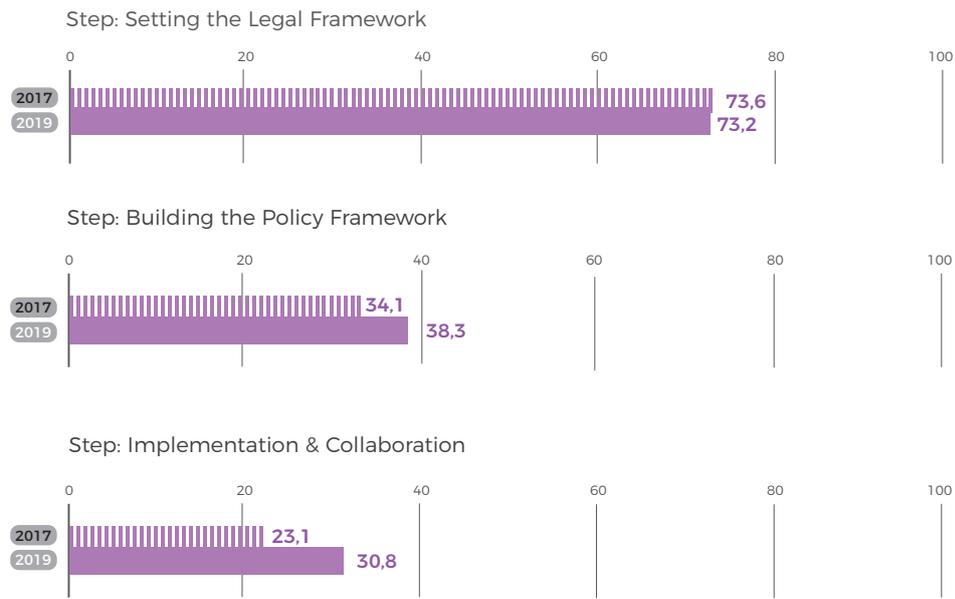
- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into employment policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on employment for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on employment with expert NGOs or non-profit employment support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

9.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

Across the assessed countries, there have been no major legal developments in the employment dimension. A few changes have been identified only in Romania and Spain. By contrast, policy indicators show a higher dynamic, characterised by some improvements in France, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. A minor deterioration can be noted in Romania, while in most of the countries there has been no policy-related change.

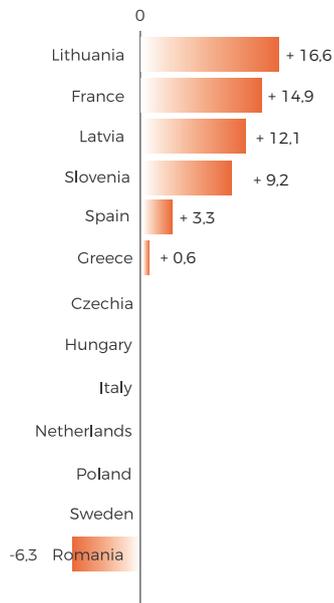
Concerning implementation and collaboration, partly significant improvements took hold in France, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. The general pattern that countries mostly advanced in the implementation and collaboration step in the 2017 to 2019 period thus is particularly seen in the employment dimension.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline 2017 and Evaluation 1 2019

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **Lithuania**, positive developments took place both with regard to policies as well as implementation and collaboration. The Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society has brought together relevant employment stakeholders and led to new employment support, awareness raising and entrepreneurship training measures.
- ▶ In **France**, targeted employment support for BIPs has been improved as a result of the 2018 to 2022 Skills Investment Plan. Access to mainstream job-seeking services for BIPs has also been strengthened. The office for immigration and integration (OFII) offers BIPs who face particular difficulties in finding employment the possibility to benefit from public employment support services.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, major developments occurred with regard to policies as well as implementation and collaboration, as the country's Action Plan includes strategies for promoting socio-economic inclusion of BIPs, and a project was set up at the State Employment Agency.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, the skills of BIPs are now widely and properly assessed. Job seekers have access to additional specialised vocational training courses. In another scheme, employers receive funds for the training of BIPs while beneficiaries receive transportation and food allowance. Coordination between the national government and employment bodies has improved as well.
- ▶ In **Spain**, when documents from the country of origin are unavailable, the procedure to recognize foreign diplomas and other qualifications accepts alternative documents or methods of assessment, such as tests or interviews, and the state provides assistance to complete the procedure.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, access to employment is becoming highly burdensome for newcomers, as the required documentation is very hard, or impossible, to obtain, and there are numerous and lengthy bureaucratic procedures, in particular, in sectors that require specific licenses and different processes of equivalence (e.g., health, education, architecture, etc.).
- ▶ In **Italy**, outside the scope of the two groups of BIPs assessed here, the repeal of the humanitarian permit and the introduction of new permits not convertible into work permits have made BIPs' access to the labour market more difficult.

In Bulgaria, BIPs have the same access to employment in the private sector as nationals, with conditions that can be met by newcomers. Regarding access to employment in the wider public sector, however, there are requirements that newcomers cannot meet. Similarly, if BIPs want to practice liberal professions, they must meet the same requirements as Bulgarian citizens, but conditions like the recognition of previous qualification to access regulated professions are difficult to comply with. BIPs have both a right to skill validation and accreditation of prior learning, as well as a right to recognition of formal degrees. The same procedures are available for them as for nationals, but these are burdensome because recognition is only available in possession of an original diploma. Thus, the procedure not only fails to take into account special needs if documents from the country of origin are unavailable; there is also no assistance to complete the procedure. Policy-related indicators are overall less favourable than the legal framework. On the encouraging side, positive action programmes, including training for professional qualifications and subsidised full-time employment for up to 12 months, are provided to BIPs. In addition, authorities inform public employment services about entitlements of BIPs on a needs basis, and there are no administrative barriers to access employment. Moreover, employment law does not take into account the specific situation of vulnerable groups, there are no assessment procedures of skills and no targeted measures for entrepreneurs exist. Concerning implementation and collaboration, formal mechanisms to mainstream the integration of BIPs into employment policies, coordination with regional and local levels and partnerships with expert NGOs and/or employment support organisations are missing throughout.

9.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration stipulates that employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants and the contributions they make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

| | |
|---|--|
| ... ensure full access to employment in the private sector, the wider public sector as well as the core administration. | SE |
| ... ensure full access to self-employment in general and to self-employment in the liberal professions. | ES HU IT LT SE |
| ... establish the right to recognition of formal degrees and to validation of skills. | BG CZ ES GR IT LT LV PL SE SL |
| ... ensure that the same procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications are available to BIPs as for nationals. | BG CZ ES HU IT LT LV NL PL RO SE SL |
| ... accept alternative methods of assessment when documents from the country of origin are unavailable and provide assistance in the recognition procedure. | CZ NL SE |

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

| | |
|---|-------------------------|
| ... ensure full access to employment for all groups of special concern. | — |
| ... not to impose any administrative barriers to accessing employment (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions). | BG CZ HU IT LT PL SE |
| ... raise awareness about the specific labour market situation of BIPs. | SE |
| ... provide for high standards in the assessment of skills (country-wide criteria, translation, procedures where documentation is missing). | CZ SL SE |
| ... provide for job-seeking counselling and positive action. | LT LV SL SE |
| ... provide targeted entrepreneurship support. | SE |

In the Step: Building the Implementation Framework

| | |
|--|-------|
| ... mainstream the integration of BIPs into employment policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review). | LT SE |
| ... coordinate with regional and local authorities and employment bodies on employment for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support. | NL SE |
| ... continuously provide means for expert NGOs or non-profit employment support organisations to assist BIPs to find employment. | CZ ES |

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

TARGETED INITIATIVE TO FOSTER REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT

FR

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

STRATEGY FOCUSED ON INFORMATION, AWARENESS RAISING AND CAMPAIGNS

LV

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

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PROCESS TO IMPROVE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

LT

The **Lithuanian** Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society foresees regular meetings with NGOs, the association of local authorities, ministries and other relevant organisations on integration issues, as well as monitoring of its implementation. It demands the organization of education events for employers to inform about integration needs, taking into account diversity in terms of gender, age, country of origin and family status. Not the least, the Action Plan requires targeted trainings

on how to start a business. Since June 2017, beneficiaries of international protection are included in the list of persons who receive additional support in the labour market.

COMPREHENSIVE AND COORDINATED LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION POLICIES



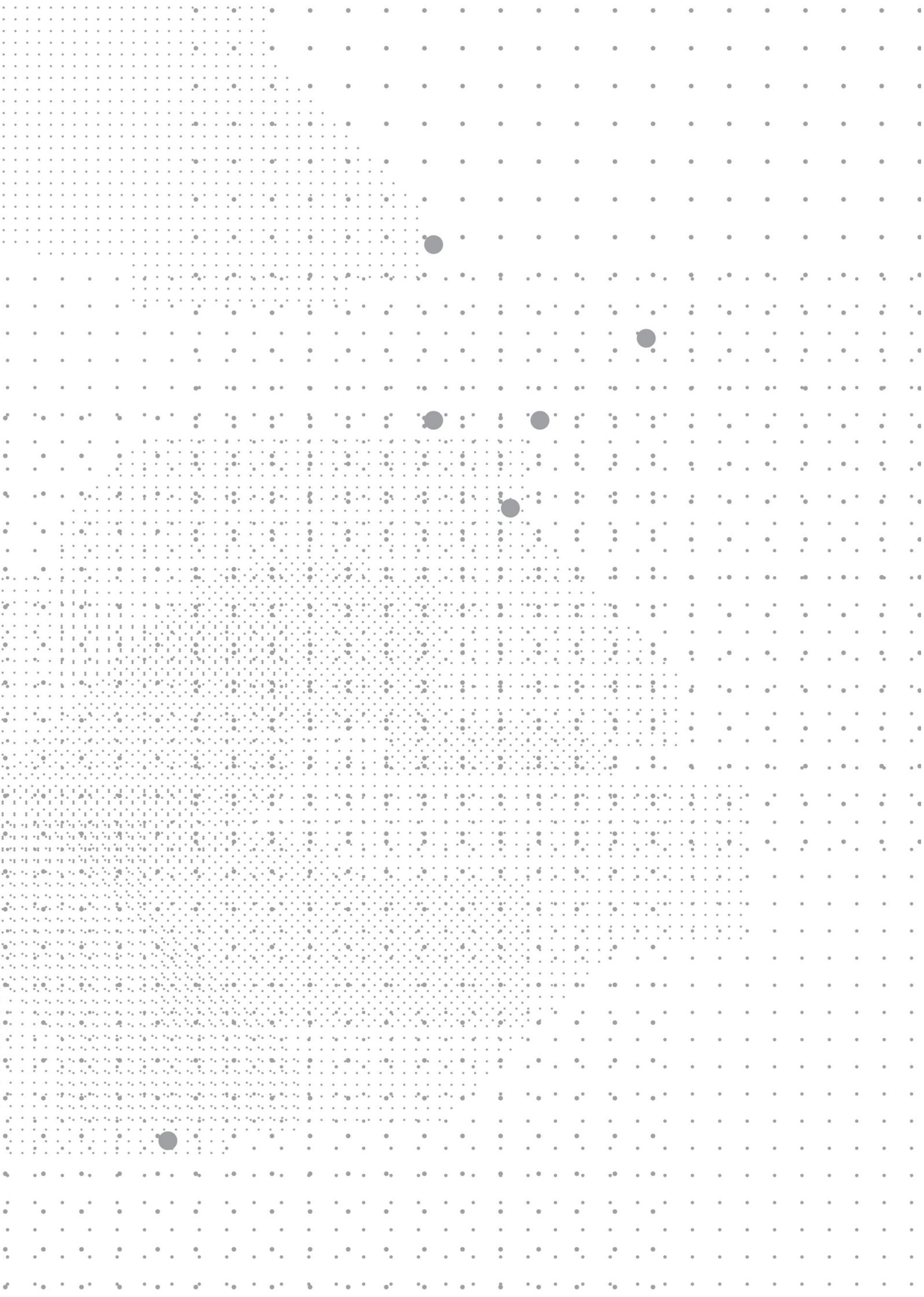
In **Sweden**, labour market integration is a core element of the country's dedicated government portfolio dealing with BIPs. The strategy involves social partners, state agencies, NGOs, local and regional levels of government. The Employment Service, as a co-ordinating actor, conducts regular evaluations of the introduction programme and reports to the government about the results of the measures. The programmes are implemented locally with regional coordination, and even if the Employment Service has the main responsibility for labour market measures, municipalities are often involved and have important roles, such as language training. Sweden obtains the highest score related to the policy-related indicators among the assessed countries, in addition to a highly favourable legal framework. The introduction programme is guaranteed to last 24 months, implemented by specially trained staff and focusing on three main components: employment services, language training and civic orientation. The first step of this programme is to validate the newcomers' education, work experience and skills. There are several forms of subsidized employment available. Unaccompanied minors of working age, single parents, women and persons with disabilities are identified as special needs groups in eligibility for mainstream employment services and targeted employment support. No administrative barriers exist for BIPs to access employment. Also, the government has adopted specific campaigns and measures targeting employers to raise awareness about the specific situation of BIPs. Targeted entrepreneurship support is provided, e.g., through a "fast-track" program for small businesses together with local business development centers.

9.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Early measures before a status decision is rendered prepare asylum seekers for entry to the labour market and speed up the process of finding employment. They include the start of procedures to recognize degrees and validate skills, providing information and counselling as well as assistance in preparing for a job search or setting up a business. When procedures take longer, legal access to employment/self-employment helps to shorten the time spent inactive and reduce dependence on benefits.

| | |
|--|--|
| Access to employment in the private sector at the latest 6 months after application |  |
| | <i>LV: language requirements</i> |
| Access to self-employment at the latest 6 months after application |  |
| | <i>LV: language requirements</i> |
| Procedure to recognise non-EU diplomas or other qualifications |  |
| Right to recognition of formal degrees and/or to validation of skills |  |
| Job-seeking support (counselling, targeted action) |  |
| Targeted entrepreneurship support | — |
| Absence of administrative barriers to accessing employment (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions) |  |

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

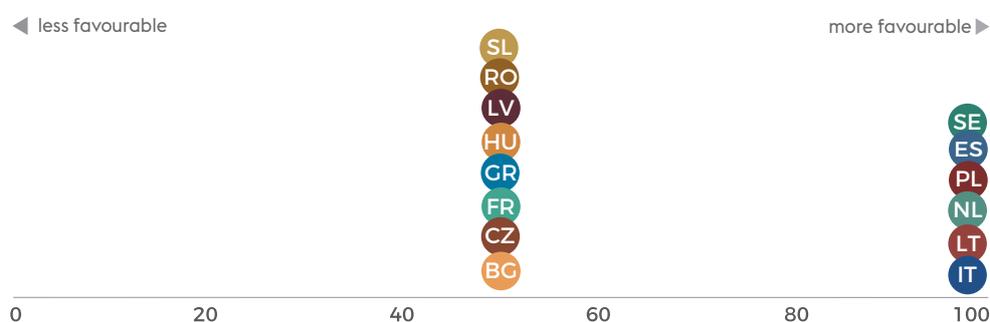


10. Vocational training and employment-related education

Quality vocational education and training equips individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies required to access the job market. The provision of relevant skills can be a highly effective way of empowering beneficiaries of international protection to take advantage of employment opportunities or preparing them for self-employment. Chances to gain employment at skill level early on are increased by targeted vocational training programmes and alternative assessment methods for the recognition of professional and academic qualifications.

10.1. Results 2019 by country

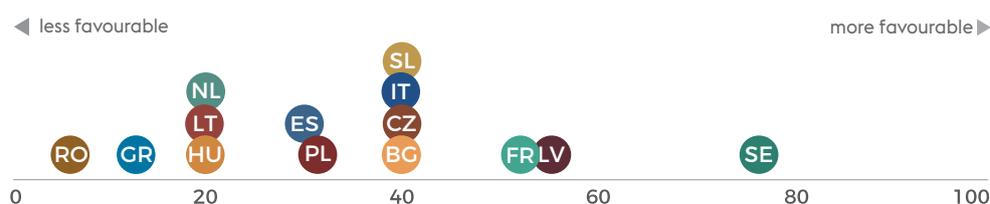
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education

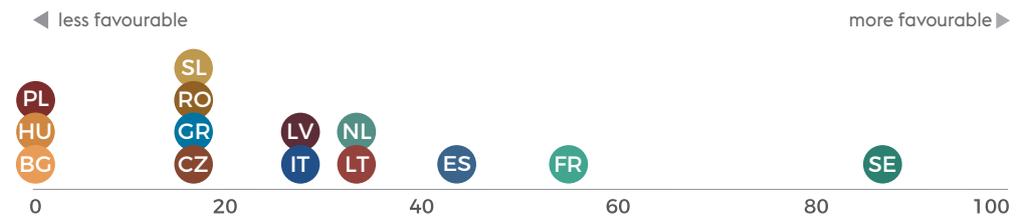
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

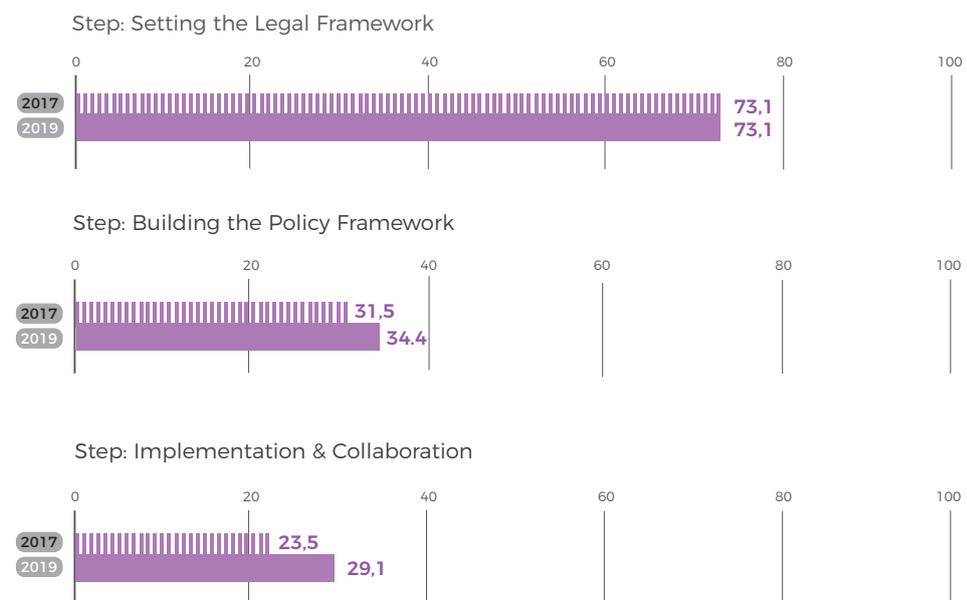
- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into vocational training and employment-related education policies
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on vocational training for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on vocational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

10.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

Legally ensured access to vocational training and employment-related education has been very stable in the 2017 and 2019 period, with no changes and countries generally providing for rather favourable provisions.

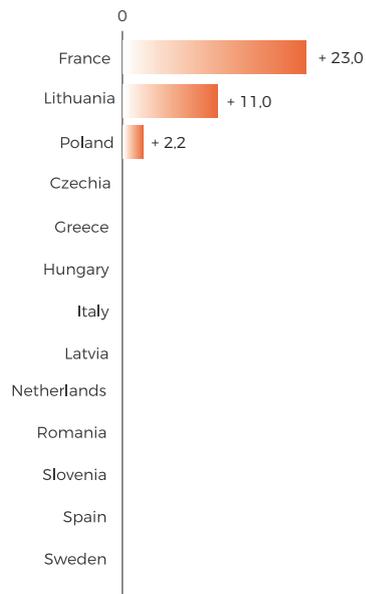
Policy-related indicators, however, still identify mostly insufficient practices in most of the assessed countries. Positive developments have taken place only in France – here on a broad front – and in Poland. Improvements with regard to implementation and collaboration are mostly driven by changes in France; Lithuania also saw some progress in the context of its “Action Plan”.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline **2017** and Evaluation 1 **2019**

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, the adoption of a five-year Skills Investment Plan with BIPs as priority target means that a comprehensive strategy has been put in place, implicating better accessibility of vocational training and employment-related education for BIPs under 25 years of age, additional means at the regional level to implement measures and to encourage local employers to invest in the training of BIP, as well as more awareness among public employment services about the entitlements and needs of BIPs.
- ▶ In **Poland**, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy provides additional training for the officers of local and regional job centres regarding the situation of labour migrants, which also includes some information about the vocational training entitlements and needs of BIPs.
- ▶ In **Lithuania**, some measures foreseen in the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society are directly related to vocational training and employment-related education, representing a step towards the mainstreaming of refugee integration into vocational education policies.

In Bulgaria, BIPs have the same access as nationals to vocational training but with general conditions that they cannot meet as newcomers. Policy-related indicators, however, show numerous gaps. While there is a National Refugee Employment and Training Programme to support the labour market integration of refugees (by means of language classes, training for professional qualifications and subsidised full-time employment for up to 12 months), this programme has not been properly implemented and a very limited number of BIPs participated. In addition, there are no measures to support BIPs in their vocational training within schools and only few of them can benefit from a limited support lasting 300 hours. The specific needs of vulnerable persons receiving international protection are not reflected in the programme, either. In addition, the required documentation to access vocational training is very hard to obtain. Although BIPs need to provide original diplomas for attending certain education levels, there is no special procedure for those who lack original diplomas. As far as indicators on collaboration and implementation are concerned, there is neither mainstreaming of refugee integration into vocational education policies nor support for NGOs or non-profit employment support organisations. On the positive side, support to access vocational training on sub-national levels is provided by the Employment Agency through its regional and local bureaux.

10.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law and, to some extent, the Geneva Convention, beneficiaries of international protection are guaranteed the same treatment as national citizens and access to targeted support to address their specific needs. For access to vocational training, the Geneva Convention requires states to grant refugees at least the most favourable treatment granted to foreign citizens. The Geneva Convention establishes a general obligation to facilitate integration (Art. 34), and this duty is spelled out in the more concrete obligations under the recast Qualification Directive. Under EU law, access to vocational training remains limited until recognition, after which the recast Qualification Directive guarantees the equal treatment of beneficiaries of international protection and national citizens in terms of access to the labour market, vocational training, employment-related education, recognition and assessment procedures of foreign qualifications (Art. 26). When relevant documents are missing, beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from alternative assessment methods (Art. 28). Before recognition, the Reception Conditions Directive stipulates for asylum seekers a maximum waiting period of nine months for labour market access (Art. 15). The directive calls for Member States to decide on conditions for labour market access that ensure effective access and avoid

procedural obstacles. However, Member States are not obliged to open vocational training possibilities to asylum seekers, and the directive remains silent on the recognition of qualifications (Art. 16).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



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



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



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



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



In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



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



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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

PLACEMENT AGENCY FOR BIPs



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

LARGE-SCALE TARGETED VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION PROGRAMME



In **France**, the employment ministry adopted the Skills Investment Plan to be implemented from 2018 to 2022. BIPs are considered as a priority target – particularly, those under 25 years of age and those who arrived less than five years ago. It is being implemented in a way that provides additional means to the regional level and encourages local employers to invest in the training of BIPs. Several regional pacts were signed in 2019. For example, the Ile-de-France region, where many BIPs are living, provides a budget of 7 million euros for vocational and language training for BIPs under the regional pact. The National Strategy for the Integration of Refugees, adopted in June 2018, relies on the Skills Investment Plan to facilitate the integration of BIPs through vocational training. The HOPE project combines language learning courses, career guidance and vocational trainings over eight months, while providing temporary accommodation. To do so, it involves all relevant partners, including vocational training centres, regional prefectures, public employment services (“Pôle Emploi”), the Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), NGOs and private companies, to guarantee vocational training for the achievement of a diploma or a professional certification. Funding was provided to reach 1500 BIPs in 2019 and 63 million euros will be made available by 2022 under the Skills Investment Plan. Specific programmes have also been set up in 2018 for BIPs between the ages of 18 and 25 who are in a precarious situation. For example, the PIAL project provides language training and an allowance of 1,454 euros over a period of three to six months to help them access mainstream vocational trainings programmes that require a sufficient knowledge of the French language. Last but not least, since August 2018, within the framework of an agreement between OFII and Pôle Emploi, “immersion days” are organised to improve knowledge of their mutual services for BIPs, thus improving awareness about the vocational training entitlements and needs of BIPs among the public employment services.

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



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

10.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Access to vocational education and training programmes already before status recognition can be the key factor for quick labour market integration of BIPs. By including asylum seekers as a target group in measures which foster participation in employment-related education, or by allowing and encouraging employers to provide vocational trainings to asylum seekers, governments can help to equip individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills and competencies needed to find a job.

Same access as nationals to vocational training and/or employment-related education



BG, FR, GR, SL: conditions/practical obstacles apply

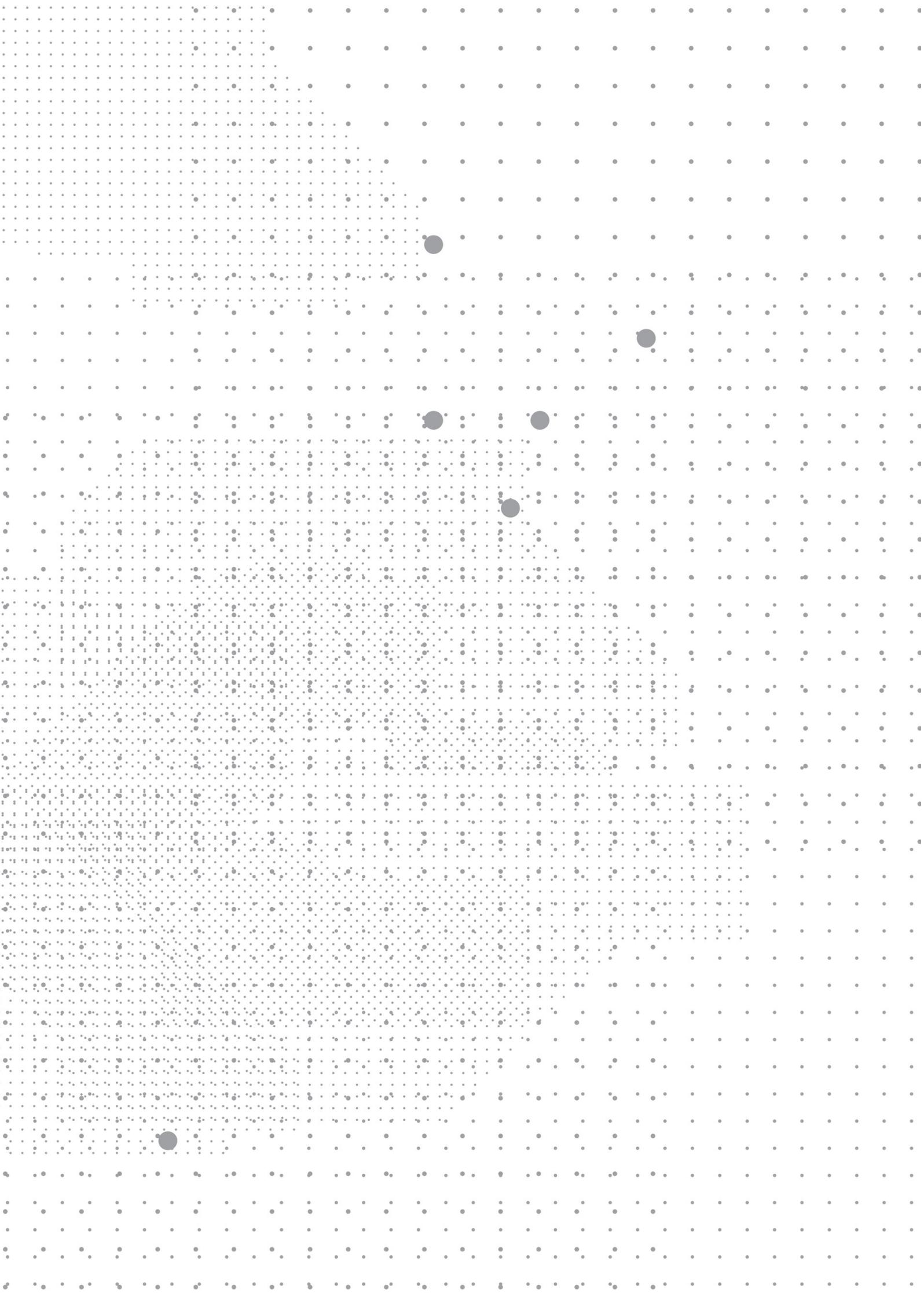
Measures to increase the participation in vocational training and employment related education and/or measures to encourage employers to provide such training/ education



Absence of administrative barriers to accessing vocational training (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions)



status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard for asylum seekers

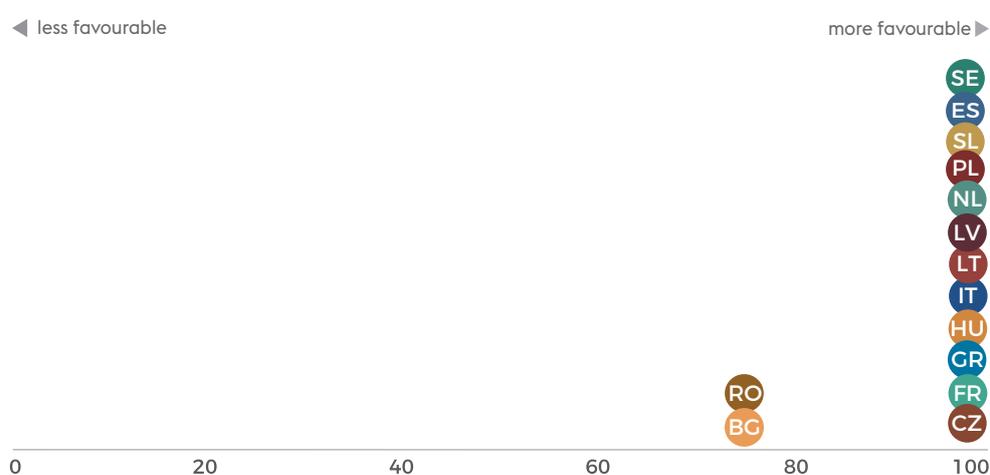


11. Health

Health and integration are mutually reinforcing, as good health is both a precondition and a consequence of full participation in society. Beneficiaries of international protection in many cases can only live up to their full potential if the physical and psychological scars caused by persecution and flight can start to heal. Early detection and intervention by health workers are crucial in order to prevent the re-emergence of trauma and social isolation. After arrival, deteriorating health and stress can also be an indicator of poor reception and integration conditions caused by inadequate living and working conditions.

11.1. Results 2019 by country

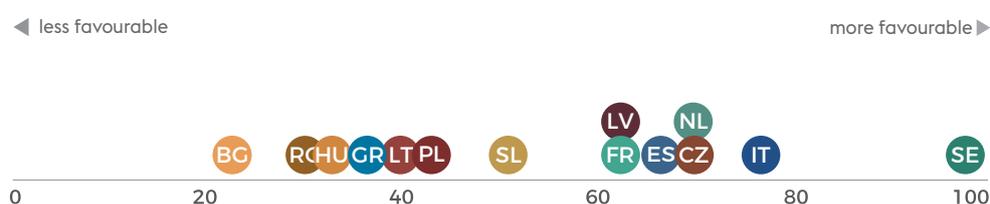
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

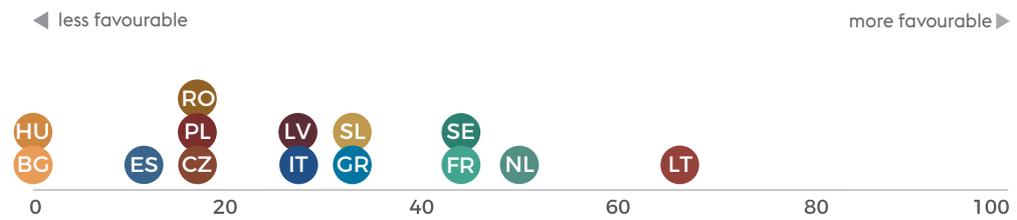
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

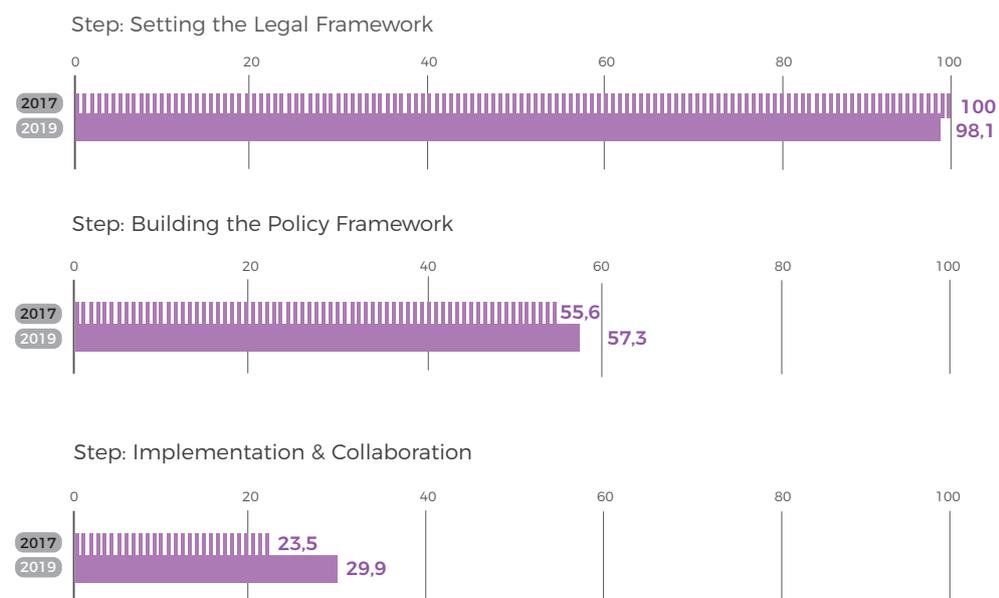
- Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of beneficiaries of international protection into health care
- Coordination with regional and local authorities and/or health bodies on health care for beneficiaries of international protection
- Partnership on health care with expert NGOs

11.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

Overall, only Lithuania, France, Slovenia and Poland made progress in the 2017 to 2019 period, mostly driven by improvements in the coordination and implementation step. The legal framework on access to health care has been very stable across the assessed countries, with generally high standards. Negative changes occurred, however, in Romania.

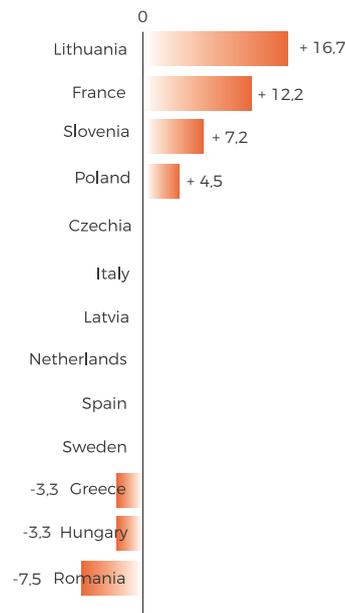
Concerning the policy-related indicators, the scores saw some improvements through developments in France, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, and negative changes in Greece and Hungary. From an overall rather low level, progress concerning mainstreaming as well as multi-level and civil society cooperation has been seen in France, Lithuania and Slovenia.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline 2017 and Evaluation 1 2019

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **Lithuania**, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society has introduced a strategy to facilitate the integration of BIPs through adequate health policies. The Action Plan involves relevant partners and also foresees measures to organise intercultural training for health service workers aimed at reducing stereotypes and promoting respect for diversity and equality.
- ▶ In **France**, BIPs have been receiving systematic information on health care entitlements in the framework of social orientation courses of the Republican Integration Contract (RIC) since March 2019. Support for health authorities at the regional level has improved significantly.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, the health ministry is enhancing cooperation with regional and local health bodies. Moreover, NGOs are commissioned to run government-financed projects with the aim to support refugees in the field of health care.
- ▶ In **Poland**, several health care entitlements for special needs groups have become included in the coverage for BIPs. In addition, fewer administrative requirements pose barriers for receiving health care and more (though not sufficient) translation services are provided.
- ▶ In **Romania**, more health care entitlements are provided for special needs groups, including pediatric care for minors and care for minors who have been victims of any form of abuse or trauma. Also, systematic provision of information on health care entitlements and the use of services is ensured.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, starting from January 2018, the required contribution for BIPs to be included in the health care system has increased to around 40 euros per month, a condition that usually cannot be met by a newcomer.
- ▶ In **Greece**, government-sponsored pilot interpretation services no longer exist. BIPs are usually assisted by NGOs and IGOs.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, systematic provision of individualised face-to-face information on entitlements and use of services is no longer granted. The asylum authority merely provides standardised information in writing.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA

BG

As regards access to the health care system, BIPs face the same general conditions as nationals but have difficulties meeting them as newcomers. However, once they obtain access to the national health insurance system, BIPs are entitled to the same health coverage as Bulgarian citizens. The policy-related indicators highlight rather disadvantageous conditions. The procedure to obtain entitlement to health care is subject to discretionary decisions, no measures are taken to raise awareness for the specific needs of BIPs in the health system, and information on health care entitlements and use of services is not provided in a systematic way. Interpretation services are only available from NGOs and international organizations in the context of ad-hoc projects. Positively, some special-needs health services (pediatric care for minors, care relating to pregnancy and childbirth, care for physically or mentally handicapped persons) are available for BIPs. Coordination takes place only between central health authorities and their territorial units; moreover, there are no comprehensive mainstreaming efforts, no coordination takes place with regions, and no systematic support exists for NGOs when delivering support services.

11.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

receive adapted medical assistance. Under the Qualification Directive (Art. 30.1), beneficiaries of international protection have the same access to health care services as national citizens. Vulnerable groups of beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from adapted health care services beyond mainstream access to health care (Art. 30.2).

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

| | |
|--|---|
| ... ensure full access to a system of health care coverage under conditions which can be met as newcomers. | CZ ES FR GR HU IT LV LT NL PL SE SL |
| ... provide for the same health coverage as for nationals. | BG CZ ES FR GR HU IT LV LT NL PL RO SE SL |

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| ... ensure access to special needs health care for vulnerable groups (pediatric care, care for minors who have been victims of abuse or trauma, pregnancy and childbirth, physically or mentally handicapped persons, nursing for the elderly, psychiatric/psychosocial care for victims of torture, rape or other forms of trauma). | CZ ES FR IT LT LV NL PL SE SL |
| ... proactively raise awareness among health care providers about the entitlements and specific health issues of BIPs. | IT SE |
| ... not impose any administrative barriers to obtaining health care (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions). | CZ GR LT NL SE |
| ... systematically provide individualised information on health care entitlements and use of services. | CZ FR SE |
| ... provide for free interpretation services across the health system or at least in major destination areas. | IT ES SE |

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

| | |
|--|-------|
| ... mainstream the integration of BIPs into health policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review). | LT |
| ... coordinate with regional and local authorities and/or health bodies on health care for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support. | SE |
| ... continuously provide means for expert NGOs to assist BIPs to receive adequate health care. | _____ |

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITIES



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

SPECIAL RESIDENCE PERMIT FOR HEALTH REASON



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

COMPREHENSIVE, INDIVIDUALISED AND MULTI-LINGUAL INFORMATION CONCERNING ENTITLEMENTS



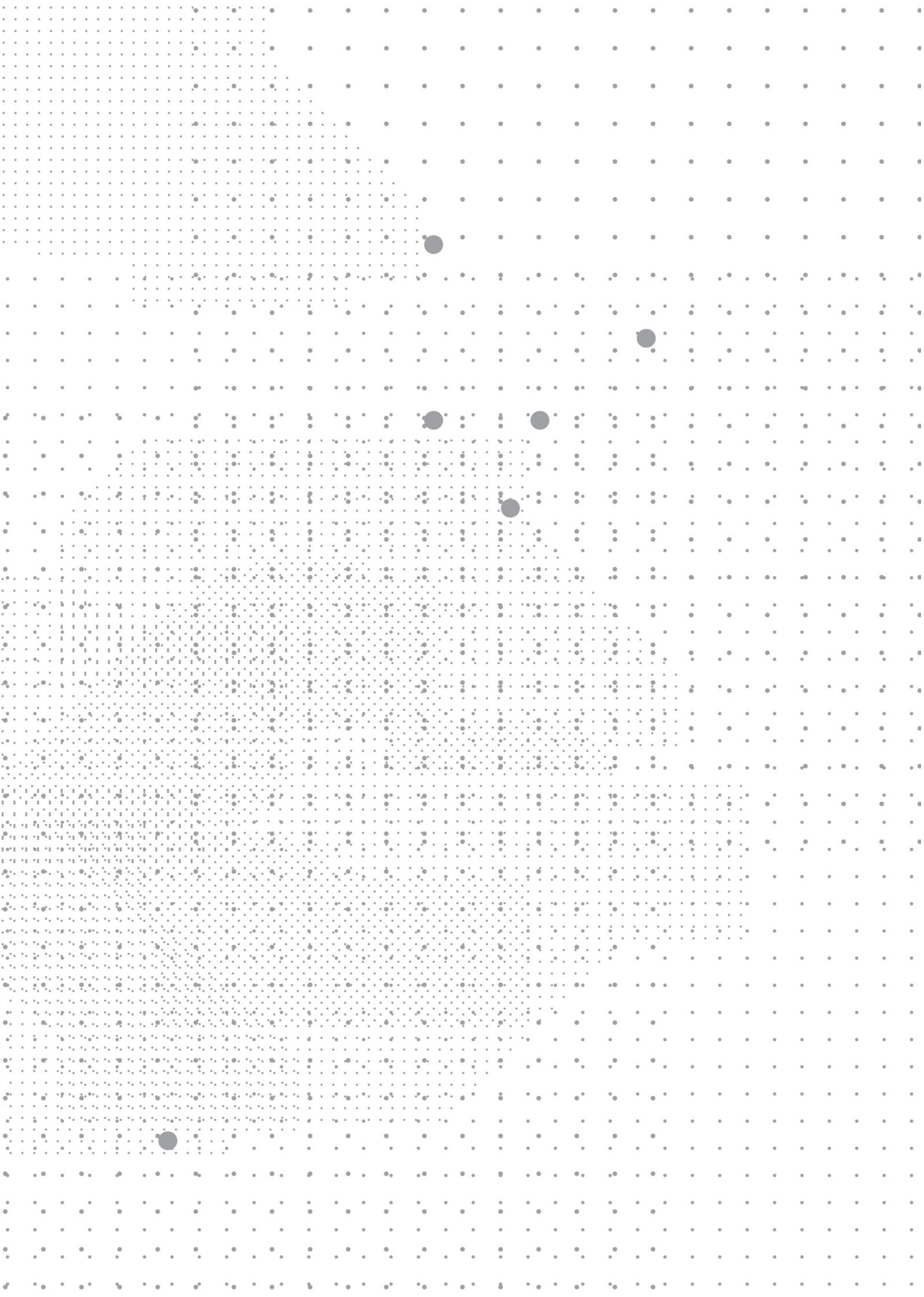
Sweden obtains the highest possible score related to the policy-related indicators, being the only country that fulfills all benchmarks. With regard to information about entitlements and the use of health services, health communicators exist in most of the regions and the book “About Sweden” includes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

11.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Asylum seekers are at heightened risk of physical illness and psychological disorders, because of the trauma experienced during their persecution in the country of origin and their troubled journey to Europe. Special health care support throughout the reception phase, special needs health care for vulnerable groups and, generally, access to a health care system not restricted to emergency treatments early on are essential for reducing the long-term health needs of BIPs and for better and more stable living and working conditions after status recognition.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Individual assessment established by law to identify asylum seekers with special needs that leads to special health care support throughout the reception phase | | <i>BG, FR, GR, HU, LT, NL, PL, RO, SL, SE: not resulting in regularly monitored/evaluated support</i> |
| Access to a system of health care coverage under conditions which can be met as newcomers and without specific access conditions for asylum seekers | | <i>RO: conditions apply</i> |
| Health care coverage not restricted to emergency care and essential treatments | | |
| Access to special needs health care for vulnerable groups (pediatric care, care for minors who have been victims of abuse or trauma, pregnancy and childbirth, physically or mentally handicapped persons, nursing for elderly, psychiatric/ psychosocial care for victims of torture, rape or other forms of trauma) | | <i>BG, SL: only for certain groups</i> |
| Systematic, individualized information on health care entitlements and use of services | | <i>HU, SL, SE: information not individualized</i> |
| Free interpretation services across the health system or at least in major destination areas | | <i>FR, LV, PL, SL: only on smaller, pilot or ad-hoc basis</i> |
| Absence of administrative barriers to obtaining health care (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions) | | |

status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard for asylum seekers

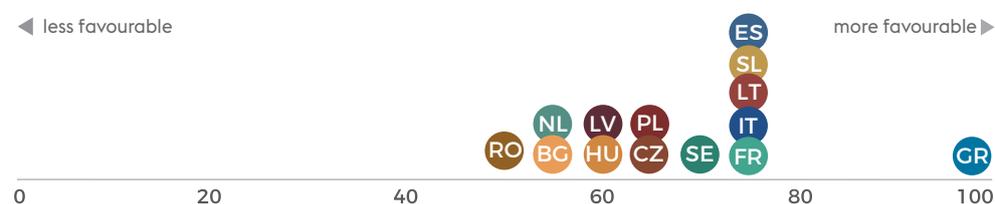


12. Social Security

Social security is not a privilege, but a necessity for beneficiaries of international protection to rebuild their lives in a new country. Refugees usually lose all of their income and savings, as well as their essential social and family support. They must start a new life with hardly any financial safety net or help from family and friends. Effective protection requires not only support to meet basic needs in the early reception phase, but also access to the full range of social security provisions to underpin integration pathways in the long run. Benefits help refugees, especially women, obtain a basic degree of financial independence for the duration of the process of socio-economic integration.

12.1. Results 2019 by country

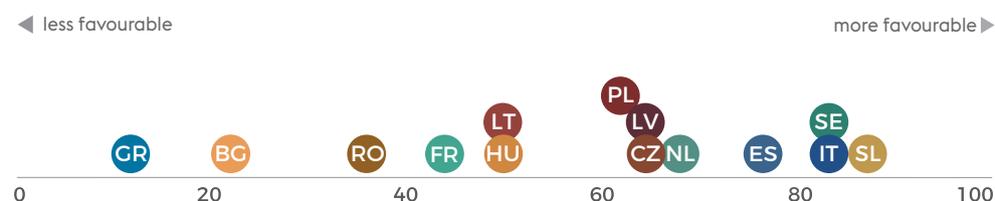
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

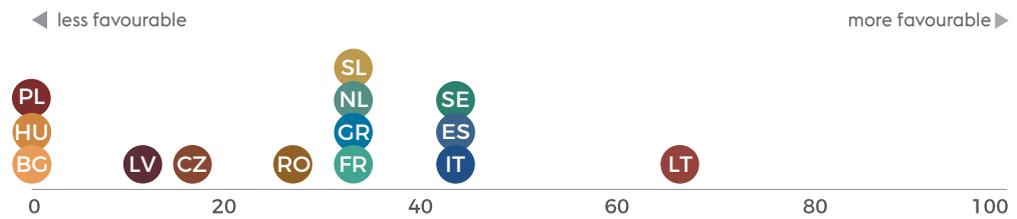
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



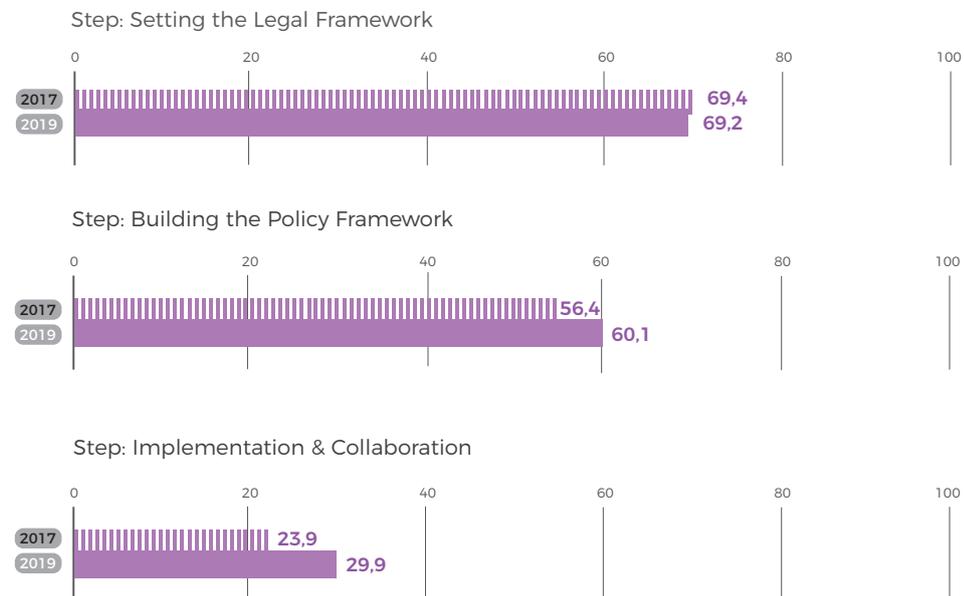
Assessed indicators:

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

12.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

The legal framework as captured by the NIEM indicators on access to social security systems and entitlements shows no development from 2017 to 2019 in the assessed countries. While France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain ensure that the conditions for BIPs are the same as for nationals, in all other countries the law excludes BIPs from eligibility to certain benefits or requires conditions that they cannot meet as newcomers.

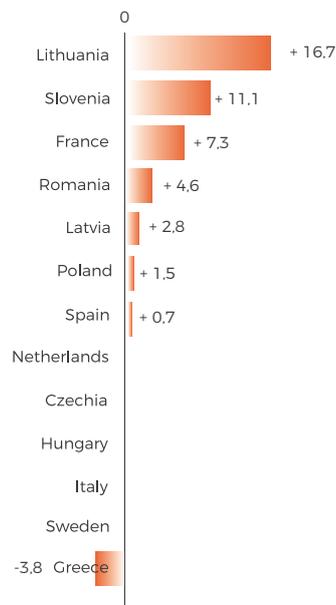
Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline **2017** and Evaluation 1 **2019**

Overall, indicators related to policy frameworks improved slightly in comparison with 2017. Positive changes affected France, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Spain, while Greece saw steps backwards. The implementation and collaboration indicators, albeit from an overall still insufficiently low level, represent the most dynamic area, characterised by partly significant positive developments in Lithuania, France, Latvia and Slovenia.

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **Lithuania**, BIPs are systematically provided information on social security entitlements and the use of services. Positively, the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society includes a strategy involving relevant partners to facilitate the integration of BIPs through comprehensive income support. Amendments to laws regulating social rights and guarantees, adopted between 2017 and 2018, equalised the status of recognised refugees and BSPs.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, social welfare offices not only receive information from the relevant Ministry of Interior and the Government Office for the Support and Integration of Migrants but they also share the information with their staff and the personnel of different offices. To this end, social and welfare offices receive support by means of trainings and guidelines.
- ▶ In **France**, since January 2019, fewer administrative barriers are in place to obtaining social benefits. In addition, BIPs who do not benefit from staying in

temporary accommodation centres may receive individualised information for six months after the granting of an international protection status. Since March 2019, BIPs also receive systematic information on social security entitlements and the use of services in the framework of social orientation courses provided within the Republican Integration Contract (RIC).

- ▶ In **Romania**, BIPs must be informed by the officers of the Immigration Inspectorate on social security entitlements and the use of services.
- ▶ **Latvia** took steps to improve collaboration, with the Ministry of Welfare monitoring the implementation of the country's Action Plan in the context of a multi-stakeholder cross-sectoral working group coordinated by the ministry.
- ▶ In **Poland**, fewer administrative barriers are observed in obtaining social assistance and unemployment benefits in particular.
- ▶ Likewise, in **Spain**, fewer administrative barriers are on the record, especially with regard to unemployment benefits, in a context widely marked by regional and local level discretion when it comes to social benefits.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Greece**, more administrative barriers to obtaining entitlement to social benefits are reported.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, a change for the worse took place with regard to family and child-related benefits for BSPs relating to conditions that they could not meet as newcomers.
- ▶ In **Romania**, excessive administrative delays and waiting periods now undermine access for BIPs to sickness and disability benefits.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA

BG

Bulgaria has one of the less favourable legal frameworks among the countries assessed on access to social security for BIPs, with conditions that they cannot meet as newcomers. Policy-related indicators show further obstacles and gaps. For instance, required documentation is very hard to obtain and can pose a barrier for newly arrived BIPs to receiving social benefits. No measures are taken to raise awareness for the specific entitlements of BIPs in the social security systems, and BIPs are not provided with individualised information on entitlements and use of service. Collaboration efforts are nonexistent, as there is no mainstreaming in terms of assuring comprehensive income support for BIPs, no coordination with sub-national authorities and/or welfare bodies, and no support for NGOs on poverty relief.

12.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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

ES FR GR IT LT SL

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

CZ ES FR LT LV NL
SE

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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

HU IT LT NL SE

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

IT SE SL

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

CZ FR SL

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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

LT

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

NL SE

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

ES

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES TO SMOOTHLY ACCESS FAMILY BENEFITS



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

INCOME SUPPORT AND COORDINATION WITH MUNICIPALITIES



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

12.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Due to the precarious economic situation of most BIPs, access to social security systems is especially crucial in the early stages of integration pathways to ensure decent living standards. By providing comprehensive information and orientation knowledge about entitlements and services already in the reception phase, BIPs after recognition will be able to access support immediately and avoid missing out on essential entitlements.

Systematic, individualized information on social security entitlements and use of services



CZ, HU, FR, RO, SE: information not individualized

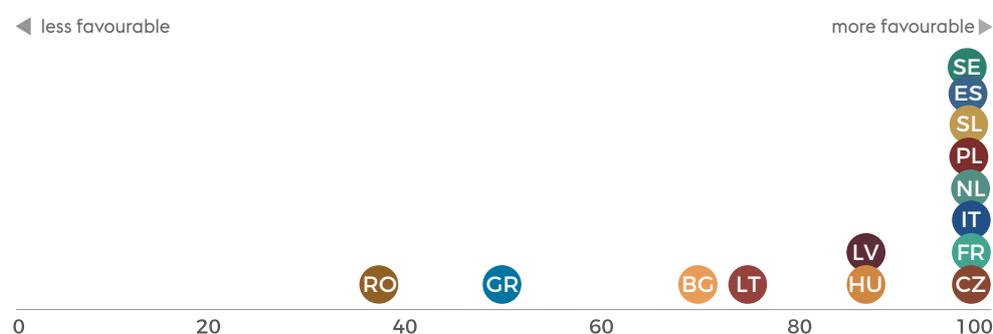
status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard for asylum seekers

13. Education

Education endows children with a perspective of personal development, social mobility, better employment prospects and a new social network. It is a key to social inclusion and better integration outcomes. Schools are places of interaction between beneficiaries of international protection and the local community, for fostering mutual understanding and reaching out to stay-at-home parents. Teachers and other school staff are the first in line to see and react to integration issues, such as physical and mental health distress, risk of drop out due to legal or financial instability or bullying and discrimination. It is the responsibility of educational systems to counteract xenophobia and promote multilingualism, citizenship and social skills for all pupils.

13.1. Results 2019 by country

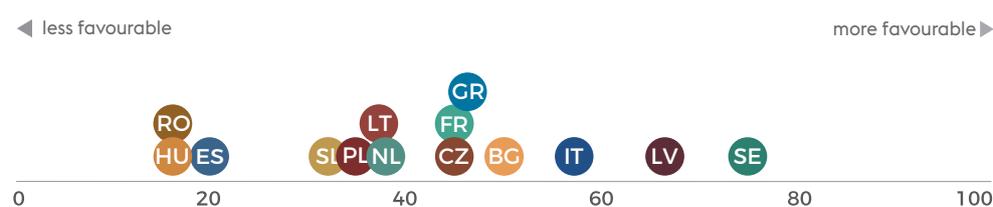
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicator:

- Access to education from pre-school to tertiary level

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to education for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers to education
- Awareness raising about the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection regarding education
- Placement in the compulsory school system
- Length of language support
- Regularity of orientation and language programmes and targeted education measures

Step: Implementation & Collaboration

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Assessed indicators:

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

13.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

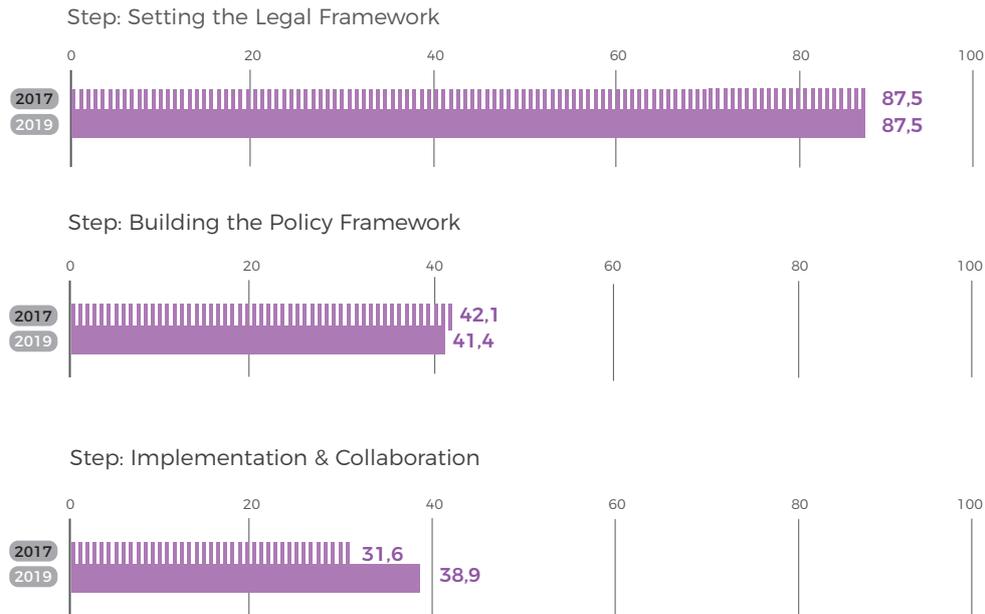
Few developments in the legal and policy frameworks have been identified across the compared countries. While France made gains between 2017 and 2019 related to improved access to university education, Romania further lost out after abolishing targeted procedures for enrolling refugee pupils. Legal access to education is widely provided. In fact, almost all the countries ensure access to different levels of education to BIPs on equal basis with nationals, from pre-school to post-secondary and tertiary education. The scores of policy-related indicators, however, demonstrate that administrative barriers frequently undermine full access to higher levels of education. Also, provisions to ensure access to education for vulnerable groups are very rare.

Focused efforts to improve implementation and coordination can be observed in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. But most of the countries still lack a multi-stakeholder strategy to facilitate integration in the area of education. Similarly, only a few countries see comprehensive multi-level coordination with regional and local education authorities. Moreover, in the majority of countries, there is no systematic state support for expert NGOs on education.

Positive developments

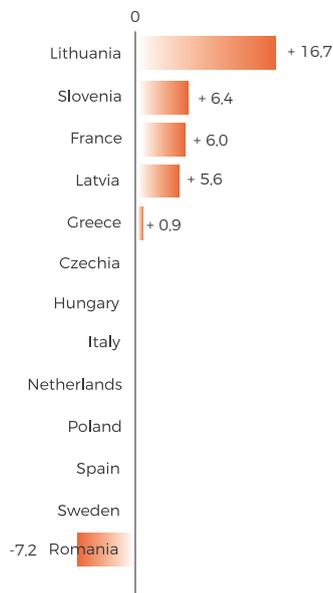
- ▶ In **France**, since September 2018, BSPs are eligible for scholarships for mainstream university training courses on the same basis as refugees and nationals. In addition, since September 2019, specific university trainings for refugees - which provide intensive French courses for one year to help them access mainstream university courses - have been eligible for scholarships.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline **2017** and Evaluation 1 **2019**

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

- ▶ In **Latvia**, the national government now coordinates with regional education authorities and school boards by supporting them in dealing with the education needs of children and youth under international protection. The coordination takes place with individual schools as well as within the framework of so-called methodological councils. Coordination, however, is needs-based and ad hoc.
- ▶ In **Lithuania**, mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies have been established. The 2018-2020 Action Plan on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society provides a strategy to facilitate the integration of BIPs through education and aims to monitor integration processes and policy by collecting quantitative and qualitative data and register them at the state authorities.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, the government improved the mainstreaming of the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies, including more coordination with regional and local education authorities and school boards to deal with the needs of pupils under international protection.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, the legal access to education for BIPs has been significantly narrowed down. In January 2018, an order issued by the Ministry of National Education limited the access for children who lack documentary evidence of study from their countries of origin. The new law cancels the simplified procedure for enrolling students in a grade corresponding to their level of training/knowledge and establishes a standard testing procedure for all students “regardless of nationality or status” with regard to all subjects and the study years for which they are unable to provide documentary evidence.
- ▶ Also in **Romania**, burdensome documentation and excessive administrative delays pose significant barriers. The Ministry of National Education has not drafted any guidelines for assessments when documentary evidence from the country of origin are missing, negatively affecting the placement of children of BIPs in the compulsory school system.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, orientation and language programmes and targeted educational measures are offered but they no longer receive funding in a systematic manner.

Bulgaria ensures BIPs' access to pre-school education and primary/lower secondary education on the same basis as nationals. On the other hand, there are conditions that adult BIPs cannot satisfy as newcomers to access upper secondary, post-secondary and tertiary education. The policy indicators show the existence of some difficulties for the effective integration of BIPs into the education system. For instance, no specific measures are provided for vulnerable pupils, and children can benefit from state-funded support for learning the host language only for a fixed number of hours. To place children in schools, the state provides guidelines for assessment where documentary evidence from the country of origin is unavailable, but nation-wide criteria to assess the level of education and prior learning are not implemented. With regard to implementation and coordination, the Ministry of Education has not adopted any formal strategy, monitoring or review mechanisms, although education is part of the National Strategy on Asylum, Migration and Integration and its Action Plan. There is no established partnership on education with expert NGOs, but only informal cooperation and partnership between the Ministry and educational NGOs. On the positive side, the government supports regional education authorities and school boards in dealing with children and youth under international protection and provides additional means to adequately address their education needs.

13.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

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

least equal treatment with foreign citizens. The fifth of the EU Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration is dedicated to education, stressing that efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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

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



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

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



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



IT: partly

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



In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



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



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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

EQUAL ACCESS TO EDUCATION



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

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER AND MULTI-LEVEL COORDINATION



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

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

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

PRO-ACTIVE LOCAL LEVEL EDUCATION POLICIES

PL

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

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN UNDER INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

SE

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

ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

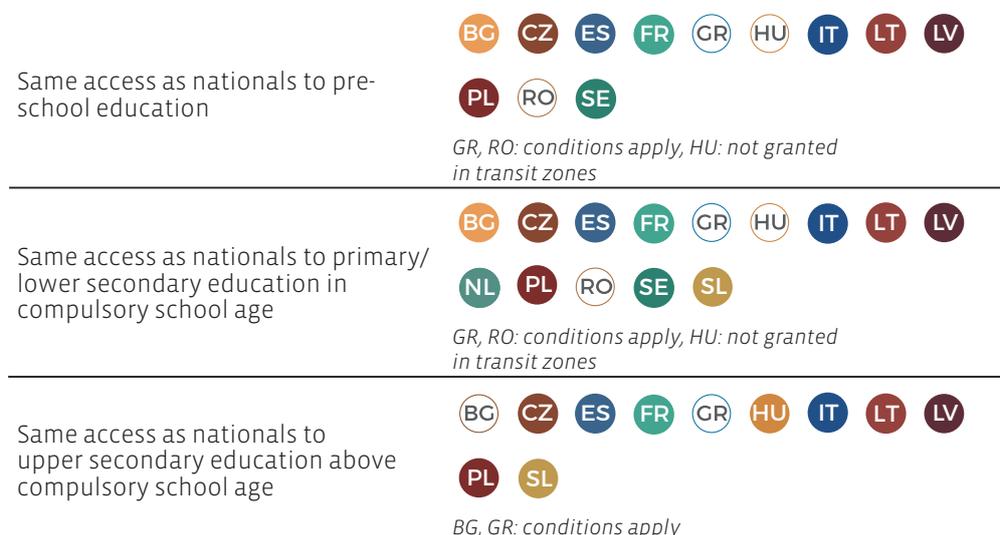
SL

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

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

10.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Access to education is a fundamental human right, including for children seeking international protection. Schooling provides an immediate opportunity for social inclusion and learning the host language. It equips children with a fundamental sense of normality and lays the ground for participation in the economic, cultural and social life of the receiving country. Governments have to ensure that asylum seekers can access the regular education system at all levels and receive quality education, and that schools address their educational needs. To avoid yet another break in their educational paths, asylum procedures should not require children to change their place of schooling.



| | |
|---|--|
| Same access as nationals to post-secondary and tertiary education |        |
| | <i>FR, GR, LV, RO: conditions/language requirements apply</i> |
| Comprehensive assessment systems and measures for the placement of children in the compulsory school system |  |
| Measures to avoid that children have to change their place of schooling during the asylum procedure |   |
| Systematic support for learning the host language |            |
| | <i>GR, PL, RO, SL: no systematic funding</i> |
| Absence of administrative barriers to accessing education (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions) |         |

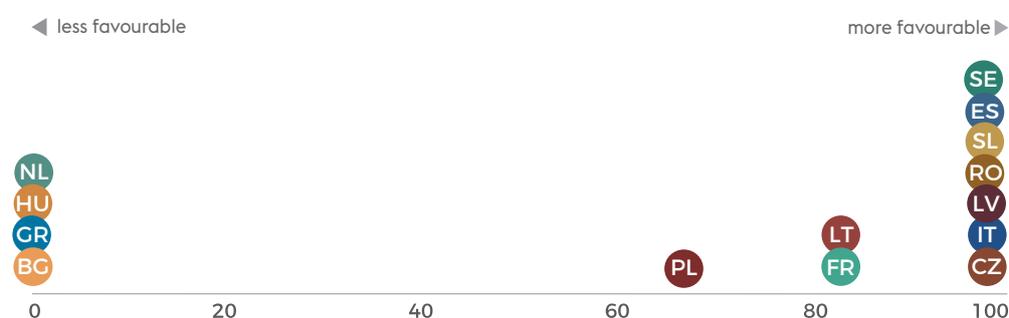
status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard for asylum seekers

14. Language learning and social orientation

Social orientation and language learning provide basic practical knowledge to help beneficiaries of international protection to get by in daily life, as promoted by the EU's fourth Common Basic Principle. Sufficient knowledge of language, institutions, administration and social norms opens up greater possibilities in public life – from greater involvement in social activities to access to the housing and labour market, health and social systems, training and education – and can facilitate access to long-term residence and citizenship. Involving volunteers in these programmes can help to bridge the cultural divide with newcomers and inform public opinion about refugees' realities.

14.1. Results 2019 by country

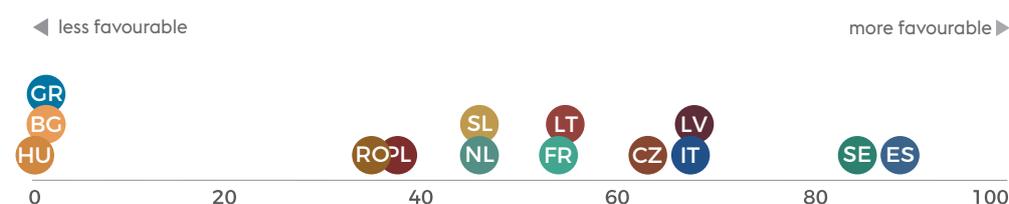
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

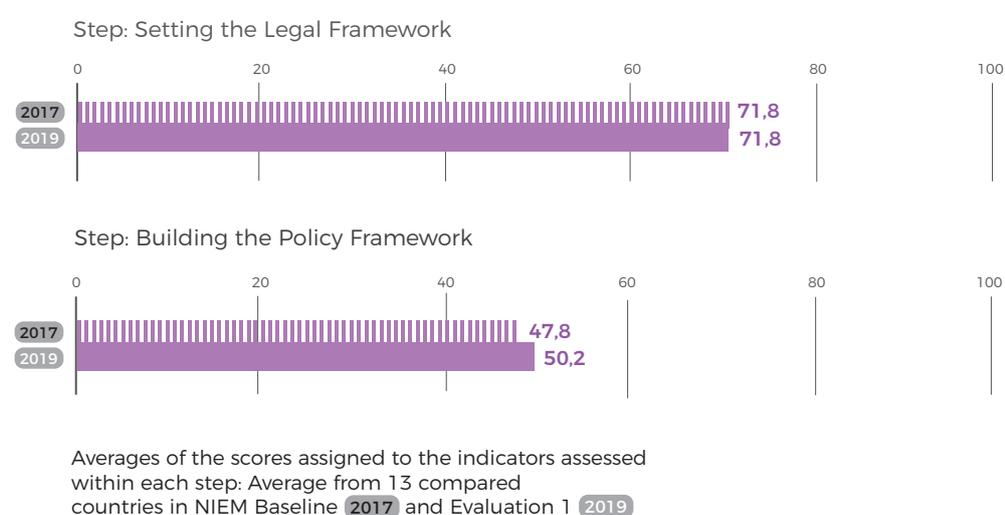
- Quality of language courses
- Duration of host language learning
- Administrative barriers to host language learning
- Duration of translation and interpretation assistance
- Quality of social orientation courses
- Provision of social orientation for groups of special concern
- Administrative barriers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

14.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

No changes occurred in the assessed countries with regard to access to publicly funded host language learning and social orientation, as captured by the legal indicators. Free language courses, with no further obligations such as costs and compulsory attendance attached, are provided only in Czechia, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

Policy-related indicators show that improvements occurred in Czechia, France, and Slovenia, mostly concerning the quality of courses on offer. In general, BIPs still encounter obstacles due to the lack of translation and interpretation assistance when dealing with public and social services. However, in the majority of countries, there are no administrative requirements that can pose a barrier for accessing publicly funded social orientation and language learning courses.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Positive developments

- ▶ In **Czechia**, the quality of language courses has improved in that curricula take into account the specific communication needs of refugees, teaching is provided by trained second-language teachers and courses are regularly evaluated in the light of country-wide quality standards. In addition, social orientation courses are now provided based on a country-wide curriculum.
- ▶ In **France**, the scope and quality of host language tuition has improved with an increase, since March 1st 2019, of the number of hours provided from 200 to a maximum of 400 hours (600 hours for illiterate persons) with the goal of allowing BIPs to reach A1 level, and additional offers on higher levels. The quality of social orientation courses also improved as the number of hours increased from 12 to 24 hours, encouraging greater interaction with the receiving society, and better adapting to the specific needs and interests of parents of children. The courses also cover a wider range of topics including access to health care, housing, education and parenting support.

- ▶ In **Slovenia**, no administrative barriers to publicly funded host language learning classes were found as of 2019.

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA



In Bulgaria, there is no legal and policy framework in place to ensure access for BIPs to publicly funded Bulgarian language courses or publicly funded social orientation courses. Only limited translation and interpretation assistance is provided to BIPs when they are dealing with immigration authorities.

14.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, while the recast Reception Conditions Directive does not mention any specific forms of integration support to asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection become entitled to integration support under the recast Qualification Directive (Article 34). The Directive specifies that this support needs to take into account their specific needs. The provision implements the general obligation that can be derived from the Geneva Convention's article on naturalisation which is interpreted to facilitate the integration process until its legal end point. Within the EU framework, the Common Basic Principles underline

that integration is a dynamic, two-way process including both migrants and locals. Common Basic Principles 7 and 9 list more concrete forms of building social cohesion. Beneficiaries of international protection and members of the receiving society should be given the chance to regularly interact and be part of shared forums and inter-cultural dialogues. This interaction should also include dialogue with decision-making bodies when beneficiaries of international protection can engage with national, regional and local authorities on the formulation of improved integration policies.

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



FR: mandatory for beginners

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



RO: limited availability

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

OBSTACLE-FREE ACCESS AND LANGUAGE COURSES BASED ON INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT



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

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



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

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



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

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES FOR MIGRANTS



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

14.4. In focus: Provisions for asylum seekers

Social orientation and language learning are key factors for successful early-stage integration. BIPs who – on status recognition – already have knowledge of the receiving country’s language, institutions, administration and social norms have a head-start in their integration process, with increased job opportunities, better social and political participation and a shorter way to go towards long-term residence and citizenship.

Free language courses



Free social orientation courses



Sufficient quality of language tuition (course placement according to needs, targeted curricula, trained second-language teachers)



Needs-based translation and interpretation assistance when dealing with authorities and public services

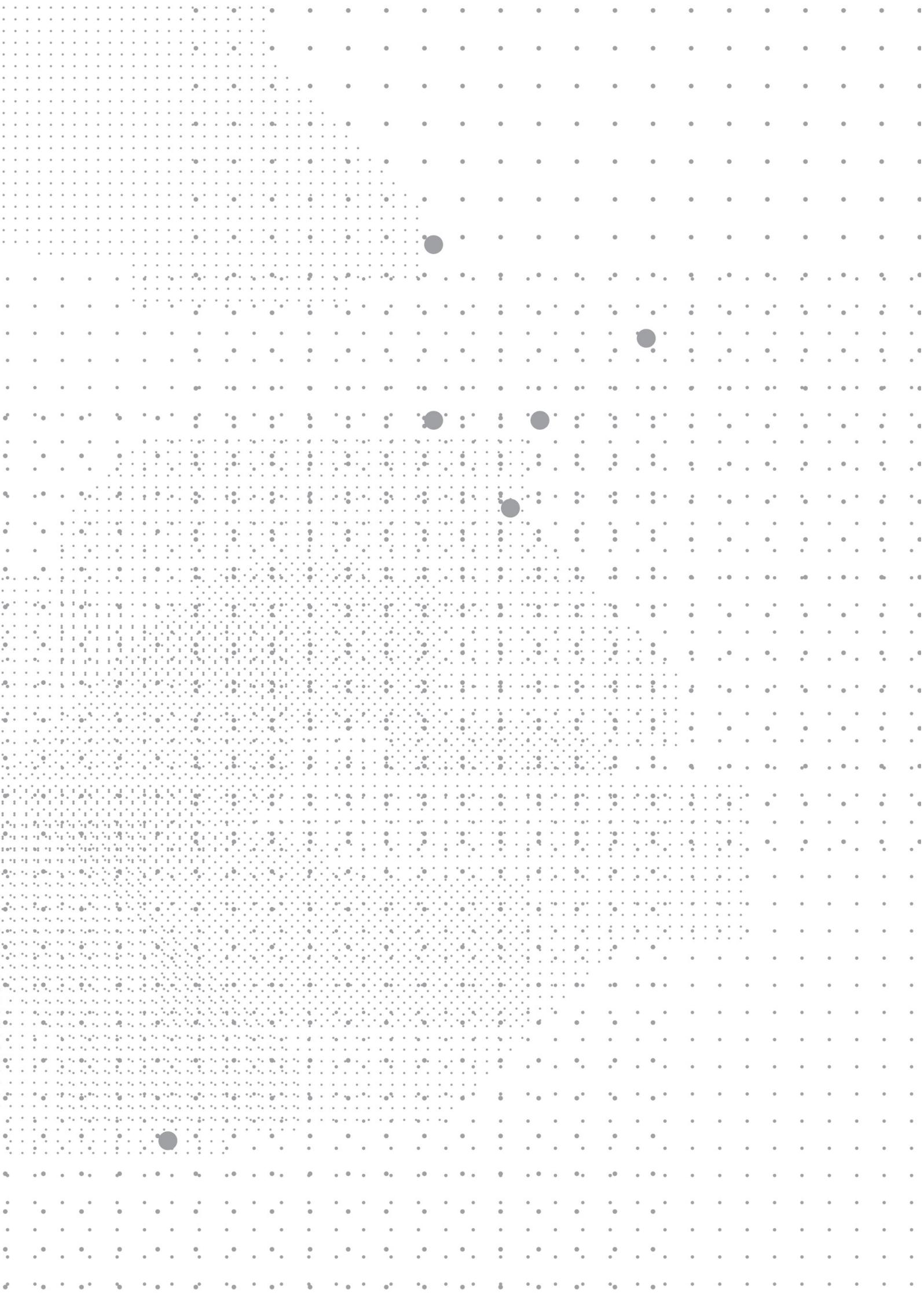


SE: restricted to some authorities and the education and health sectors

Absence of administrative barriers to host language learning and/or social orientation (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions)



status as of 31 March 2019; countries shown comply with the assessed standard for asylum seekers

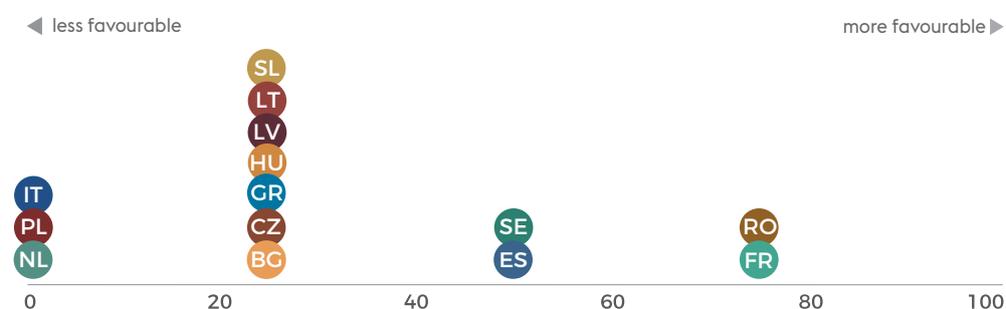


15. Building bridges

Integration is a two-way process that demands efforts both on the part of migrants and on the part of the receiving society. Integration policies should foresee a role and responsibilities for native citizens, encourage civic initiatives and foster a welcoming social climate that is free of xenophobia and discrimination. Enabling beneficiaries of international protection to participate strengthens social cohesion and fosters their active citizenship. When able to contribute to the making of policies designed for their integration, they are not only empowered but can help to improve the quality and effectiveness of integration measures.

15.1. Results 2019 by country

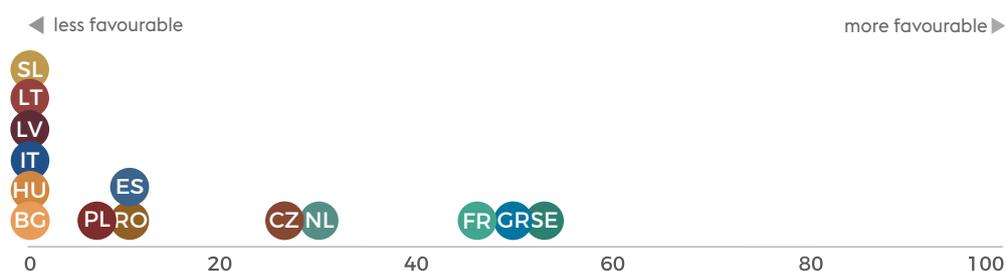
Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

Step: Implementation & Collaboration



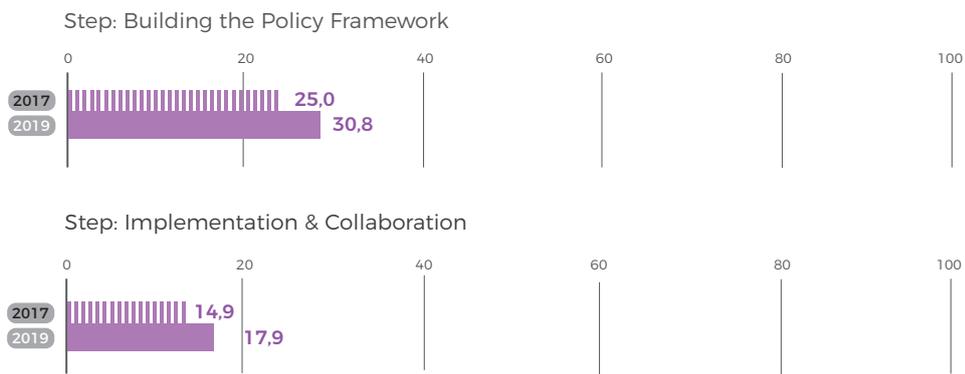
Assessed indicators:

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

15.2. Key trends 2017 to 2019

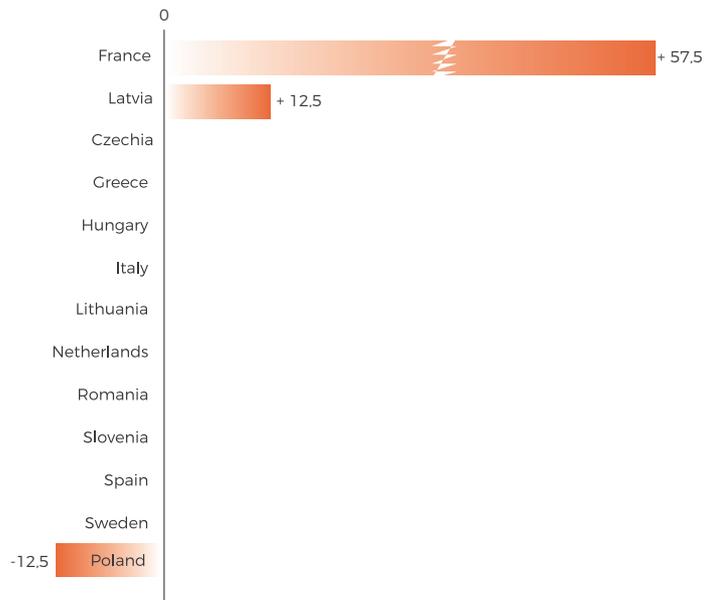
Indicators related to policies which demand a proactive role on the part of the receiving society and further raising of awareness for the situation of BIPs were mostly stable between 2017 and 2019, with the exceptions of France (where a new overall strategy was adopted) and Latvia (which has implemented a campaign). The negative trend seen in Poland, however, relates to the petering out of the last public awareness activities. The distinctly positive development in France also concerns a number of the indicators related to implementation and collaboration, such as supporting interaction of the receiving society with BIPs at regional and local levels as well as the involvement of BIPs in civic activities.

Overall change 2017 to 2019



Averages of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step: Average from 13 compared countries in NIEM Baseline 2017 and Evaluation 1 2019

Overall change 2017 to 2019 by country



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

Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, the 2018 National Strategy for the Integration of Refugees has a specific focus on fostering links between refugees and the host society. It also sets out to strengthen the participation of young BIPs in civic activities. There are also more campaigns to raise awareness on the specific situation of BIPs and support for regional and local authorities in fostering interaction between newcomers and the receiving society.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, a campaign called Openness is Value aimed to raise awareness on the situation of BIPs has been implemented by a state foundation in the context of an ESF-funded diversity promotion project.

Negative developments

- ▶ In **Poland**, there are no longer any publicly funded campaigns to raise awareness about the situation of BIPs. Delays and suspension in disbursing AMIF funds to NGOs are limiting the possibility to carry out such campaigns, which had always relied on EU and other international funding. In addition, public consultations of NGOs in the legislative process is very limited, with a very short time to provide comments to legislative proposals.

NEW IN THE NIEM COMPARISON: BULGARIA



In Bulgaria, the National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration (2015-2020) obliges the receiving society to be tolerant and accepting of persons under international protection, although there are no publicly funded campaigns to raise awareness on their situation. Also, there are no activities in any of the other indicators related to implementation and collaboration, leading to an overall very disadvantageous situation.

15.3. Best practices in refugee integration

What EU and international law requires

According to the first Common Basic Principle for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. In addition, the seventh Common Basic Principle underlines that frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is fundamental for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens. The ninth Common Basic Principle also sets out that the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration. Likewise, the UNHCR Executive

Committee in 2005 stipulated that the integration of refugees is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires the efforts of all concerned parties, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of the receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse community

In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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

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

In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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

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

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

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

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

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

IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE



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

BUILDING BRIDGES AS A FOCAL AREA OF A NATIONAL REFUGEE INTEGRATION STRATEGY



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

New commitments and responsibilities at regional and local levels were created as well. Prefects have to supervise the launch and implementation of regional or sub-regional calls for tender issued by the ministry of the interior, which should also promote interaction of BIPs with the receiving society. As of January 2019, prefects have also the duty to appoint departmental referents in their region and create steering committees to design local roadmaps for the integration of BIPs. "Territorial contracts" have been signed in June 2019 with metropolitan cities to implement initiatives that foster integration pathways and foster interaction between refugees and

the host society. Those cities will benefit from special funding ranging from EUR 200,000 to 300,000 (Dijon, Brest, Nantes, Nancy, Strasbourg, Clermont-Ferrand, Lyon, Grenoble, Bordeaux and Toulouse are already involved).

CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS



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

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