

Introduction: Why should we care about integrating refugees and other vulnerable migrants?

Global refugee stocks are now at their highest levels in history – the latest figures indicate that about six million refugees now live in OECD countries. Most of them arrived in the past five years as part of record recent inflows of refugees in OECD countries, especially in 2014-16.

While total flows have diminished in the last two years, there are lessons to be learned from these recent inflows for other crisis situations, elsewhere or in the future. Indeed, today there are many regions around the world where humanitarian crises induce large migration flows, especially in developing and emerging countries. Whereas OECD countries may learn from these situations, the experience of integration policies implemented by member countries also constitutes a collective knowledge that may be useful in other countries. Risk factors that may trigger other humanitarian crises are in fact not likely to diminish in the future, including in the vicinity of many OECD countries. One way to be better prepared to deal with these future risks is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the country-level and multilateral responses to the refugee inflows of the past five years.

Integrating refugees and other vulnerable migrants (see) for a definition of this group) is an objective of utmost importance, for two reasons. First, by improving the employability of refugees and other vulnerable migrants, host countries can help them realise their full economic potential and thus benefit from the positive economic impact. Secondly, improving employability improves the acceptance and social inclusion of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in the local community. Failing to integrate these people carries costs – in terms of social exclusion, tension and more unequal societies. Moreover, it could sharply constrain policy options to address future inflows.

This report builds on a collective OECD effort that has mobilised resources and expertise across the organisation and involved the endeavours of diverse committees and working parties. It gathers evidence on many dimensions of the integration process of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in origin, transit and destination countries, in terms of both economic and social outcomes and the policies in place to respond to the challenges posed by the arrival of larger-than-usual inflows.

The report focuses on how to improve the resilience of systems. This includes the immediate coping capacities in the event of external and unplanned shocks; the ability to absorb the shock in the short-term emergency; adaptive capacities in order to recover from the consequences of these shocks and to mitigate losses; and transformative capacities in the long term in order to anticipate similar crises and alleviate their consequences.

The first part of this report provides an overview of the recent flows of migrants seeking protection, discusses the expected economic impact of these flows, and presents the milestones of the multilateral response. The second part discusses the many dimensions

of integrating refugees and other vulnerable migrants, in terms of their economic and social outcomes as well as specific factors of vulnerability. It also provides a comprehensive assessment of the policies put in place to support the livelihood and integration of refugees and other vulnerable migrants in destination and transit countries, as well as in origin countries upon return. The third section of the report tackles issues of anticipation, monitoring and reacting, examining the role of early warning mechanisms and the challenge of improving information to better monitor integration outcomes and frame policies.

This report tries to respond to the challenges posed by the unexpected arrival of relatively large inflows of refugees and other vulnerable migrants, taking account of the complexity involved in hosting and integrating people who have not chosen to leave their home. Although finding solutions to these issues is by no means simple, the experience accumulated by OECD countries in this area provides knowledge that will help avoid past mistakes and improve the efficiency of the response in similar situations in the future.

Who are refugees and other vulnerable migrants?

In this report the word “refugees” is used as a generic term to include all beneficiaries of international protection – both those who obtained formal refugee status and those who received other forms of protection, notably subsidiary protection. The term “vulnerable migrants” refers to those who have characteristics and face integration challenges similar to refugees but who have been admitted on other grounds and have a legal right to stay. When reference is made to survey data, these generally relate to persons who self-declare having migrated for purposes of international protection. The report considers asylum seekers, who are candidates for international protection status, separately from refugees.



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