

RESPONDING TO THE ECEC NEEDS OF CHILDREN OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA



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TRANSATLANTIC FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EARLY YEARS

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Executive Summary

With refugees and asylum seekers arriving in large numbers across Europe and North America in recent years, many countries have struggled to address their basic reception needs and provide effective integration services. Young children comprise a substantial share of these arrivals, and many have experienced significant trauma and stress that pose serious risks to their cognitive, psychosocial, and physical development. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs provide an important means by which receiving countries can mitigate many of the risks these young children face, thereby boosting their education and career trajectories and supporting longer-term integration success. Since parents engage with these services on behalf of their children, such programs also provide an important opportunity to reach out to and promote the successful integration of refugee parents and families more generally.

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) programs provide an important means by which receiving countries can mitigate many of the risks these young children face.

Seeking to better understand current policies and practices in this arena, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) coordinated an international study of the challenges and successes major host countries in Europe and North America are experiencing in the provision of high-quality ECEC services to young children of refugees and asylum seekers. Fieldwork for this study was conducted in Belgium, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. Despite often wide variation in the characteristics of each country's refugee and asylum-seeker populations and the design of their migration management and ECEC systems, a number of common challenges and promising policies were identified.

A. Recent Trends in Arrivals and Challenges for Reception and Integration Systems

Extraordinarily high levels of displacement across the globe in 2015 and 2016 led large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees to seek protection in Europe and North America. EU Member States received 1.26 million first-time asylum applications in 2015 and 1.21 million in 2016. The United States and Canada experienced substantial increases in asylum applications during the same period, while also increasing the number of refugees they committed to resettle, in part due to the ongoing war in Syria.

Faced with this rapid increase in arrivals, many EU Member States have experienced serious backlogs in their asylum systems. As applicants wait for extended periods to receive a decision on their applications, many have come to rely on temporary accommodations—an arrangement that can place additional stress on families who are often relocated multiple times within host countries, disrupting their access to critical support services. And while EU law states that all school-age children have the right to education regardless of their legal status, and that countries are required to grant asylum-seeker children access to education within three months of submitting a protection claim, many wait longer. Children often stay for extended periods in reception centers that lack educational services, and both reception and education systems have struggled to build the capacity to fulfill this legal right. As this report demonstrates, capacity to reach and effectively serve young asylum-seeker and refugee children through early childhood programs is also significantly lacking once families move beyond the initial reception stage. With the level of forced displacement around the world likely to remain high in the coming years, improving these systems will remain an important challenge for policymakers even as the current sense of acute crisis subsides.



B. *The Importance of High-Quality ECEC Services for Refugee Families*

Young refugee children come from widely varying backgrounds. However, their shared experience of flight is marked by a significant degree of stress and hardship. For these children, who are in a critical stage of their cognitive and socioemotional development, poverty, physical and emotional stressors, and gaps in language learning can severely affect their future academic and professional trajectories and prospects for successful integration into a new society.

ECEC programs can help to mitigate these risk factors by establishing a strong foundation for school readiness and success. Research shows that services to support children in their early years have both greater benefits and a higher return on investment than costly interventions at a later stage. Programs that serve young children are also uniquely well-positioned to build meaningful relationships with parents and families, and thus offer host countries a promising tool to achieve integration goals and promote social cohesion.

Services to support children in their early years have both greater benefits and a higher return on investment than costly interventions at a later stage.

Despite these many potential benefits, significant obstacles in finding and accessing high-quality programming mean that refugee families are less likely than native families to enroll their children in ECEC programs. Barriers include a lack of linguistically and culturally competent programs, cost, bureaucratic hurdles, and inflexible schedules that clash with parents' work obligations.

C. *Key Findings from Comparative Research*

Field research conducted in nine major host countries in Europe and North America identified the following critical challenges, promising practices, and opportunities for action.

I. *Critical Challenges*

Despite variation in migration-management and ECEC policies, as well as the resources devoted to their implementation, many of the most significant challenges related to serving young refugee and asylum-seeker children were shared across countries. Among these, two overarching and particularly prominent challenges stand out:

Country-wide responses to the ECEC needs for young refugee and asylum-seeker children have been extraordinarily weak, despite the legal obligation in most countries to serve this population. National responsibility and accountability are largely lacking, as is support for local governments charged with ECEC service provision in most cases.

Interviews and field research revealed significant capacity constraints within agencies overseeing refugee resettlement and integration as well as those responsible for early childhood programs. A lack of clarity regarding which actor is responsible for young refugee and asylum-seeker children was evident, as was a corresponding lack of accountability for their wellbeing. For example, reception centers across all countries included in this study typically do not offer any activities for children under age 6. And because these children are below the compulsory school age, gaps in services and obstacles to participation may be invisible at the policy level and few programs and services exist outside reception centers that specifically target this group.



A fundamental disconnect is also evident in many countries between refugee and asylum services—which are managed by national governments and international agencies—and ECEC services, which are largely the domain of subnational governments. At the same time, ECEC services are often not universally required or available, and linguistically and culturally competent providers equipped to effectively serve diverse populations are often scarce. Absent policy leadership, funding, and capacity-building support from higher levels of government, many local systems are unable to adequately or effectively meet the needs of young children from refugee and asylum-seeker families.

While ECEC programs recognize the importance of trauma-informed care, training and resources to provide this kind of support are almost universally lacking.

Despite growing recognition of the long-lasting detrimental effects of trauma experienced in early childhood, few programs and systems provide staff training or other resources to ensure that young refugee children receive appropriate support. There is a widespread need to strengthen how providers identify mental health needs, bolster resilience, and mitigate the potential negative effects of trauma. A lack of expertise and information on trauma-informed care—much less information on the specific needs of refugee families—is a critical issue given how many recently arrived children have experienced the loss of loved ones, exposure to violence, and high degrees of uncertainty after arrival in a host country.

2. Promising Practices and Opportunities for Policy Action

Although national policies governing the care of young refugee children are lacking in most of the countries included in this study, some (most notably, Sweden and Germany) have implemented significant policies and programs either at the national or local level to support the provision of ECEC services to these children. Furthermore, in some countries where formal policies are not in place, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have stepped in to fill gaps in services through innovative approaches. Three of the most promising practices and policy approaches are:

Providing systematic support for local governments and ECEC programs as they build their capacity to meet the needs of children from refugee and asylum-seeker families. Key supports include expanded service slots, language support, and tailored workforce training and parent mentor programs.

System-wide guidance and support is often needed to scale up the workforce and program elements required to effectively serve these children. This is particularly the case where the ECEC workforce does not already have the linguistic skills and cultural knowledge to work with children from diverse backgrounds.

While improving ECEC provision for refugee families does not appear to be a priority for policymakers in most of the countries in this study, Germany is a notable exception. Adopting a whole-of-government approach to integrating the roughly 1 million refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in the country in recent years, the national government has undertaken major initiatives and investments in partnership with a range of subnational government actors, including those responsible for ECEC. Through the Sprach-Kitas program, for example, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs provides professional support for early childhood programs working to improve language acquisition. The ministry is investing almost 400 million euros between 2017 and 2020 to expand the program and double the number of available staff. Federal investments are also helping to scale up the Stepping into Childcare program that currently operates in 200 locations and is working to win refugee parents' trust and introduce them to the country's ECEC offerings.

Serving young refugee children alongside their native peers in mixed classrooms to prevent the segregation of ECEC programs and promote social cohesion.

In Sweden, refugee and asylum-seeker families are dispersed during settlement with the expectation that this will make it easier to integrate into their new communities. Cities and schools make a similar effort



to design mixed classrooms based on research showing that newcomer children achieve better outcomes when they are not concentrated in a single school and can instead learn alongside native-born children. Similarly, the German Modell-Kitas program in Berlin aims to support the inclusion and integration of refugee families by serving them alongside other families in the surrounding community.

Forging interagency and community partnerships encourages collaboration and cooperation, and enables ECEC initiatives to leverage a range of assets and maximize service impacts.

A lack of coordination and communication between disparate government departments was widely reported during MPI's fieldwork as a key challenge that contributes to the lack of effective ECEC policies and service infrastructure for refugee children. As such, partnerships within and outside of government, and at both the national and local level, were identified as essential. In Belgium, for example, Kind en Gezin, the public ECEC agency for the Flemish community, has a collaborative agreement with Fedasil (Belgium's Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) and the Red Cross, which manages reception centers in the country. This partnership ensures that refugee and asylum-seeker parents of young children can access many of the services Kind en Gezin provides, including prenatal, postnatal, and preventative health care; parenting support; home visits; and consultations.

D. Conclusion

Many government and NGO initiatives are employing thoughtful approaches to provide much-needed support for young refugee and asylum-seeker children and their families, yet much more remains to be done. In most cases, these programs reach only a small number of those in need. Services proven to be effective are a long way from being systematized and sufficiently resourced to ensure widespread accessibility and long-term viability. Early childhood services have often been overlooked in emergency-response and long-term integration efforts, yet the enormous benefits they hold both for newcomer families and for society as a whole are indisputable. As the immediate sense of crisis passes and recognition grows that new challenges will inevitably come, prioritizing the provision of quality ECEC services to refugee families represents an indispensable investment for receiving societies.

Services proven to be effective are a long way from being systematized and sufficiently resourced to ensure widespread accessibility and long-term viability.

I. Introduction

Across Europe and North America, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers¹ in recent years has challenged the ability of many countries to meet basic reception needs and provide effective integration services. With armed conflicts, political instability, and other drivers of displacement predicted to fuel such movements for years to come, these challenges are likely to be sustained well into the future. There is thus an urgent need in many refugee-receiving countries to create and scale up integration systems.

¹ This report uses the term "refugee" when discussing newcomers who have either arrived through refugee resettlement routes or applied for and received international protection status after arrival. A distinction between refugees and asylum seekers is made where appropriate for clarity (e.g., when a service or program is available to one but not both groups).



Young children make up a significant proportion of recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers, and many have experienced levels of stress and trauma that pose significant risks to their wellbeing and future development. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) services have the potential to address these risk factors at a critical stage in these vulnerable young children's development. They can also play a central role in supporting the long-term integration of refugee and asylum-seeker families as a whole. However, research into strategies that have proven successful in serving young refugee children and their families in ECEC programs remains scant, and this population often receives little policy attention and few dedicated resources.

This report takes stock of ECEC service provision for young children of refugees and asylum seekers in select European countries (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Turkey) as well as in Canada and the United States. In doing so, it aims to build understanding of strategies that have been shown to serve these children and families well. It draws on extensive fieldwork conducted in nine refugee-receiving countries and was developed with support from the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years (TFIEY), a consortium of European and U.S. foundations concerned with improving the life prospects of young children who face risks to their wellbeing and healthy development.

They can also play a central role in supporting the long-term integration of refugee and asylum-seeker families as a whole.

Beginning with a review of recent trends in migration to Europe (and to a lesser extent, North America), the report highlights the need for urgent and sustained action to address the integration needs of recent humanitarian arrivals. It then examines what the evidence shows about the ability of high-quality ECEC services to both mitigate the negative effects of poverty, trauma, and other risk factors experienced by many refugee families and to benefit the development of refugee children in other ways, including long-term integration into host-country societies. Finally, the report draws on original fieldwork to provide a comparative look at how ECEC systems in Europe and North America have—or have not—effectively reacted to recent arrivals, identifying common challenges and highlighting a wide range of promising policies and practices.

II. Recent Trends in Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Flows

A record 65.6 million people were displaced around the world in 2016. While many remained within their countries of origin as internally displaced persons, 22.5 million refugees and 2.8 million asylum seekers were forced to seek safety abroad (see Figure 1).² Amidst these extraordinarily high levels of displacement globally, Europe and North America have experienced the arrival of increasing numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in recent years.³ In 2015, asylum seekers filed 1.26 million first-time applications in EU Member States—more than twice the amount in 2014 and a record high.⁴ The number

2 This overall figure of 65.6 million includes 40.3 million internally displaced persons. See United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2017), www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34.

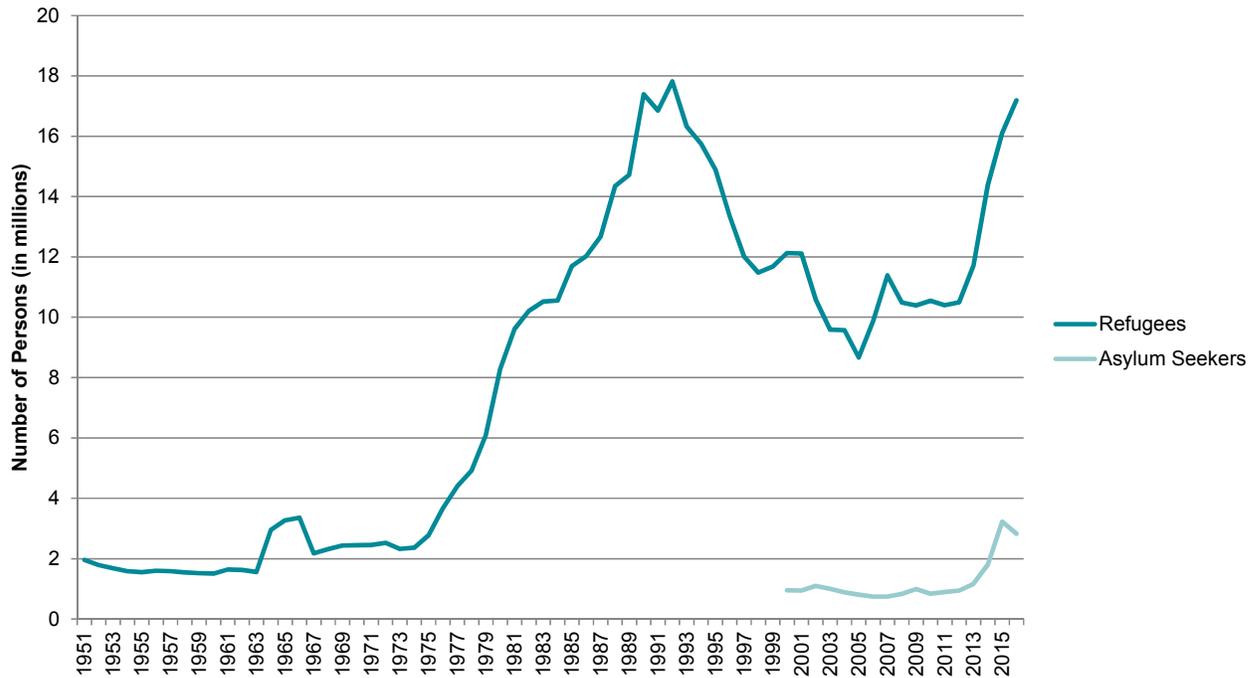
3 While refugees and asylum seekers have different legal statuses and are therefore entitled to different services and benefits, individuals within these groups often share a number of characteristics, including exposure to violence or trauma, separation from family or home, language barriers, and/or disrupted education.

4 Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data (Rounded) [migr_asyappctza]," updated October 4, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyappctza; Eurostat, "Record Number of Over 1.2 million First Time Asylum Seekers Registered in 2015" (news release, Eurostat, Luxembourg, March 4, 2016), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7203832/3-04032016-AP-EN.pdf>.



of first-time applicants remained high in 2016, at 1.21 million.⁵ Meanwhile, in the United States, more than 115,000 affirmative asylum applications were filed in fiscal year (FY) 2016,⁶ a 39 percent increase from the previous year.⁷ And Canada saw a 48 percent increase from 2015 to 2016, receiving 23,895 applications.⁸

Figure 1. Refugees and Asylum Seekers Worldwide, 1951–2016



Notes: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Population Statistics Database does not report global statistics on asylum seekers until 2000. Refugee figures exclude Palestinians registered by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Source: UNCHR, “UNHCR Population Statistics Database,” accessed August 4, 2017, <http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview>.

In addition to receiving asylum seekers, several countries resettle refugees from first-asylum countries. The United States and Canada have long run some of the world’s largest refugee resettlement programs. The United States resettled nearly 85,000 refugees in FY 2016, up from almost 70,000 in FY 2015. However, while admissions were set to increase to 110,000 in FY 2017, only 54,000 refugees were resettled that year due to Trump administration efforts to pause and restrict the U.S. resettlement

5 Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data.”
 6 The U.S. government’s fiscal year (FY) begins on October 1 and ends on September 30 (e.g., FY 2016 ran from October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016).
 7 This number only includes principal applicants, and does not include dependents. It also does not include defensive asylum requests, which are submitted in response to removal proceedings. See Nadwa Mossaad and Ryan Baugh, “Refugees and Asylees: 2016,” in *Annual Flow Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, 2018), www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/Refugees_Asylees_2016.pdf.
 8 Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), “Canada - Asylum Claimants by Claim Office Type, Province / Territory of Claim and Claim Year” (dataset, accessed July 13, 2017), <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/b6cbcf4d-f763-4924-a2fb-8cc4a06e3de4>.



program.⁹ Between January 2015 and October 2017, Canada resettled almost 90,000 refugees.¹⁰ In a targeted effort to address the high and rising levels of displacement caused by the Syrian civil war, the Canadian government also resettled more than 40,000 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and January 2017.¹¹ Meanwhile, some European countries have launched refugee resettlement schemes in recent years, although these programs have generally resettled more modest numbers of refugees; collectively, EU Member States resettled 8,155 refugees in 2015 and 14,205 in 2016.¹²

With these increased arrivals, migration has come to feature more prominently in public and political discourse, particularly in Europe. And while the sense of acute crisis felt in many corners of Europe during 2015 and 2016 has largely subsided as of writing, migration-related issues—including the social and economic integration of newcomers—are still and will remain key concerns for both policymakers and the general public.¹³ The protracted nature of many of the forces driving displacement around the world suggest that large numbers of people will continue to seek refuge in Europe and North America, and that pressure will remain on countries there to resettle significant numbers of refugees from overburdened first-asylum countries.

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and their families will benefit both the refugees themselves and
the societies into which they settle.*

Across refugee and asylum-seeker groups, children represent a subpopulation of particular concern. Children accounted for half of the refugee population worldwide in 2016,¹⁴ and young children make up a considerable share of newly arriving refugees and asylum seekers in many resettlement countries.¹⁵ Family reunification is expected to further increase the number of young refugee children in Europe and North America. In the face of this sustained demographic change, steps to facilitate the successful integration of refugee children and their families will benefit both the refugees themselves and the societies into which they settle. With the majority of refugees worldwide now originating from Middle

9 The Trump administration has further reduced the refugee admissions ceiling for FY 2018 to 45,000. See Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Data Hub, “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present,” accessed January 9, 2018, www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/data-hub/charts/us-annual-refugee-resettlement-ceilings-and-number-refugees-admitted-united; Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Miriam Jordan, “Trump Plans 45,000 Limit on Refugees Admitted to U.S.,” *New York Times*, September 26, 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/us/politics/trump-plans-45000-limit-on-refugees-admitted-to-us.html.

10 The Canadian government has set a target of admitting 43,000 resettled refugees and protected persons in 2018, including 27,000 refugees resettled through its Government Assisted, Blended Visa Office-Referred, and Privately Sponsor programs. See IRCC, “Notice – Supplementary Information 2018-2020 Immigration Levels Plan” (notice, IRCC, Ottawa, November 1, 2017), www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/notices/2017-11-01.asp; IRCC, “Canada - Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory and Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Intended Destination and Immigration Category” (dataset, accessed December 19, 2017), <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/4a1b260a-7ac4-4985-80a0-603bfe4aec11>.

11 These figures include those resettled through both government and private sponsorship. See IRCC, “#WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures,” updated January 29, 2017, www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/milestones.asp.

12 Eurostat, “Resettled Persons by Age, Sex and Citizenship. Annual Data (Rounded) [migr_asyresa],” updated April 26, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyresa.

13 Demetrios G. Papademetriou with Caitlin Katsiaficas, *Europe’s Enduring Migration Crisis: The Search for Solutions to an Elusive Policy Puzzle* (Washington, DC: MPI, forthcoming).

14 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 2.

15 Data on the number of children receiving protection status are more limited. In 2015, 256,780 asylum applicants and 3,350 persons resettled in the European Union were under age 14. The United States resettled 10,001 refugees under age 5 in FY 2016. See Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data”; Eurostat, “Resettled Persons by Age, Sex and Citizenship. Annual Data”; U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics, “Table 15. Refugee Arrivals by Relationship to Principal Applicant and Sex, Age, and Marital Status: Fiscal Year 2016,” accessed January 9, 2018, www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/YRBK%202016%20RFA%20Excel%20Final_1.zip.



Eastern and African countries,¹⁶ ECEC systems in Europe and North America are well placed to help communities bridge differences in language and cultural beliefs that shape child rearing practices and expectations about school readiness—but meeting this challenge will require thoughtful program adjustments, capacity building, and other forms of support.

III. Increased Stress on European Reception and Integration Systems

The rapid increase in the arrival of asylum seekers in Europe since 2014 has put stress on the reception and humanitarian protection systems in many EU Member States.¹⁷ Backlogs in the adjudication of asylum claims have grown, with applicants facing extended wait times before receiving a decision,¹⁸ and reception systems are under tremendous strain to find accommodations for them as they wait. Several countries have adopted emergency measures to respond to reception capacity challenges, including arranging emergency accommodations, and some have responded by imposing limits on family reunification and the length of residency permits for protection seekers.

Yet such measures can hinder the long-term integration of refugee families and negatively impact their wellbeing. For example, the reliance on temporary accommodations means that asylum seekers may have to move multiple times, placing additional stress on families and making it difficult for service providers to offer consistent support, particularly as children move from school to school.¹⁹ Other families may have to remain in the reception system even after receiving protection status, at times in collective accommodation, due to a scarcity of more permanent housing.²⁰ Recent research conducted in Germany shows that mass accommodations are not adequately safe spaces for children, as they lack privacy, support, and structure.²¹ Inadequate housing conditions are also a source of stress for children and their families in and of themselves, and have been shown to harm school performance and child wellbeing.²²

These demographic changes and system pressures are also felt unevenly across Europe. Heightened demand for housing and public services has at times exacerbated existing shortages.²³ And just as some countries have received more newcomers than others, some schools and municipalities within individual Member States have been more heavily affected than others by the arrival of asylum-seeker children. As a

16 In 2016, the five largest countries of origin of refugees were Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Sudan. See UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*.

17 However, it is important to note that the distribution of asylum seekers across the European Union is uneven, with just a handful of countries receiving the lion's share of asylum seekers in recent years. In 2015, more than one-third (35 percent) of first-time asylum applications were submitted in Germany, while 14 percent were registered in Hungary and 12 percent in Sweden. The following year, an even larger share—60 percent—were filed in Germany; Italy ranked second in 2016 with 10 percent of applications. In terms of applications per capita, Hungary, Sweden, and Austria received the highest number in 2015, and Germany, Greece, and Austria received the most in 2016. See Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data"; Eurostat, "Record Number of Over 1.2 Million First Time Asylum Seekers Registered in 2015"; Eurostat, "1.2 Million First Time Asylum Seekers Registered in 2016" (news release, Eurostat, Luxembourg, March 16, 2017), <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7921609/3-16032017-BP-EN.pdf>.

18 Wait times vary by country and applicant, as well as over time. At the end of September 2017, more than 960,000 people had pending asylum applications in the European Union. See Eurostat, "Persons Subject of Asylum Applications Pending at the End of the Month by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Monthly Data (Rounded) [migr_asypenczm]," updated December 15, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asypenczm.

19 See, for example, Susan Fratzke, *Weathering Crisis, Forging Ahead: Swedish Asylum and Integration Policy* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2017), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/weathering-crisis-forging-ahead-swedish-asylum-and-integration-policy.

20 See, for instance, Flemish Refugee Action, *Asylum Information Database Country Report: Belgium* (Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2016), 112, www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/report-download/aida_be_2016update.pdf.

21 Anne Wihstutz, "Everyday Life of Young Children in Accommodation Centres for Refugees in Germany, Berlin, 2016-2017" (presentation at the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years, Berlin, September 11-12, 2017), www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-Berlin_PP/Anne-Wihstutz.pdf.

22 Fratzke, *Weathering Crisis, Forging Ahead*, 14.

23 Ibid.



result, asylum seekers may be obligated to move from one city to another to obtain a place in a reception center,²⁴ while others may be required to settle in a particular state or municipality after receiving protection status.²⁵ Several Member States, such as Germany and Sweden, make an effort to disperse asylum seekers throughout the country, placing them based on factors such as local population, labor-market conditions, and tax revenue. Because some localities have little prior experience with immigrant and refugee populations, service providers and educators may be working with newcomer families for the first time.²⁶

Municipalities often play a large role in the provision of ECEC services and, given the increased need and unpredictability of future arrivals, many are facing significant capacity challenges.²⁷ All children have a right to education under EU law, regardless of their legal status.²⁸ Because ECEC enrollment is not mandatory for all child nationals, however, this legal right is often interpreted as being focused on primary and secondary education. According to the EU Reception Conditions Directive, countries must grant asylum-seeker children access to education “under similar conditions as their own nationals” within three months of submitting a protection claim.²⁹ These education services can be provided inside or outside of reception centers.³⁰ However, in practice, the time between when an asylum application is filed and a child enrolls in school can differ considerably depending on the country, region, and reception facility.³¹

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Initial reception centers, often meant to house families only for a short time, often lack educational services and have limited recreational opportunities to support child development; however, inadequate capacity elsewhere has meant that some children are housed in these facilities for considerably longer than envisioned.³² The same can also be said for children held in pre-removal centers after being judged not to have a valid legal claim to protection—though they too have a right to education contingent on

24 For instance, if an asylum seeker in Italy does not accept a place in the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR), they exit the reception system. See Association for Legal Studies on Immigration (ASGI), *Asylum Information Database Country Report: Italy* (Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2016), 109, www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy.

25 In Germany, protection beneficiaries must settle within the state that processed their application, and sometimes within a particular municipality, for up to three years unless an exception is granted for family, education, or employment reasons. This applies to all persons granted protection on or after January 1, 2016. See Informationsverbund Asyl und Migration, *Asylum Information Database Country Report: Germany* (Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, 2016), 90-91, www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/germany/content-international-protection/movement-and-mobility/freedom-movement.

26 *Ibid.*, 19.

27 See Brian Salant and Meghan Benton, *Strengthening Local Education Systems for Newly Arrived Adults and Children: Empowering Cities through Better Use of EU Instruments* (Brussels: MPI Europe, 2017), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/strengthening-local-education-systems-newly-arrived-adults-and-children-empowering-cities.

28 A 2011 study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights found that most Member States granted the right to education to all children, including those without legal status and those in detention; however, such provisions were only enshrined in law in four countries. See European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), *European Legal and Policy Framework on Immigration Detention of Children* (Vienna: FRA, 2017), 80, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/child-migrant-detention>.

29 “Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying Down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection (Recast),” *Official Journal of the European Union* 2013 L 180/96, June 26, 2013, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2013:180:0096:0116:EN:PDF>.

30 *Ibid.*

31 FRA, *Current Migration Situation in the EU: Education* (Vienna: FRA, 2017), 10, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/current-migration-situation-eu-education>.

32 FRA, *European Legal and Policy Framework on Immigration Detention of Children*, 81.



their length of stay in detention (in many cases, for any stay longer than two weeks).³³ However, in reality, children subject to a removal order are unlikely to have access to any ECEC services. Finally, this report also demonstrates that in most cases, ECEC system capacity to effectively serve refugee and asylum-seeker families once they move beyond the initial reception stage and are living in more permanent accommodations is also highly limited.

Overall, while reception and integration infrastructure varies significantly across European countries, these systems have almost universally come under great strain in recent years—with serious consequences for the wellbeing of the refugee children and families they serve. Because responsibility for providing ECEC services to refugee and asylum-seeker families does not fall neatly into a national policy portfolio and is in many cases devolved to the local level, these systems are often under-resourced, if not entirely overlooked.

IV. Risk Factors for Young Children in Refugee Families

Refugee and asylum-seeker families come from a wide range of countries of origin and bring with them vastly different cultural backgrounds and life experiences. Their journeys in search of safety also differ; they may undertake a dangerous voyage, spend considerable time in a refugee camp or reception center, and/or experience separation from family members. And depending on their mode of arrival, they may face uncertainty or stiff challenges in seeking to establish their legal status in the destination country. Despite these differences, most share a significant degree of stress, hardship, loss of family and community support, and adjustment.³⁴ For young children at a sensitive stage in their cognitive and socioemotional development, challenges common to refugee families—including poverty, language gaps, and a host of physical and emotional stressors—can affect their future prospects and integration into their new communities.³⁵

Trauma experienced before, during, or after arrival in a host country can hamper the ability of refugee children to form healthy attachments and relationships. In this context, young children may have difficulty establishing a foundation of security, limiting their capacity to learn.³⁶ Additionally, research shows that trauma experienced in childhood can have critical long-term physical, mental, and emotional impacts as children grow and well into adulthood.³⁷ Parents' exposure to trauma can also affect their ability to support their children or have indirect negative effects on them in the form of secondary exposure.³⁸ In addition, many refugee parents have limited formal education, lack proficiency in the

33 Ibid, 80-81.

34 Heather Sevazzi, "Supporting the Settlement Needs of Young Refugee Children," *The Early Child Educator* (Spring 2016): 7-12, www.ecebc.ca/resources/journal/2016_Spring/Savazzi.pdf.

35 Kate Hooper, Jie Zong, Randy Capps, and Michael Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States: Integration Successes and Challenges* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/young-children-refugees-united-states-integration-successes-and-challenges; Hamish R. Graham, Ripudaman S. Minhas, and Georgia Paxton, "Learning Problems in Children of Refugee Background: A Systematic Review," *Pediatrics* 137, no. 6 (2016): 1-15.

36 Zero to Six Collaborative Group, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, *Early Childhood Trauma* (Los Angeles and Durham, NC: National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, 2010), 7, www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/nctsn_earlychildhoodtrauma_08-2010final.pdf; Katie Statman-Weil, *Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2015), www.naeyc.org/system/files/YC0515_Trauma-Sensitive_Classrooms_Statman-Weil.pdf; Jessica Dym Bartlett, Sheila Smith, and Elizabeth Bringewatt, *Helping Young Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: Policies and Strategies for Early Care and Education* (Bethesda, MD and New York: Child Trends and the National Center for Children in Poverty, 2017), 1, www.childtrends.org/publications/ecetrauma/.

37 Erin R. Barnett and Jessica Hambien, "Trauma, PTSD, and Attachment in Infants and Young Children," National Center for PTSD, accessed May 10, 2017, www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treatment/children/trauma_ptsd_attachment.asp.

38 National Child Traumatic Stress Network, "Guidance for Mental Health Practitioners," accessed July 24, 2017, <http://nctsn.org/trauma-types/refugee-trauma/guidance-professionals>; Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*; Graham, Minhas, and Paxton, "Learning Problems in Children of Refugee Background," 10.



majority language, and experience social exclusion—all of which can negatively affect their children's development.³⁹

Depending on circumstances before and during flight, young refugee children may have little or no prior experience with formal early childhood services.⁴⁰ Once in a destination country, these children and their families can face a range of obstacles to accessing ECEC, including a lack of awareness of ECEC service options; cost and difficulty accessing financial assistance; cultural and linguistic barriers or a lack of trust in providers; difficulty finding reliable and affordable transportation; ECEC program schedules that clash with parents' work hours; or barriers related to legal status in the destination country.⁴¹ With immigrant and refugee children already participating in ECEC services at lower rates than native-born children,⁴² they may face additional challenges to accessing the high-quality care that is essential for reaping the many benefits of ECEC.⁴³ An extensive body of research shows that services considered to be high-quality on the basis of their ability to meet the needs of native children may not necessarily provide the same level of quality for migrant and refugee children.

V. The Importance of High-Quality ECEC Services for Refugee Families

ECEC programs have the potential to address a variety of needs unique to young refugee children while supporting their overall healthy development. Often one of the first and most intimate points of interaction between receiving societies and refugee families with young children, ECEC programs can help mitigate the risk factors described above.⁴⁴ These services can promote children's healthy physical, cognitive, and socioemotional development and foster their language, literacy, and math skills, thus

- 39 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*; Nicola Dolan and Catherine Sherlock, "Family Support through Childcare Services: Meeting the Needs of Asylum-Seeking and Refugee Families," *Child Care in Practice* 16, no. 2 (2010): 147–65, 153.
- 40 Gina Fidazzo, Laura Schmidt, and Alisia Bergsman, *Enhancing Child Care for Refugee Self-Sufficiency: A Training Resource and Toolkit* (Baltimore, MD and Washington, DC: Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops Migration and Refugee Services, 2006), 8, www.brycs.org/documents/upload/EnhancingChildCare.pdf.
- 41 Colleen K. Vesely and Mark R. Ginsberg, *Exploration of the Status of Services for Immigrant Families in Early Childhood Education Programs* (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2011), www.buildinitiative.org/portals/0/uploads/documents/resource-center/diversity-and-equity-toolkit/vesely-ginsberg-servicesforimmigrantfamiliesinec-2011.pdf; Fidazzo, Schmidt, and Bergsman, *Enhancing Child Care for Refugee Self-Sufficiency*; Olivia Golden and Karina Fortuny, *Young Children of Immigrants and the Path to Educational Success: Key Themes from an Urban Institute Roundtable* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2010), www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/27276/412330-Young-Children-of-Immigrants-and-the-Path-to-Educational-Success.PDF; Rasmia Kirmani and Vanessa Leung, "Breaking Down Barriers: Immigrant Families and Early Childhood Education in New York City" (policy brief, Coalition for Asian American Children and Families, May 1 2008), www.cacf.org/documents/Breaking%20Down%20Barriers%20Policy%20Brief.pdf; Julia Gelatt, Gina Adams, and Sandra Huerta, *Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2014), www.urban.org/research/publication/supporting-immigrant-families-access-prekindergarten; Karoly and Gonzalez, "Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families"; Lyn Morland, Nicole Ives, Clea McNeely, and Chenoa Allen, *Providing a Head Start: Improving Access to Early Childhood Education for Refugees* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), 5, www.migrationpolicy.org/research/providing-head-start-improving-access-early-childhood-education-refugees.
- 42 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2017), 55, www.oecd.org/education/starting-strong-2017-9789264276116-en.htm; Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*; Lynn A. Karoly and Gabriella C. Gonzalez, "Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families," *The Future of Children* 21, no. 1 (2011): 71–101, 82, https://futureofchildren.princeton.edu/sites/futureofchildren/files/media/immigrant_children_21_01_fulljournal.pdf; Hannah Matthews and Danielle Ewen, *Early Education Programs and Children of Immigrants: Learning Each Other's Language* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2010), www.urban.org/research/publication/early-education-programs-and-children-immigrants-learning-each-others-language.
- 43 Katherine A. Magnuson and Jane Waldfogel, "Early Childhood Care and Education Effects on Ethnic and Racial Gaps in School Readiness," *The Future of Children* 15, no. 1 (2005): 169–96.
- 44 Vesely and Ginsberg, *Exploration of the Status of Services*.



establishing a solid foundation for school readiness and success.⁴⁵ Particularly important for immigrant and refugee children, ECEC programs can provide language instruction in the majority language of the receiving country,⁴⁶ either alone or in addition to instruction in a child's home language. Evidence from the United States has shown that immigrant children who participate in high-quality ECEC programs show a greater degree of school readiness than their peers who did not,⁴⁷ and that they may benefit even more than their native-born peers from high-quality early learning programs.⁴⁸ The provision of high-quality ECEC has also been shown to reduce future gaps in outcomes between refugee children and children of native-born parents, boosting not only academic performance, but also employment opportunities, income, and overall health.⁴⁹

Beyond the young children themselves, ECEC services can play an important role in the care, support, and integration of entire refugee families. Given their emphasis on holistic service provision and natural strengths in family and community engagement, early childhood programs are particularly well-positioned to address family needs more broadly. If well designed and supported, such programs can help host countries achieve important integration goals and promote the building of inclusive communities and societies. For example, ECEC programs often help parents gain the confidence, knowledge, and skills to navigate a new school system and advocating on behalf of their children.⁵⁰ Leveraging their relationships with parents, such programs can also help refugee families access a range of physical and mental health, employment, and other services that support family wellbeing, economic stability, and integration; this can be done either by offering these services directly or through partnerships and referrals.

The provision of high-quality ECEC has also been shown to reduce future gaps in outcomes between refugee children and children of native-born parents.

Some ECEC programs also take a two-generation approach by offering parents educational opportunities, such as language instruction and/or workforce training. Language instruction can help reduce families' linguistic isolation, which has been linked to lower income and education levels and

45 Ibid.; Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*; Robert Crosnoe, *Preparing the Children of Immigrants for Early Academic Success* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2013), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/preparing-children-immigrants-early-academic-success; European Commission, *Study on the Effective Use of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) in Preventing Early School Leaving (ESL)* (Brussels: European Commission, 2014), <http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/study-on-the-effective-use-of-early-childhood-education-and-care-eccec-in-preventing-early-school-leaving-esl--pbNC0414324/>.

46 Dolan and Sherlock, "Family Support through Childcare Services," 156.

47 U.S. Department of Education, *Resource Guide: Building a Bright Future for All. Success in Early Learning Programs and Elementary School for Immigrant Families* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2017), 6, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/focus/early-learning-teacher-and-parent-resource-guide.pdf>.

48 Maki Park, "Accessibility of Early Childhood Education and Care Services in the United States for Children of Immigrants of Diverse Origin Background Paper: Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years Meeting 1" (paper presented at Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Early Years, Ghent, Belgium, January 21-23, 2013), www.europe-kbf.eu/~media/Europe/TFIEY/TFIEY-1_InputPaper/Accessibility-of-ECEC-in-US.pdf; Karoly and Gonzalez, "Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families"; Gelatt, Adams, and Huerta, *Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten*.

49 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, *Policy Statement on Supporting the Development of Children Who Are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education, 2016), www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/dll_policy_statement_final.pdf; Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*; OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 59, 158; Vesely and Ginsberg, *Exploration of the Status of Services*; Gelatt, Adams, and Huerta, *Supporting Immigrant Families' Access to Prekindergarten*.

50 Maki Park and Margie McHugh, *Immigrant Parents and Early Childhood Programs: Addressing Barriers of Literacy, Culture and Systems Knowledge* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2014), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-parents-early-childhood-programs-barriers.



challenges accessing health and social services.⁵¹ In providing education and skill-building opportunities for parents, ECEC programs can also promote economic self-sufficiency and social inclusion.⁵²

More broadly, ECEC services can connect refugee families—who frequently experience social exclusion and marginalization—to the larger community, fostering networks and social capital that can provide newcomer parents with an important source of support.⁵³ At their best, early childhood programs can also contribute to social cohesion by providing a space in which the values of diversity, tolerance, and respect are nurtured—not only among children, but also among parents and the wider community.⁵⁴

VI. Key Findings: Challenges and Successes in ECEC Provision for Refugee and Asylum-Seeker Families

As the reception and integration of newcomers took on new urgency, MPI, with support from the TFIEY, launched an international study to deepen understanding of the challenges and successes major host countries are experiencing in providing high-quality ECEC services to young refugee and asylum-seeker children and their families. MPI researchers and expert consultants conducted field research in Belgium, Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. In each country, a field scan identified the programs currently working effectively with young children in recently arrived families, and researchers conducted interviews with key administrators, policymakers, and other leaders who could speak to the policy implications of recent migration trends. This research explored the following questions:

- How are ECEC programs addressing the need for linguistically and culturally appropriate communication with families who do not speak the majority language?
- How are these programs supporting the first- and second-language development of young children?
- What approaches are they taking to address trauma and stress experienced by young refugee and asylum-seeker children and their parents?
- How are ECEC programs partnering effectively with other social-service providers to ensure that families are receiving the holistic and comprehensive services required to support their integration and long-term success?
- What are the key challenges related to scaling up high-quality services for this population?

Despite significant country-to-country variation in terms of demographics, refugee policies, available resources, and early childhood infrastructure, many of the most significant challenges were widely shared across national contexts. Similarly, this study identified a common set of promising practices and effective approaches undertaken in all countries at the program level. In order to illustrate these areas of overlap as well as the unique contexts in which each ECEC system is operating, this report synthesizes the most

51 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*, 17.

52 Fidazzo, Schmidt, and Bergsman, *Enhancing Child Care for Refugee Self-Sufficiency*; Vesely and Ginsberg, *Exploration of the Status of Services*; Yusef Emre Akgündüz, Özgün Ünver, Janneke Plantenga, and Ides Nicaise, *The Socio-Economic Dimension of Early Childhood Education* (Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2015), http://ecec-care.org/fileadmin/careproject/Publications/reports/D5_1_The_Socio-Economic_Dimension_of_ECEC_in_Europe.pdf.

53 Dolan and Sherlock, “Family Support through Childcare Services,” 153; Karoly and Gonzalez, “Early Care and Education for Children in Immigrant Families,” 84.

54 Martha Friendly and Nina Prabhu, “Can Early Childhood Education and Care Help Keep Canada’s Promise of Respect for Diversity?” (occasional paper no. 23, Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Toronto, January 2010), http://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/crru_op23_diversity.pdf; Martha Friendly, “How ECEC Programmes Contribute to Social Inclusion in Diverse Societies,” in *Childhood Matters* no. 108 (2007): 12–13, www.bibalex.org/Search4Dev/files/293425/124164.pdf.



notable shared challenges and promising practices in this section and provides more in-depth contextual information for each country in the appendices.

A. *Topline Challenges*

At the country level, ECEC provisions for young refugee and asylum-seeker children are extraordinarily weak, despite these children’s legal eligibility for such services in most countries. National responsibility and accountability for this population is largely lacking, as is critical support for local governments charged with service provision.

Interviews with policymakers across the nine study countries revealed that early childhood services for young refugee children are a low-priority issue within both the departments responsible for refugee resettlement and integration and those that oversee early childhood programs. In the Netherlands, for instance, no ECEC services are designed specifically to support refugee children, and there is no national policy for the education of refugee children below compulsory schooling age. In Canada, meanwhile, targeted child care for newcomer families is available, but these services are only provided while parents are enrolled in government-sponsored English or French courses—a condition that suggests the employment outcomes of refugee parents are a high priority while less value is placed on ensuring that young refugee children have sustained access to high-quality care and learning opportunities.

Reception centers typically lack any activities for young children ages 6 and under.

Because young children below compulsory school age are often assumed to be safely in the care of their parents, providing social and educational services to this group is often viewed as less urgent, despite the extensive evidence of their importance to children’s development. Interviewees across study countries reported that reception centers typically lack any activities for young children ages 6 and under. Furthermore, because school attendance is not compulsory and access to education not ensured by law for learners below a certain age in most countries, gaps in services and obstacles to participation may not be easily recognizable at the policy level, either locally or nationally. Indeed, research conducted for this report was difficult to complete in several countries due to a lack of specific policies concerning provisions for refugee children, as well as a lack of clarity regarding the ministries or departments responsible for their welfare. Overall, the absence of policies and infrastructure for the provision of ECEC services to young children of refugees would appear to result in a broader lack of accountability for this vulnerable population’s wellbeing.

A fundamental disconnect between refugee and asylum services, which are managed by national governments and international agencies, and ECEC services, which are largely the domain of subnational governments, is evident across many countries. At the same time, ECEC services are often not universally required or available, and linguistic and cultural competencies for effectively serving diverse populations are often lacking. Absent policy leadership, funding, and capacity-building support from higher levels of government, many local systems are unable to adequately or effectively meet the needs of these young children. Quality provisions for these children also fall through the cracks in policies and services overseen by national and international reception and protection agencies.

While many ECEC programs recognize the importance of providing trauma-informed care, training and resources to provide this kind of support are almost universally lacking.

The detrimental effects of childhood trauma have received increased attention in recent years, yet this recognition often fails to translate into practice. Few of the programs consulted for this study reported



providing staff training or other resources to ensure that young children who had experienced trauma would receive support that could bolster their resilience, identify potential mental-health needs, and mitigate the negative impacts of exposure to trauma in the long run. Program staff reported a general lack of access to expertise on trauma-informed care, even more so when it came to information or training on addressing the specific needs of refugee families. At best, they provided referrals to mental-health services at other institutions when a need for counseling was identified. This lack of capacity is a critical issue given the prevalence of experiences of loss or separation from loved ones and exposure to violence among these young children.

A shortage of qualified, multilingual staff with cultural knowledge is a common challenge for programs seeking to provide relevant, high-quality ECEC services to refugee families.

Because refugee and asylum seeker populations in most of the study countries exhibit a high degree of linguistic and cultural diversity, and because the growth in new arrivals (whether many or few in number) occurred fairly rapidly, many localities have found it extremely challenging to recruit and train ECEC staff that reflect the families they serve. In many cases this increase in demand exacerbated existing shortages of qualified staff with language skills and cultural competence. In Germany, for example, finding staff who speak the wide range of African languages represented among refugees was cited as a particular challenge. Looking ahead, both program administrators and policymakers stressed the importance of employing diverse staff who understand the challenges refugees face in a new society in order to build trusting relationships and to work meaningfully with young children and their families in a time of fraught and stressful transitions.

A high degree of mobility and displacement is typical among refugee and asylum-seeker families, even after arriving in a host country; this makes it difficult to provide continuity in services and directs scarce resources to bureaucratic and logistical processes.

Program staff often reported high levels of turnover among the refugee families they serve, with some moving among short-term emergency accommodations and others transitioning from reception to more permanent accommodations. For young refugees, this movement can have a variety of adverse effects as it interrupts the process of building valuable relationships between teachers, children, and their parents and creates further discontinuity in their learning. In Sweden, the frequent movement of refugees and asylum seekers within the country has meant that some schools receive new students nearly every week, rendering it difficult for staff to build relationships and coherent educational programming for young children and their families. In the Netherlands as well, families frequently move from one asylum center to another, leading staff to devote significant time and resources to repeated intake and registration processes, limiting their ability to focus on other aspects of service provision.

Even where programs are working effectively with refugee and asylum-seeker children and families, many cited a lack of long-term funding as a barrier to achieving scale and stability.

In cases where action in the public sphere was limited, programs run by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) were consulted for this study. Many of these programs are funded through short-term contracts and, as a result, report finding it difficult to develop long-term plans or scale up services. Most also reported a lack of resources and capacity to serve the growing population of potential program participants in their communities. In addition, some NGOs funded by government agencies also reported that the volatility of public and political debates surrounding refugee and asylum issues created a highly unstable operating environment.

A lack of coordination among disparate government departments, NGOs, and other key stakeholders means that programs often act in isolation from one another, with limited access to critical information and a heightened risk that scarce resources are used inefficiently.

Program staff almost universally expressed concern regarding a lack of collaboration, information-sharing, and communication among key actors. In Greece, in particular, numerous organizations



providing ECEC and other services were reported to be working at the same sites without joint coordination or planning. Overall, country-level research and interviews with policymakers and practitioners revealed a stark picture: extremely scarce resources and little communication or coordination among departments and programs to ensure they are used efficiently.

B. Promising Practices

Despite the prevalence of challenges and the low level of priority often accorded to the provision of ECEC to young refugees, several promising policies and programs were identified.

Providing systematic support for ECEC programs as they build the capacity to meet the needs of children from refugee and asylum-seeker families is critical as local governments and individual programs may lack the prior experience or expertise to serve these populations.

Key types of support ECEC systems serving refugee and asylum-seeker families may need include expanded service slots, language support, and tailored workforce training and parent mentoring programs. Systemwide leadership is often also needed to bring to scale new methods of training ECEC workers or hiring new staff with linguistic and cultural skills. While this study found a very weak focus among policymakers in most of the sample countries on the effective provision of ECEC for refugee families, Germany was a notable exception.

Adopting a whole-of-government approach to ensuring the successful integration of the roughly 1 million refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in the country in recent years, the German national government has made major investments in partnerships with subnational government actors in a range of fields, including ECEC. For example, the Sprach-Kitas program launched by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs provides early childhood programs with professional support related to language acquisition issues. Local authorities will not, in the words of State Secretary Ralf Kleindeik “be left to fend for themselves” when it comes to making ECEC service improvements. The Ministry has pledged to invest almost 400 million euros between 2017 and 2020 to expand the program, including by doubling the number of staff. Federal investments are also helping to scale up a Stepping Into Childcare program that currently operates in 200 locations and is working to win refugee parents’ trust and introduce them to the country’s ECEC offerings.

Systemwide leadership is often also needed to bring to scale new methods of training ECEC workers or hiring new staff with linguistic and cultural skills.

Sweden also demonstrates an above-average level of coordination and support at the national level. The Swedish National Agency for Education partners directly with municipalities to support newly arrived students, offering targeted guidance and supplemental funding for newcomer-focused programs. The national preschool curriculum also instructs that children with a home language other than Swedish be provided opportunities to develop their cultural identity and proficiency in both languages. Some initiatives also provide newcomer support at a regional or municipal level. In Gothenburg, a centralized institution called the [Gothenburg Language Center](#) provides mother-tongue instruction and support across all city schools, thereby reducing the burden on individual schools to develop these services, and helping to ensure that changing local demographics can be addressed more rapidly and efficiently.

Finally, in Canada, the federal government partners with NGOs to meet emerging or specific service needs. For example, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) provides funding to the organization [Childminding Monitoring, Advisory, and Support \(CMAS\)](#), which supports a network of child-care



services for immigrants and refugees, in partnership with the IRCC's national [Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada \(LINC\)](#) program. With an explicit focus on the care of immigrant and refugee children, CMAS offers comprehensive and tailored resources, such as the 2015 [Caring for Syrian Refugee Children report](#), as well as direct technical assistance and training opportunities. This partnership allows IRCC to offer culturally relevant, enriching care for young children that simultaneously enables parents to access language learning opportunities.

Recruiting and training multilingual staff with cultural knowledge—ideally from within refugee communities—enables ECEC programs to connect meaningfully with refugee families.

Because building trusting relationships and communicating effectively with parents are critical to working effectively with young children, programs and policymakers in a number of study countries reported that a cornerstone of their efforts is recruiting and training staff who understand the range of challenges refugees may face in a new country and can speak refugees' home languages. In Berlin's [Modell-Kitas](#) program, for example, *Stadtteilmütter* (Borough Mothers) who are often themselves resettled refugee mothers, help build connections and serve as liaisons between newly arrived families and local service providers. In the Netherlands, similarly, an organization called Pharos trains refugee community leaders known as [Sleutelpersonen](#) (Key Leaders) as cultural mediators who can conduct outreach within refugee communities to facilitate newcomers' access to services. These *Sleutelpersonen* also support service providers and municipalities by offering training and practical materials regarding the provision of culturally relevant care.

Some programs are themselves leading the charge on this front. [Parents in Community Action Inc. \(PICA\) Head Start](#)—a nonprofit ECEC provider in the U.S. state of Minnesota—is making an explicit effort to build a diverse ECEC workforce in the state that reflects its refugee clientele. To do so, it supports the mothers of Head Start participants as they work to obtain the skills and credentials needed to join the program's teaching staff. Efforts such as these not only raise the overall quality of services provided to refugee families, they are also a way for programs to highlight the value they place on home languages and cultures, thus creating a more welcoming program environment for newcomers.

At a systems and policy level, building linguistic and cultural competence in the workforce is another key strategy. Sweden, for example, is building workforce capacity through its [Fast Track Initiative](#), which streamlines the integration of immigrants and refugees into the workforce, particularly in industries facing shortages (including ECEC and education more broadly). Through programs at six universities that offer instruction in both Swedish and Arabic, it is creating a pool of qualified bilingual preschool teachers from within the immigrant and refugee community. In a similar effort to boost capacity and combat shortages, the Office of Refugee Resettlement within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services runs a [Refugee Family Child Care Microenterprise Development Program](#) that aims to help refugee women open licensed child-care businesses in areas where child-care provision is scarce. Providing microloans alongside training and other supports, the initiative helps to broaden the availability of culturally and linguistically responsive care options for refugee communities while also creating employment opportunities for refugees.

Taking a deliberately inclusive approach to serving young refugee children alongside their native peers in mixed classrooms can help avoid segregation in ECEC programs and promote social cohesion.

Swedish policymakers view avoiding the segregation of newly arrived families as one of the country's most important priorities. Refugee families, as a result, are dispersed across the country during settlement with the expectation that this will boost their opportunities to engage with and integrate into receiving communities, while at the same time the broader public will become more welcoming and sympathetic toward the refugee community as the two more regularly interact with each other. Based also on research suggesting that newcomer children are more likely to achieve better outcomes when fewer newcomers are enrolled in a single school, schools make a particular effort to design mixed classrooms.



This focus on integration through inclusive services can be seen in other countries as well. The Modell-Kitas program in Berlin also explicitly aspires to support the integration of refugee families by serving them alongside other families in the surrounding community. As part of their effort to build a deeper understanding between diverse groups of children and adults, the program aims to promote sharing of the experiences of newly arrived refugees among parents, with experts providing guidance to staff on how to approach sensitive topics.

Providing wrap-around and/or collocated services to ensure that young children are supported in a holistic and comprehensive way.

Child and Family ([Kind en Gezin](#)), the public ECEC agency for Belgium’s Flemish community, has established family centers (Huizen van het Kind) across the Flemish and Brussels-Capital regions, uniting all services for families with children under one roof in order to improve the accessibility of high-quality services. The service providers involved operate under a philosophy of progressive universalism and are open to all families, though special considerations and tailored support are available for particularly vulnerable populations, including refugee families. This collocation approach can also be seen in individual initiatives and institutions. [Educare Arizona](#), an ECEC provider in the U.S. state of Arizona, has a full-service health clinic on site that offers dental care, well visits, health education, and behavioral support in addition to primary medical care. Having these services next door to early learning programs can increase service use among refugee and other vulnerable families who may otherwise face a range of barriers to finding and accessing comprehensive services. Educare Arizona also runs an extensive family engagement program and grants parents access to a resource library.

Serving parents alongside their children and providing parenting supports can help ECEC programs build trusting relationships and engage parents in services that benefit families as a whole.

Many effective programs seize the opportunity to serve young children and their parents through a two-generation strategy, capitalizing on the important link between parents’ outcomes and their children’s future success. The [Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants \(ASAM\)](#) in Turkey, for instance, offers parenting education, health training, breastfeeding instruction, and psychosocial support to refugee mothers in both Turkish and Arabic alongside activities for their young children. Similarly, Mother’s Space ([Spazio Mamme](#)), a project operated by Save the Children in Italy, provides a suite of activities to empower underprivileged mothers, including training in financial management and job readiness, legal advice and support, self-help groups, and socialization opportunities, as well as educational advocacy and support for their children.

Some programs also use activities that involve parents as a means of reaching out to refugee families and making the case for enrolling their young children in program services. Interviewees in Germany, for example, explained the importance of drawing in newly arrived families who may have reservations about enrolling in ECEC programming and being separated from their young children. To do so, they engage parents in “low-threshold activities” such as playgroups that involve mothers alongside their children, gradually building trust and a higher level of comfort.

Forging partnerships among agencies, levels of government, NGOs, and community stakeholders to encourage vital collaboration and cooperation.

In a number of study countries, partnerships both within and outside government, and at both national and local levels, are proving essential to supporting young refugee children. For example, Kind en Gezin in Belgium has a collaborative agreement with Fedasil (the Belgian Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) and the Red Cross, which manages reception centers in Belgium. This partnership ensures that refugee and asylum-seeker parents of young children can access many of the services Kind en Gezin provides, including preventative, prenatal, and postnatal health care, parenting support, home visits, and consultations. Similarly, in the United States, a [Refugee Head Start collaboration project](#) links local refugee resettlement agencies to Head Start programs, thereby increasing access to PreK services



among refugee families, who are universally eligible for this income-based program. While it may seem partnerships would naturally occur, linkages such as these are often overlooked within large systems that are tightly focused on executing their particular service model.

Interagency partnerships can also be critically important and especially fruitful at a local level. For example, the [First Steps Early Years Refugee Settlement Program](#) in Surrey, Canada brings together a wide range of NGO actors alongside city public service providers. This partnership serves the dual purposes of offering integration programming for refugee families and sensitizing city institutions to the challenges refugees experience when seeking to access city services. By coordinating efforts to create a welcoming and supportive environment across a wide range of NGO and government actors, First Steps is able to offer programming that is aligned with other local initiatives and supports for young refugee children (ages 0 to 6) and their caregivers, with a particular focus on parent engagement. This initiative has also educated health, school, and other city staff about the resettlement process and strategies for relationship building, training workers across the city to engage effectively with newcomers.

VII. Conclusion

As this array of promising practices illustrates, many government and NGO initiatives are using thoughtfully designed approaches to provide much-needed supports for young refugee children and their families. A number of these initiatives are undertaken with an eye both to meeting immediate needs and to ensuring longer-term integration and success. In most cases, however, they are able to reach only a small subset of the children in need. Approaches and services that have proven effective are a long way from being scaled and sufficiently resourced. At the same time, with ECEC service access for all residents varying widely across and even within countries, securing sufficient resources for the broader field also remains a challenge. The resulting gaps in access to high-quality early learning opportunities mean that inequities between advantaged and disadvantaged families, including refugee families, could continue to be replicated in future generations.

Designing inclusive early childhood systems that are able to respond to evolving linguistic and cultural diversity will be an invaluable vehicle for social cohesion.

As the number of new asylum seekers arriving in Europe eases and the sense of immediate crisis subsides, European policymakers would do well to consider the promise of ECEC programs as they seek strategies to support the integration of newcomers to their societies. Though often overlooked, such services offer enormous and indisputable benefits for young refugee children, their families, and for society as a whole, and young children who lack this support early on are likely to require costly services and supports in later years. As migration flows inevitably continue, designing inclusive early childhood systems that are able to respond to evolving linguistic and cultural diversity will be an invaluable vehicle for social cohesion. The provision of high-quality early childhood services for refugee families thus represents an indispensable investment for receiving societies, one that can provide essential support to families as they strive to create a home and a community in a new land.

VIII. Appendices. Case Studies of Nine Receiving Countries

Appendix A. Belgium⁵⁵

Asylum seekers have arrived in Belgium in record numbers in recent years, with a peak in 2015, when 44,660 asylum applications were filed.⁵⁶ The number of applications dropped to 18,280 in 2016 in a downward trend that continued in 2017, with 16,895 applications in the first 11 months of the year.⁵⁷ The largest group of asylum seekers was from Afghanistan—Afghans represented one-third of those accommodated in reception centers—with Syria and Iraq rounding out the top three countries of origin in 2016.⁵⁸ Families comprised an increasing share of asylum flows during this period, making up 54 percent of reception center residents in 2016.⁵⁹ The number of children among new arrivals is also notable: an estimated 2,138 children under the age of 6 were living in Belgian reception centers as of April 2017.⁶⁰

Belgium is a federal state with different competencies devolved to its communities (Flemish, French, and German speaking) and to its regions (the Brussels-Capital, Flemish, and Walloon regions). Laws on asylum and the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, however, are set at the federal level and apply to the entire country. The Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (CGRS) is an independent federal agency that oversees the asylum procedure. Fedasil, the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, manages reception centers in coordination with the Red Cross, Caritas, and other NGOs. During asylum procedures, families are hosted in either collective or individual housing facilities located throughout the country. While in the reception system, all individuals are entitled to personalized social guidance and legal, medical, and psychological assistance as necessary.

Families who are not granted asylum might either remain in the country without legal status or are placed in centers until they are returned to their countries of origin; families in the latter group are unable to access ECEC services despite legal eligibility.⁶¹ Families granted asylum are entitled to all public educational services and, after receiving their asylum decision, are referred to local government offices that can connect them to mainstream services, though some may access these services independently. However, as in other countries, access to ECEC is complicated. Refugee families may experience a range of barriers to access, including a lack of awareness of available services, lengthy waiting lists, inability to cover program costs or navigate onerous administrative procedures, and a general feeling of being unwelcome. One of the biggest challenges interviewees identified as part of this study is the need to conduct meaningful outreach to parents of young refugee children in a way that builds both trust and awareness of the available services and the benefits they provide.

While the federal government oversees asylum procedures, other policy portfolios important for refugee families (including child care, family support services, and preschool education) are governed by the Flemish-, French-, and German-speaking communities. Compulsory schooling in Belgium begins at age 6, and policies and programs are in place both inside and outside reception centers for refugee and asylum-seeker children above this age. Policies for those below age 6 do not exist, as such children are assumed to be in the care of their parents. Thus, while preschool is free across Belgium and is open to 2.5- to 6-year-olds under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, participation is not compulsory, nor is access guaranteed. Preschool enrollment in the country is very high overall—98 percent of children ages

55 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted in Belgium for MPI by consultant Ankie Vandekerckhove, project coordinator at the Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, and by MPI staff between September and October 2017.

56 Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data."

57 Ibid.; Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Monthly Data (Rounded) [migr_asyappctzm]," updated January 5, 2018, http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/migr_asyappctzm.

58 Fedasil, *Review 2016: Reception of Asylum Seekers and Voluntary Return* (Brussels: Fedasil, 2017), www.fedasil.be/en/news/2016-annual-report.

59 Ibid, 7.

60 Fieldwork conducted by MPI consultant Ankie Vandekerckhove in Belgium, January to June 2017.

61 Ibid.



3 to 5—while participation rates for children under age 3 are more limited, at 55 percent.⁶² Data on the rate at which refugee children participate in mainstream preschool services are unavailable. And while interviewees in a number of relevant ministries noted a significant lack of data and information on ECEC as it relates to refugee and asylum seekers, none has an explicit responsibility for this issue.

According to an interview with a staff member responsible for children and unaccompanied minors with the Red Cross Belgium, while refugee and asylum-seeker parents desire to enroll their children in free mainstream preschool services beginning at age 2.5, most programs do not have a specific approach to serving newcomers. As for child care for younger children, most refugee parents are unable to access these services due to their cost. Some may also be hesitant to enroll their children in an unfamiliar service, as many have not been exposed to formal child-care programs in the past.⁶³

Kind en Gezin (Child and Family), the Flemish Community’s public ECEC agency, is responsible for providing child care and parental support for children ages 0 to 2.5 in Flanders and Brussels. Child care is subsidized, with fees charged on a sliding-scale based on family income. The Office de la Naissance et de l’Enfance (Office of Birth and Childhood, ONE), the counterpart of Kind en Gezin in the French community, oversees day care centers for children ages 3 months to 3 years in Wallonia and Brussels. Some of these daycare centers are subsidized, with fees based on parental income. ONE provides a range of social and medical services to support the development of young children, most of which are free of charge. Though ONE does not offer programs designed specifically for asylum-seeker and refugee children, it strives to serve these children through existing programs.

Outside these mainstream services, some initiatives aim to provide more targeted support for young children of asylum seekers and refugees. For example, although no systematic policies ensure ECEC service provision for young children in reception centers, some centers do have “play rooms” in which activities are organized on an ad hoc basis with the help of local volunteers. Furthermore, Kind en Gezin’s cooperation with Fedasil and the Red Cross has expanded in recent years; the agency has also organized targeted services for the most vulnerable families through its INLOOP program, which now provides parenting support in ten cities. In spite of these efforts, many families in the asylum system may be unaware of or unable to connect with these services, pointing to a need for additional outreach.⁶⁴

Promising Practices

While few policies are evident in Belgium that target young children of refugees and asylum seekers specifically, universal ECEC services offer some activities designed specifically for newcomers and adapt other existing services to their needs. The NGO sector also offers some smaller-scale programs specifically for asylum-seeker children and families. The following promising practices were identified in a scan of both sectors.

Offering universal services with targeted provisions promotes accessibility and social cohesion and encourages service providers to take a comprehensive approach to serving young refugee and asylum-seeker children and their families.

The family centers (Huizen van het Kind) that [Kind en Gezin](#) runs in cities throughout the Flanders and Brussels regions aim to reach all families with children, while paying special attention to vulnerable families, including refugees. To maximize accessibility, these centers bring together a wide range of services relevant to families with children, including health services, parenting support, information about preschool and child care, home visits, and consultations. Furthermore, the fact that these services are universally available—not only to families that are low income or otherwise marginalized—can help to reduce the stigma associated with participation in some needs-based services. By bringing together families from a variety of backgrounds, they may also promote social cohesion and integration. Similarly,

⁶² OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

⁶³ Fieldwork conducted by MPI consultant Ankie Vandekerckhove in Belgium, January to June 2017.

⁶⁴ Ibid.



within the French community, [ONE](#) works to include refugee and asylum-seeker families in its programs, conducting outreach in multiple languages and with NGOs such as Médecins du Monde (Doctors of the World) to reach these families.

Building partnerships between the public agencies responsible for asylum procedures and child care can make integrated services possible.

Interviewees in this study credited the formal partnership between Fedasil and Kind en Gezin as key to making possible the provision of accessible services for young asylum-seeker children and their mothers in reception centers. Through this partnership, these two organizations have established on-site consultation bureaus in which families can see that the medical needs of their young children are met, including vaccinations, hearing tests, and general follow-up services to support growth and development. This systemwide collaboration reportedly enables Kind en Gezin to gain an understanding of the needs and characteristics of refugee families and to respond accordingly, including by reaching newly arrived children and families during their first days in Belgium. This type of cooperation between public agencies is notably absent in many of the other countries in this study, where ECEC programs are often unaware of the challenges refugee and asylum-seeker families face and of gaps in services available to them. In contrast to this regional level of coordination, ONE coordinates with Fedasil at the local level, allowing its partnerships to take on different forms depending on local needs.

Bringing tailored activities to young refugee children in the form of “mobile play spaces” can make a range of supports easily accessible to families.

[INLOOP](#), a program run by Kind en Gezin and focused on serving Belgium’s most vulnerable families, brings mobile play and meeting spaces to community centers to allow children and parents to interact informally and engage in play. In doing so, the program aims to help them build social capital and access parenting support. Activities such as these often serve as a first point of contact for hard-to-reach families, encouraging them to access further integration-related services as they become familiar with Kind en Gezin.

Engaging parents alongside their children through a two-generation approach to service provision can enable them to gain a level of comfort and trust with child-care workers and settings.

In 2015–16, the European Commission’s Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Flemish Ministry of Integration funded a pilot program specifically geared toward serving immigrant women with limited education and children between ages 0 and 3. As a result of feedback collected from practitioners involved in the pilot to inform further action and policy, this program model is being scaled up with support from a long-term grant program developed by Kind en Gezin in 2017 called KOALA. This two-generation program is supported by the King Baudouin Foundation’s Vergnes Fund, and combines child care for vulnerable families with accessible activities that bring parents and their children together, offering language courses, societal orientation, and parental support for participants. One of the key aims of this initiative is to foster family integration and the development of trusting relationships between mothers and child-care workers by allowing them to interact in a low-threshold environment.



Appendix B. Canada⁶⁵

Canada operates one of the world's largest refugee resettlement programs, second only to the United States.⁶⁶ Government and private sponsors take on different levels of responsibility for newly arrived refugees' reception and integration in the three primary resettlement pathways: the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR), and the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) programs. In light of the massive displacement caused by Syria's civil war, the Canadian government pledged to increase its resettlement of Syrian refugees, welcoming more than 40,000 newly resettled Syrians between November 2015 and January 2017.⁶⁷ This is part of a broader 90,000 refugees resettled in Canada between January 2015 and October 2017.⁶⁸ The refugees who settled in Canada are from a wide range of countries and cultures; among the most common languages spoken are Arabic, Tigrinya, Armenian, Dari, and Somali.⁶⁹ In addition to growth in its resettlement program, Canada also saw a 48 percent increase in asylum applications from 2015 to 2016 (from 16,115 to 23,925 applications), with this number continuing to rise considerably in 2017.⁷⁰ In recent years, the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta have resettled the largest number of refugees, and Ontario and Quebec have seen the largest number of asylum applicants.⁷¹

The Canadian government provides targeted child-care services for newly arrived families as a means of enabling newcomer parents to attend language courses and access other settlement services. Free English or French language courses are funded for all refugees through the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program run by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the federal ministry responsible for both resettlement and integration. While parents attend these classes or other settlement-related appointments, their children (ages 6 months and over) can participate in the Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program. CNC aims to provide a welcoming classroom environment featuring multicultural materials and multilingual staff, with an emphasis on language learning.

Local CNC service providers can decide whether to provide long-term care (services provided to the same group on a regular basis—for example, children whose parents are attending LINC courses); short-term care (services provided to different groups of children as needed, such as for occasional settlement-related appointments); or both, based on parent needs and organizational capacity. The ages of the children CNC programs serve also vary, as do the hours of services, with some services running for two and a half to five hours during the day and others operating on nights or weekends.⁷² Childminding Monitoring, Advisory, and Support (CMAS), another IRCC funded organization, provides technical assistance to CNC programs across Canada to ensure that these early learning services are relevant for and responsive to the needs of young refugee children. Both the targeted nature of the CNC program, which is embedded into the settlement process, and the technical assistance provided by CMAS are unique among the ECEC supports for refugee children found in the countries included in this study. However, the fact that access to free CNC child care is restricted to the time period in which parents are attending language courses is a major limitation of this program.

65 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted by MPI researchers Caitlin Katsiaticas, Maki Park, and Lauren Hodges between January and August 2017.

66 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 27; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016), 26, www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html.

67 These figures include those resettled through both government and private sponsorship. See IRCC, “#WelcomeRefugees: Key Figures.”

68 IRCC, “Canada - Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory and Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).”

69 IRCC, “Canada - Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory of Intended Destination, Mother Tongue and Immigration Category,” updated June 30, 2017, <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/4a1b260a-7ac4-4985-80a0-603bfe-4aec11>.

70 IRCC, “Canada - Asylum Claimants by Claim Office Type, Province/Territory of Claim and Claim Year,” accessed January 11, 2018, <http://open.canada.ca/data/en/dataset/b6cbcf4d-f763-4924-a2fb-8cc4a06e3de4>.

71 Ibid.; IRCC, “Canada - Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory of Intended Destination, Mother Tongue and Immigration Category.”

72 Childminding Monitoring, Advisory, and Support (CMAS), *Care for Newcomer Children (CNC): A Step-by-Step Guide for New Programs* (Toronto: CMAS, 2016), 18, http://cmascanada.ca/wp-content/uploads/courses/cnc/CNC_Guide_2016.pdf.



For refugee children of age to attend school, beginning with Junior Kindergarten for 4- and 5-year-olds, the national Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) program works to foster integration and school success in around 3,000 locations. Among the services SWIS offers are needs assessments, interpretation services, case management, referrals, and school and community orientation. The program is a partnership between IRCC, local boards of education, and service provider organizations.⁷³

In addition to ECEC services targeted specifically to refugee and immigrant children, refugee children can also participate in mainstream child care, preschools, and Family Resource Programs.⁷⁴ At the national level, there is no comprehensive ECEC system, with most services and programs falling under provincial or territorial jurisdiction. Therefore, the availability of various types of regulated child care (including full- and part-time center-based programs and family child care), the level of public funding, and the costs to parents can differ considerably across provinces and territories. Most subsidize child-care costs for lower-income families; however, while a family may be eligible for subsidized care, more families may be eligible than there are subsidies available, or the subsidy may not cover the full cost of a program's fees.⁷⁵ The increase in the number of refugees resettled in recent years has resulted in greater demand for child-care spaces, putting further pressure on the system.⁷⁶

In addition to regulated child care, Family Resource Programs provide informal services aimed at reducing isolation and providing information and referrals to promote child wellbeing.⁷⁷ Located in a variety of public spaces (e.g., schools, community centers, and churches) in thousands of communities across Canada, these programs provide a range of services tailored to community needs. These may include ECEC services, assistance for home-based ECEC providers, family literacy programs, parenting support, counseling, employment services, and referrals.⁷⁸ Home visiting programs such as Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPI) have a more limited reach, but are nonetheless noteworthy for the work they do in supporting parents and children who are particularly vulnerable and may otherwise be isolated. Overall, while access to ECEC in Canada for all children is uneven, enrollment rates for children under age 5 are consistent with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) average.⁷⁹

While several Canadian initiatives promote refugee participation in ECEC services, the growing number of refugee arrivals has brought a number of new challenges. Although IRCC increased its funding of a range of integration programs in 2016–17 to support the influx of Syrian refugees, space limitations have constrained program expansion, waitlists can be long, and child-care services may remain too costly for many low-income families.⁸⁰ A number of challenges have also emerged at the program level. These include a shortage of interpreters (particularly for low-incidence languages), difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff, uncertainty about longer-term funding (hindering future planning), and the need to develop staff capacity to respond to trauma and refer families to culturally and linguistically appropriate mental-health services. Additionally, as suggested by the explicit linkage of CNC services with parents' enrollment in language training, the primary focus of the bulk of integration services for refugees is on employment outcomes; the provision of ECEC services to refugees receives little policy attention on its own, with no single policymaker or government department responsible for this issue.

73 Author interviews with IRCC policymakers as part of fieldwork, January to August 2017.

74 Such programs are known by a variety of names, including Parent Link Centre, Ontario Early Years Centre, Community Action Programs for Children, and organisme communautaire à la famille.

75 Carolyn Ferns and Martha Friendly, *The State of Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2012* (Toronto, Guelph, and Winnipeg: Moving Childcare Forward Project, 2014), http://ywcacanada.ca/data/research_docs/00000322.pdf.

76 Giuseppe Valiante, "Garderie: Québec évalue le nombre de places pour les réfugiés," *La Presse*, January 10, 2016, www.lapresse.ca/actualites/politique/quebecoise/201601/10/01-4938317-garderie-quebec-evalue-le-nombre-de-places-pour-les-refugies.php.

77 Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, "Family Resource Programs in Canada" (brief, Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, Ottawa, n.d., accessed January 3, 2018), www.frp.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=document.viewDocument&documentid=1303&documentFormatId=2546&vDocLinkOrigin=1&CFID=14848657&CFTOKEN=7503bff96e5d09b7-9D9780C5-1C23-C8EB-80E24A9CE0EB8CD6.

78 Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, "What is a Family Resource Program?" accessed August 28, 2017, www.frp.ca/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=1241.

79 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 136.

80 Author interviews with policymakers and ECEC program staff as part of fieldwork, January to August 2017.



Promising Practices

Overall, Canada provides significant support for newcomer families who wish to access ECEC programming. While these programs do not always have sufficient capacity and are sometimes of limited duration, the following key promising practices can be drawn from the services they offer.

The provision of ECEC services directly by settlement organizations allows for a holistic approach to meeting the needs of refugee families and promotes ECEC accessibility.

Several settlement organizations in Canada offer ECEC programs through the CNC program to facilitate families' participation in a wide range of services. Such programs can offer collocated services, including on-site case workers who can help build a comprehensive team approach to addressing a family's needs. For example, staff interviewed at both [Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia](#) and [Immigrants Working Centre](#) in Hamilton described the importance of ECEC staff being able to reach out to on-site settlement workers when an urgent issue arises, such as medical, housing, or other settlement-related needs.

Program flexibility is an important design element that allows services to address evolving community needs.

The CNC program, for instance, is intended to be a flexible model within which service providers can adapt their offerings to respond to diverse community needs, including care that suits parents' irregular work schedules and that can scale up and down as demand for spaces fluctuates.⁸¹ Such adaptability allows service providers such as the [Association for New Canadians](#) in St. John's and Immigrants Working Centre to adapt to the arrival of new refugee groups by modifying the schedules and intensity of their services (e.g., by creating evening and weekend sessions for different age groups). Program directors described this flexibility as essential to their ability to respond nimbly and effectively to refugee family needs.

Community partnerships help connect refugees to their new homes, better prepare communities for refugees' arrivals, and facilitate refugee participation in ECEC and other programs.

The City of Surrey, for example, participated in a working group with local stakeholders to discuss how to best meet the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate ECEC services for refugee children. The resulting [First Steps Early Years Settlement Program](#) operates as a partnership of three NGOs: [Options Community Services](#), which focuses on early childhood and social services; [DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society](#), which has a background in settlement services; and [Umoja Operation Compassion Society of British Columbia](#), an organization with cultural expertise.⁸² Through this unique initiative, Surrey has successfully educated health, school, and city staff about the resettlement process and strategies for building relationships with resettled refugees, preparing workers across the city to engage effectively with these newcomers. Additionally, the program offers opportunities for refugee families to visit libraries, community centers, and family resource programs, and organizes a community speaker series on issues such as healthy living and dental health. First Steps takes an inclusive approach in its work, identifying leaders within refugee communities, for example, to educate program staff about community issues, such as the challenges of parent engagement.

The provision of systematic, targeted technical assistance enables programs to improve the quality of their programming for refugee children.

In addition to creating standards of service and using them to monitor ECEC programs, [Childminding Monitoring, Advisory, and Support \(CMAS\)](#) provides a variety of tools for service providers through its technical assistance to CNC programs across Canada. These include training, translated materials,

81 CMAS, "About CNC," accessed August 28, 2017, <http://cmascanada.ca/cnc/about-cnc/>.

82 Author interviews with policymakers and ECEC program staff as part of fieldwork, January to August 2017.



classroom materials, online resources, a special-needs consultant, and annual and on-demand consultant visits—all focused on strategies for working specifically with young newcomer children. Program staff have reported this targeted and sustained assistance to be essential in building the capacity of their ECEC programs to work successfully with refugee children, especially as they expand in response to increased arrivals. Although CMAS is funded specifically to work with CNC programs, the organization has received requests for assistance from ECEC and other education programs outside of this model, indicating that there is demand for similar support in other sectors.

Offering home-based assistance to those on waiting lists can provide needed support to parents and reduce isolation.

Several program staff interviewed as part of this study reported long waiting lists due to the large number of newcomers in recent years, primarily Syrian families. Space constraints, as well as funding challenges, have meant that some programs have been unable to accommodate all eligible families during a given school year. For those still waiting to access its program, the Association for New Canadians provides itinerant home language instruction as a form of interim support. This initiative ensures that refugee families have access to at least a bare minimum of support during a challenging transition period.

Targeted kindergarten readiness initiatives help smooth the transition to school for refugee children and parents.

The First Steps Early Years Settlement Program has collaborated with a local school district to provide a summer kindergarten readiness program. It is conducted jointly by kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators and aims to ease the transition from ECEC to school for both children and their parents. Children learn, for instance, about lining up and washing their hands, and have a chance to acclimatize to the classroom environment—small steps that build valuable skills and a level of comfort that will promote their school success. Parents, meanwhile, learn about classroom set-up, communicating with teachers, and other Canadian school norms. These activities help parents and families navigate a complex and unfamiliar system, preparing them to support and advocate for their young children.

The evaluation of resettlement and integration programs can provide important insights into what works and what does not, and allow these lessons to inform future efforts.

In one such assessment, the IRCC conducted a rapid impact evaluation of its 2015–16 Syrian Refugee Initiative, examining the short-term outcomes for Syrian refugees who arrived between November 2015 and March 2016.⁸³ Its survey recorded assistance received by refugees, including help locating child care and registering children for school. By noting health needs, success in entering employment, and other indicators relevant to the integration of refugee children and families, such assessments can help policymakers and practitioners identify gaps in services and lessons for future resettlement efforts.

83 IRCC, *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* (Ottawa: IRCC, 2016), www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/pdf/evaluation-syrian-refugee-initiative.pdf.



Appendix C. Germany⁸⁴

With its strong economy serving as a powerful magnet, Germany has been the preferred destination of many migrants coming to Europe. During 2015 and 2016, it was also the recipient of the largest number of asylum applications in the world, a trend that continued into 2017.⁸⁵ At the height of the European migration and refugee crisis, between the summer of 2015 and April of 2016, 682,025 asylum seekers arrived in Germany, of whom 49,670 were young children ages 0 to 3 and another 37,524 ages 3 to 6,⁸⁶ meaning that 12.7 percent of newcomers are eligible for ECEC services. At the regional level, more than 300,000 asylum seekers arrived in North Rhine-Westphalia in the same time period, 100,000 in Berlin, and 25,000 in Saxony.⁸⁷

Traditionally, children under the age of 3 in Germany are cared for in *Kinderkrippen* (crèches or nursery care), while children ages 3 and up attend kindergartens, which offer both half-day and full-day options. The term “Kita” is used in some *Länder* (states) to refer broadly to ECEC centers for children from birth to age 6 as well for after-school care for children up to age 10. In general, fees for ECEC services are set on a sliding scale based on family income, with some services available free of charge to low-income families. The OECD reports that 97 percent of children in Germany ages 3 to 5 and 37 percent of those ages 0 to 3 are enrolled in ECEC. Compulsory schooling begins at age 6.⁸⁸

According to a German law enacted in 2013, all children have the legal right to access the ECEC system starting on their first birthday. Translating these rights into practice, however, poses an enormous challenge for municipalities, which are responsible for service provision, given both the large number of new arrivals in recent years and the expectations for ongoing rapid expansion of the ECEC system under the new law.

While concrete data are unavailable for the number of children in asylum-seeker families living in shelters or collective accommodations as opposed to in private housing, national reports indicate that many young children are spending months or even years in shelters. These shelters are often unsafe and unsuitable for children, making the longer-term integration prospects of young refugees who spend extended periods in them a particular concern.⁸⁹ In response, the Federal Ministry of Family and Youth Affairs has developed a Child and Women Protection Concept, with the goal of implementing nationwide minimal standards for asylum-seeker accommodations. In April 2017, the German government drafted a bill that aims to increase protections for children and adolescents living in shelters (Gesetzentwurf zur Stärkung von Kindern und Jugendlichen), though this bill has not yet been enacted.

Also in April 2017, a nationwide program entitled Kita-Einstieg (Kindergarten Entry) was established to work with families in shelters who are unfamiliar with the German ECEC system. This program promotes services that prepare families to access ECEC services and strives to reduce barriers for underserved families at a local level. The supports offered through Kita-Einsteig were developed based on a community needs analysis, which attempted to identify relevant obstacles. Approximately 300 to 350 municipalities (out of a total of 620) have the option to participate in this program, which is expected to run through the end of 2020. Each participating municipality receives up to 150,000 euros each year to develop low-threshold services according to local demand and their own available resources.

84 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted in Germany for MPI by consultant Christa Preissing, Director of the Berlin Kita Institute for Quality Development (Berliner Kita-Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung), between January and August 2017.

85 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*; Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data.”

86 Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, *Bildung in Deutschland* (Bielefeld, Germany: W. Bertelsmann Verlag, 2016), Fig. H4-3A, www.bildungsbericht.de/de/bildungsberichte-seit-2006/bildungsbericht-2016/pdf-bildungsbericht-2016/bildungsbericht-2016.

87 Fieldwork for this study was completed in these three locations.

88 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

89 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), *Kindheit im Wartezustand: Studie zur Situation von Kindern und Jugendlichen in Flüchtlingsunterkünften in Deutschland* (Geneva: UNICEF, 2017), www.unicef.de/blob/137704/053ab16048c3f443736c4047694cc5d1/studie--kindheit-im-wartezustand-data.pdf.



Other promising programs were developed prior to the 2015–16 crisis and are adapting to changing demands. Since 2011, the Sprach-Kitas (Language Kindergarten) program has been assisting ECEC centers with specially qualified professionals trained to support children in German language acquisition, especially those who speak German as a second or third language. Each participating kindergarten is supported by a half-time specialist. Since 2017, this program has begun focusing specifically on supporting refugee children. This initiative also funds external consultations, with centers organized into groups of 15 to form a network that will be supported by an external expert. These experts conduct trainings and organize professional exchanges and counselling to facilitate program improvement.

Regional governments have also responded to the rise in the number of refugee families with young children who have settled in Germany through the development of local initiatives. A “master plan for integration and security” drafted in Berlin in 2016, for example, included plans for 24 Modell-Kitas, good-practice centers designed specifically to work with young refugee children and their families. However, the Federal Ministry of Finance committed to implementing only eight of these programs, with a limited budget and funding only through the end of 2016.

In Saxony, a similar model emerged in the form of Willkommen-Kitas (Welcome Kindergartens), designed by the German Child and Youth Foundation and funded by the Saxony Ministries of Culture and of the Interior. This program, which ran from 2014 through 2017, included ten Kitas, all of which were situated next to reception centers. One unique policy challenge in Saxony is that families must reside in a reception center for three months before they can access ECEC services. Furthermore, because ECEC programs in Saxony have had less experience working with immigrant families compared with those in other *Länder*, such as Berlin, interviewees for this study cited trainings on crosscultural education and strategies for working in diverse settings as an important piece of initial preparation for the program.

One of the biggest challenges to the successful implementation of these programs, as described by program coordinators, is a shortage of qualified professionals due to the concurrent expansion of the ECEC system. In particular, interviewees noted that professionals with language skills—especially less commonly spoken African languages—are lacking. Another commonly cited challenge is the high mobility of many refugee families, with the movement of families from one part of the city to another interrupting the continuity of ECEC and other services and requiring parents to identify new services with each relocation. Finally, the arrival of a large number of unaccompanied minors in cities such as Berlin has demanded urgent humanitarian attention and, in some cases, drawn focus and resources away from services for other refugee groups, including young children in families.

Promising Practices

Germany has earned praise for its welcome of refugees, and the value the country places on inclusion is evident in the array of public early-years initiatives to support young refugee and asylum-seeker children and their families, as compared with most other EU Member States. The majority of the promising practices below are drawn from national and local initiatives supported directly by the German government.

An existing and sustained focus on inclusion in the ECEC system can help ensure that systems and professionals already have the relevant preparation to respond to the unpredictable arrival of asylum-seeker families.

According to interviewees, the German ECEC system had already come to prioritize inclusive practices prior to the 2015–16 influx of asylum seekers. As a result, many professionals in Berlin, in particular, felt they already had some of the preparation and training necessary to effectively serve immigrant children and other students from diverse backgrounds—for example, anti-bias training and strategies for supporting both first- and second-language development. The integration of principles such as inclusiveness, equity, and the promotion of diversity was broadly described as strengthening the ECEC system while also promoting a more cohesive society and ensuring that services will continue to adapt as local demographics inevitably evolve in the future.



Offering informal low-threshold services for refugee families with young children is an effective form of outreach that can build trust and gateway to further services for hard-to-reach families.

“Springboard projects,” such as those included in the Berlin [Modell-Kitas](#) project, can include playgroups and organized games in refugee shelters as a means of engaging with the parents of young children in an accessible and comfortable space. Such initiatives often aim to encourage participation in further child-care activities, reduce parents’ fears about being separated from their children, and promote language-learning opportunities for both parents and children. [Willkommen-Kitas](#) in Saxony also work directly with nearby shelters and reception centers to invite parents to visit classrooms as a low-risk and low-commitment strategy to initiate contact and engage hesitant parents.

Written materials as a vehicle for outreach, technical assistance, and community education have the potential to reach a wide audience.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, the Ministry of Family and Children and the Ministry of Labor, Integration, and Social Affairs published multilingual materials and handouts to provide support and encourage cooperation between teaching staff, social workers, and refugee parents around issues of early childhood education. These materials were translated into languages commonly spoken in the refugee community and also include information on fundamental rights, translation tools, and language acquisition by young children. The [Diözesanverband of Cologne](#), an association of Catholic providers responsible for 670 Kitas in the region, also created a [similar, comprehensive tool](#) to support programs working with newcomers. And in Berlin, the Ministry of Education partnered with a trauma specialist to produce a brochure informing early childhood workers of strategies to work with children who have experienced trauma.

Recruiting staff from within the refugee community helps ECEC programs to build meaningful relationships with refugee parents.

By hiring Stadtteilmütter (Borough Mothers) who come from the neighborhood and are often themselves refugees, some German programs have been able to build better connections with families in refugee centers and provide more effective and intimate outreach.

Facilitating connections and partnerships between ECEC services and other local support services can help ensure that urgent family needs are addressed in a timely manner.

Willkommen-Kitas in Saxony are establishing local support networks to provide a variety of services (physical and mental health, legal aid, social services, housing, and translation) that both Kitas and parents can access as needs arise. Similarly, because many social workers providing support to families living in shelters are overwhelmed and unable to respond to all requests for assistance fully and in a timely manner, coordinators from the Berlin Modell-Kitas program have begun to organize their own social work and advocacy support networks. These are growing to include, for example, legal professionals, language interpreters, and experts on trauma therapy in each municipality that Kita directors can contact directly as needs emerge. In this way, programs aim to more quickly and effectively refer families to responsive services as necessary.

Prioritizing not only integration efforts that target young refugee children and families, but also initiatives to reduce biases among parents and build inclusive communities, has proven useful in supporting the successful integration of refugee families.

In an effort to reduce anti-refugee biases and prejudices among other parents and families, the Berlin Modell-Kitas is designing programming to foster understanding between parents and families and to encourage dialogue and a sense of shared community. Formal workshops and trainings were also implemented to help staff work more effectively with parents from a range of backgrounds.



Appendix D. Greece⁹⁰

Greece saw a dramatic increase in asylum-seeker arrivals starting in 2014. As flows peaked in 2015, more than 873,000 migrants and asylum seekers journeyed from Turkey to the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, accounting for 80 percent of all people to arrive in Europe irregularly that year.⁹¹ Most of these arrivals transited through Greece, aiming to reach other European countries. However, the 2016 EU-Turkey statement and the closure of the Greek border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, along with border closures along the Western Balkan route, led to both a decrease in new arrivals to Greece and to an increase in the share of newcomers remaining in the country.⁹² Syrians constitute the largest group among arrivals to Greece, along with significant numbers of newcomers from Afghanistan and Iraq, although arrivals' countries of origin have increasingly diversified since the height of the crisis to include a range of African and Middle Eastern countries.⁹³ More than one-third (37 percent) of migrants who arrived irregularly via sea crossings in 2017 were children.⁹⁴

As of June 2017, 43,000 unauthorized migrants and asylum seekers remain in Greece, 80 percent of whom are on the mainland while 20 percent are on the islands.⁹⁵ Asylum seekers are hosted in various accommodations across the country, including hotspots on the Aegean islands and refugee camps, apartments, and hotels on the mainland. The Athens area, visited as part of this study, has several large camps including Schisto (with 888 people as of February 2017), Eleonas (1,986), Skaramangas (3,000), and Elliniko (5,000). Since the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement in March 2016, the vast majority of new arrivals have been required to stay on the islands, where fewer health-care and other services are available.⁹⁶

There are three main pathways through which asylum seekers in Greece may receive international protection: relocation to another EU Member State, family reunification in another country, or obtaining asylum in Greece. However, each of these pathways is laden with challenges. These include significant backlogs and delays in implementation due to political obstacles (e.g., the unwillingness of other Member States to participate in relocation efforts). In addition, newcomers of some nationalities are eligible for relocation while others are not, a fact that has led to tension between groups. According to ECEC service providers interviewed for this report, uncertainty about the future can also affect newcomers' motivation to learn Greek or to enroll their children in ECEC programs, meaning that some support services may go unused. Additionally, the long waiting periods and uncertainty can create stress that exacerbates existing trauma, exacting a significant psychological toll.⁹⁷

90 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted in Greece for MPI by consultant Thalia Dragona, Dean of the School of Education at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, between January and May 2017.

91 Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2017* (Warsaw: Frontex, 2017), 19, http://frontex.europa.eu/assets/Publications/Risk_Analysis/Annual_Risk_Analysis_2017.pdf; Jonathan Clayton and Hereward Holland, "Over One Million Sea Arrivals Reach Europe in 2015," UNHCR, December 30, 2015, www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2015/12/5683d0b56/million-sea-arrivals-reach-europe-2015.html.

92 More than 173,000 people crossed the Aegean into Greece in 2016, compared to 30,000 in 2017. See Frontex, *Risk Analysis for 2017*, 19; UNHCR, "Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Greece," updated January 8, 2018, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>.

93 UNHCR, "Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Greece"; UNHCR, *Refugees & Migrants Sea Arrivals in Europe* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2016), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/53447>.

94 UNHCR, "Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Greece."

95 UNHCR, "Greece" (fact sheet, UNHCR, Geneva, June 30, 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58720>.

96 Vulnerable cases, such as families with very young children or children with special needs, single-parent families, and those that cannot return to Turkey safely are to be moved to the mainland to have their asylum applications examined there. However, human rights groups have raised concerns regarding the scale and scope of vulnerability assessments. See, for example, Izza Leghtas, "Like a Prison": *Asylum-Seekers Confined to the Greek Islands* (Washington, DC: Refugees International, 2017), https://static1.squarespace.com/static/506c8ea1e4b01d9450dd53f5/t/59920f919f74567e875ab5cc/1502744473695/201708+Greece_PDF_DRAFT+TWO.pdf.

97 See UNICEF, "Refugee and Migrant Children Stranded in European Transit Countries Suffer Psychologically in the Face of Uncertain Future – UNICEF" (press release, UNICEF, New York and Geneva, May 4, 2017), www.unicef.org/media/media_95938.html.



Formal schooling in Greece begins at age 5. Compared to other OECD countries, children in Greece enroll in ECEC at lower rates overall, with 71 percent of children ages 3 to 5 and only 14 percent of those under age 3 participating.⁹⁸ Greece also has one of the lowest rates of participation in formal child care and one of the highest for use of informal care.⁹⁹ The Greek Ministry of Education has indicated that, while asylum-seeker children under age 3 will remain in the care of their parents, it aims to include children ages 4 to 6 in the formal education system by facilitating their attendance of prekindergarten and kindergarten in their camps and neighborhoods. To this end, the ministry aimed to establish prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms in camps for the 2016–17 school year, though bureaucratic, administrative, and financial difficulties prevented these classrooms from opening.¹⁰⁰ As of writing, it is unclear whether these aims will be fully achieved during the 2017–18 school year. Currently, no plans are in place to provide formal education for asylum seekers on the islands, where children depend on UNICEF Blue Dots centers (described below) and informal ECEC services.¹⁰¹

NGOs in Greece provide informal services for asylum-seeker children ages 3 to 6, helping to fill a critical gap. Yet these services, too, serve a limited share of this population. NGOs offering informal education services must be certified by the Ministry of Education’s Institute of Educational Policy.¹⁰² However, the quality of ECEC services still depends considerably on the qualifications and level of motivation of staff. On the whole, asylum-seeker children’s access to ECEC services in Greece remains highly inconsistent, with psychosocial supports and services for children under age 3 even more limited.

Other challenges to the provision of ECEC services for asylum-seeker children in Greece include space constraints, a lack of equipment and educational materials, and difficulty providing mother-tongue education.¹⁰³ A dearth of coordination among national and international agencies has resulted in delayed and/or suboptimal responses to these and other needs. In addition, a lack of coordination among the organizations working within camps has reportedly led to inefficient use of resources, with NGOs in some cases competing to serve the same clients.

Promoting the attendance of asylum-seeker children in existing ECEC programs can also be difficult. Obstacles can include the distances asylum-seeker families must travel to access services (particularly for those living in noncamp settings); busy schedules, a lack of trust, and incomplete information among parents; a lack of motivation among those who think they will soon leave Greece; and difficulty identifying and reaching out to asylum-seeker families living outside of camps. Some subgroups of asylum seekers have also proven easier than others to engage. One ECEC worker in Schisto camp noted, for instance, that the camp has a higher ECEC participation rate compared to other camps, likely owing to the fact that the camp is predominantly comprised of Afghan asylum seekers who are ineligible for relocation and, therefore, more likely than other groups (such as Syrians) to remain in Greece in the long term, an expectation about the future that has motivated many Afghan parents to enroll their children in education programs.¹⁰⁴

It is important to note that the severity of the humanitarian crisis coupled with prolonged economic depression in Greece effectively resulted in two concurrent crises. A general sense of inefficiency and lack of coordination among national, international, and contracted actors—despite relatively high levels of funding—also exacerbated the challenges of providing services to asylum seekers. Furthermore, while significant resources were channeled into Greece at the height of the crisis, funds are now decreasing as the situation is viewed as entering a postemergency phase. Looking ahead to the 2017–18 school year, the Greek government had hoped to enroll preschool-aged refugee children in camp- and neighborhood-based early learning programs, but it is still unclear whether these intentions will be realized.

98 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 123, 128-29.

99 Ibid, 126.

100 MPI consultant interviews with policymakers in Greece, January to May 2017. For more information on educational activities, see the Greek Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs, Scientific Committee to Assist the Work of the Committee of Support of Refugee Children, *Educational Actions for Refugee Children* (Athens: Greek Ministry of Education, Research, and Religious Affairs, 2016), www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2016/Epistimoniki_Epitropi_Prosfygon_YP-PETH_Full_Report_June_2016_-_translated.pdf.

101 MPI consultant interviews with policymaker from UNHCR in Greece, January to May 2017.

102 As of February 2017, no applications had been rejected. Ibid.

103 MPI consultant fieldwork in Greece, January to May 2017.

104 MPI consultant interviews with NGOs in Greece, January to May 2017.

Promising Practices

Against the backdrop of both an enormous humanitarian crisis and the country's ongoing financial crisis, ECEC services and support for the general wellbeing of asylum-seeker children have not been a significant focus for the Greek government or for the international response in Greece more broadly. However, while asylum-seeker children are not meaningfully incorporated into the formal Greek preschool system, NGOs and some actors within the Greek government have implemented promising practices, described below, to serve this population both inside and outside of camps.

The creation of a research committee, under the auspices of the Greek Ministry of Education, to provide recommendations on the provision of formal education to asylum-seeker children promotes a strategic approach to improving access to ECEC services for this population.

In March 2016, the Greek Ministry of Education established a 30-member, interdisciplinary scientific committee to record and evaluate informal educational activities conducted in camps across Greece. The committee identified best practices and provided advice regarding the integration of asylum-seeker children into Greece's formal education system, including on strategies to incorporate mother-tongue instruction into the broader curriculum. Suggestions for the 2016–17 school year were issued in a June 2016 report,¹⁰⁵ with an updated report published in May 2017.¹⁰⁶ While some disconnect is evident between the recommendations made in the report and the pursuant actions taken, this represents an effort to take a strategic approach at the national level to the provision of education to asylum-seeker children. It also promotes the use of research and expertise to inform quality practice, an exercise in grounding that other countries and localities could find beneficial.

The establishment of child-friendly spaces in camps can provide a safe, stimulating atmosphere and activities for young children in what is often a stressful environment.

For example, the [Network for Children's Rights](#) works in Schisto camp to provide culturally sensitive and creative activities for children and their parents in child-friendly spaces, such as drawing and painting. The network also operates a child protection unit staffed by a social worker, lawyer, and psychologist and a mother-baby area in the camp.

Engaging parents both in outreach efforts and ECEC activities can support the parent-child bond and foster parents' trust and confidence.

In a preschool program operated by the Philanthropic Organization of the Holy Archdiocese of Athens [Apostoli](#) in the Athens neighborhood of Satovriandou, staff have worked to address attendance barriers by meeting regularly with parents, holding small-group discussions to understand their priorities, and finding ways to introduce them to Greek culture and promote a sense of agency. The program also provides Greek and English classes for parents, while employing staff who speak Arabic and Farsi to connect meaningfully with both parents and children. Similarly, the Network for Children's Rights conducts outreach efforts in Schisto camp to engage families and works to include both parents and children in its structured activities. The organization also operates a lending library through which families have access to resources in Farsi and English with the aim of encouraging parents to read to their children.

105 Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Scientific Committee to Assist the Work of the Committee of Support of Refugee Children, *Educational Actions for Refugee Children*.

106 Greek Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, Scientific Committee in Support of Refugee Children, A. *Assessment Report on the Integration Project of Refugee Children in Education (March 2016-April 2017) B. Proposals for the Education of Refugee Children during the 2017-2018 School Year* (Athens: Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, 2017), www.minedu.gov.gr/publications/docs2017/CENG_Epistimoniki_Epitropi_Proshfygon_YPPETH_Apotimisi_Protaseis_2016_2017_070_.pdf.



Providing services that focus on the psychosocial wellbeing of children and families alongside educational and recreational activities can address a critical developmental need that is otherwise often overlooked.

[UNICEF](#), for instance, provides psychological and mental-health care at Child and Family Support Hubs, which are located in several camps across Greece as part of its [Blue Dots](#) initiative. This project, which was launched in February 2015, aims to improve the protection of asylum-seeker children and women. The hubs offer educational and recreational activities for children, group pregnancy and breastfeeding counseling for mothers, information on asylum seekers' rights, and private psychosocial support and counseling. In 2016, the Blue Dots served 17,000 children, in collaboration with several NGOs.¹⁰⁷ Other camp-based ECEC services aim to help children with their coping and socialization skills, working to address the effects of past trauma and ongoing stress. The Network for Children's Rights provides direct services, as well as referrals to services in the community for more severe cases. And in Athens, Apostoli's Satovriandou preschool program includes both an on-site social worker and mental-health referrals. These supports are essential to providing a sense of security and normalcy for children and families.

Offering services for pregnant women, infants, and toddlers can remedy gaps in services for the youngest children.

NGO engagement with these groups is particularly important as children under age 3 are often underserved. A variety of services are available in Schisto camp, for example, including a maternity counselor and safe spaces for mothers, infants, and toddlers, and the Blue Dots Hubs provide group and individual counseling for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

¹⁰⁷ MPI consultant interviews with policymaker from UNHCR in Greece, January to May 2017.

Appendix E. Italy¹⁰⁸

Italy has been among the EU countries most affected by a sharp rise in migration due to its position as the entry point into Europe for migrants and refugees traveling along the Central Mediterranean route.¹⁰⁹ In 2014, 170,100 migrants and asylum seekers landed on Italian shores. While this number decreased in 2015, it rose again in 2016, when 181,436 arrived in the country—more than any other EU Member State.¹¹⁰ This trend continued in 2017, with 119,247 migrants and asylum seekers arriving in Italy.¹¹¹ Those journeying to Italy have largely been men, although a significant share of newcomers are unaccompanied children.¹¹² The numbers of children arriving with one or both parents, in contrast, have been lower: 2,377 in 2016 and 1,085 in the first half of 2017 (January through July).¹¹³ While a considerable number of Syrians fled to Italy in 2014, arrivals in recent years have primarily hailed from sub-Saharan African countries, including Eritrea, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Nigeria, as well as Bangladesh.¹¹⁴ However, the nationalities of asylum applicants have not necessarily corresponded with those of arrivals more generally; some groups, such as Syrians and Eritreans, view Italy more as a transit country than a destination.¹¹⁵ Along with arrivals, the number of asylum applicants in Italy increased considerably beginning in 2014, with 65,000 applicants that year, 84,000 in 2015, and 123,000 in 2016.¹¹⁶ Asylum seekers are not dispersed evenly throughout Italy; out of 8,000 municipalities nationwide, only 2,600 have received asylum seekers and implemented reception and integration projects.¹¹⁷

Italy has a three-level reception system: hotspots and first assistance centers, where identification and fingerprinting takes place; first-line reception centers meant to provide initial services for asylum seekers during their first seven to 30 days; and second-line reception centers that provide longer-term assistance.¹¹⁸ Asylum applicants are housed in reception centers while they prepare for their claim to be heard by the Territorial Commission and wait for a decision on their asylum application. The hearing is meant to take place within 30 days of application submission, with a decision issued within another three days. Yet wait times in recent years have typically been much longer—between six months and one year—due to the spike in applications.

The second-level reception system consists of the Protection System for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (SPRAR) and “extraordinary reception facilities” (centri di accoglienza straordinaria, CAS). SPRAR is a network of small-scale, decentralized reception facilities managed by local authorities and NGOs that provides integration services and other supports to asylum seekers. The recent increase in asylum-

108 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted in Italy for MPI by Viviana Premazzi, research associate at the International and European Forum on Migration Research (Forum Internazionale ed Europeo di Ricerche sull’Immigrazione), between January and May 2017.

109 In addition to those who use sea routes to reach Italy, some migrants travel by land (particularly from the Eastern border) or by air.

110 Italian Ministry of the Interior, Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, *Cruscotto Statistico Giornaliero*, 2016, www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/documentazione/statistica/cruscotto-statistico-giornaliero; UNHCR, “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Italy,” updated August 24, 2017, <http://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5205>.

111 UNHCR, “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Italy.”

112 12,360 unaccompanied children arrived in Italy in 2015, and 25,846 arrived in 2016. See *ibid.*

113 UNHCR, *Italy Weekly Snapshot – 27 Aug 2017* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/58896>; UNHCR, UNICEF, and International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Refugee and Migrant Children—Including Unaccompanied and Separated Children—in the EU* (Geneva and New York: UNHCR, UNICEF, and IOM, 2017), <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/55971>.

114 UNHCR, “Operational Portal Refugee Situations: Mediterranean Situation: Italy;” Italian Ministry of the Interior, Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, *Cruscotto Statistico Giornaliero*, 2015 and 2016.

115 This could be due to poor reception conditions and integration prospects in Italy, as well as to the presence of relatives in other EU countries. See Minos Mouzourakis et al., *Common Asylum System at a Turning Point: Refugees Caught in Europe’s Solidarity Crisis* (Brussels: European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Asylum Information Database, 2015), www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/shadow-reports/aida_annualreport_2014-2015_0.pdf.

116 Eurostat, “Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data.”

117 Italian Ministry of the Interior, Department of Civil Liberties and Immigration, “Immigrazione e accoglienza e integrazione oggi al centro del dibattito all’Assemblea ANCI a Bari,” updated October 12, 2016, www.libertaciviliimmigrazione.dlci.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/immigrazione-accoglienza-e-integrazione-oggi-al-centro-del-dibattito-allassemblea-anci-bari.

118 See UNHCR, “Italy: UNHCR Update #11” (brief, UNHCR, Geneva, January 2017), 5, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/54800>.



seeker arrivals in Italy, and resulting demand for reception facilities, led to the creation of CAS in 2014. While these were created to be “extraordinary” structures, used only in emergencies when capacity elsewhere has been exceeded, they now house more than 70 percent of those in the reception system.¹¹⁹ CAS centers are inconsistent in the supports they offer and do not have the same level of standards as SPRAR centers.¹²⁰ Additionally, asylum seekers must leave reception centers soon after a final decision is made on their application, particularly if they are in the CAS system, and no structured support is in place for international protection beneficiaries upon leaving the reception system. As a result, families, and especially single mothers, experience a serious risk of poverty and insecurity after they are granted international protection.¹²¹

Under Article 18 of Italy’s Legislative Decree 142/2015, reception centers are required to offer services to address children’s needs, including recreational activities. However, such services are rarely available for young children or for those who have experienced trauma.¹²² Article 21 of the same law stipulates that children of asylum seekers are subject to compulsory education, requiring those between ages 6 and 16 to take part in the national education system. Some may also have access to courses and activities for learning Italian. Italy provides free ECEC to children ages 3 to 5, and asylum-seeker children of this age can enroll in kindergarten. Other children, such as those ages 3 months to 3 years, can access public or private nurseries, where fees are based on family income.¹²³ However, local authorities have discretion as to whether to accept a reception-center address for nursery and kindergarten waiting lists and registration, which can in some cases impede access to these services.¹²⁴ In these cases, the support of the third sector, associations, and NGOs has proven to be extremely important in facilitating ECEC access and enrollment for refugees and asylum seekers. Overall, 3- to 5-year-olds in Italy have a 95 percent ECEC enrollment rate, though this rate is lower (24 percent) for those under age 3.¹²⁵ The Italian government is working to boost the participation of younger children through the implementation of a new, integrated system for children ages 0 to 6.¹²⁶ Data on the rates at which children of refugees and asylum seekers enroll in such services are not collected.

In general, few systematic, medium- or long-term supports or resources are in place to address the needs of young asylum-seeker children in Italy, and this group is relatively overlooked as a specific target for services. Projects focused on mothers and children who have been victims of human trafficking have worked to remove them from situations of exploitation and help them to regain their autonomy. However, because a significant share of migrants arriving in Italy are determined to have arrived for economic reasons and are thus ineligible for international protection, establishing more fleshed-out policies around services for this population, whose future in Italy is uncertain, has been particularly challenging.¹²⁷ Many asylum-seeker-specific initiatives, particularly those run by CAS and NGOs, are often driven by the personal motivation of their leaders. Indeed, the significant contributions of NGOs and volunteers in facilitating the integration of asylum seekers in Italy have been critical in bolstering the wellbeing of young asylum-seeker children and their families.

119 Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani (ANCI) et al., *Rapporto sulla protezione internazionale in Italia 2016* (Rome: ANCI et al., 2017), www.ilsole24ore.com/pdf/2010/01/16/Reporto_protezione_internazionale_2016.pdf.

120 Ibid.

121 Consultant interviews with NGOs and policymakers from January to May 2017.

122 Ibid.

123 Italian Ministry of the Interior, *Manuale operativo per l’attivazione e la gestione di servizi di accoglienza e integrazione per richiedenti asilo, rifugiati e beneficiari di protezione umanitaria* (Rome: Italian Ministry of the Interior, 2006), www.comune.torino.it/stranieri-nomadi/stranieri/progetti/manuale.pdf; OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 63.

124 Associazione Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione, *Access to Education: Italy* (N.p.: Associazione Studi Giuridici sull’Immigrazione, 2016).

125 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 41.

126 The new system is provided for in law 107/2015, with additional legislation in progress for its implementation. See *ibid.*

127 MPI interview with regional policymaker, conducted in October 2017.



Promising Practices

While the letter of the law in Italy is supportive of young refugee and asylum-seeker children, the challenge posed by the large number of recent arrivals has made this legislation difficult to implement in practice. In this context, the NGO sector plays a vital role by addressing gaps in services experienced by these children, both within and outside of reception systems. NGO programs that successfully serve these families include a few that are targeted exclusively to this population as well as a number that serve vulnerable or disadvantaged families more broadly. The following promising practices were identified from among both types of programs.

On-site ECEC services in reception centers facilitate access for children and families to essential services.

As asylum backlogs have led to long wait times in reception centers, providing services on site is important for addressing families' needs. While many reception centers lack dedicated services for young children, staff at a SPRAR center in Chiesanuova, Turin Province, provide a range of supports for young children and families, including psychological supports, legal orientation, and linguistic and cultural mediation. The center also offers activities to aid in societal integration, including visits to the town and the connection of families with local nurseries and kindergartens.

Filling the service gap for families who are living outside of or have left the reception system provides essential protections to those most likely to be vulnerable.

Programs serving asylum seekers and refugees who are not in SPRAR centers and those who have left reception centers are an important means of addressing the needs of families at risk of poverty and of helping them transition to life in a new society. For example, the [A Home to Live](#) project run by the nonprofit organization Articolo 10, provides housing for refugee mothers as well as social supports for one year. These services include education, orientation to local services, livelihoods trainings, and psychological supports. The project aims to help mothers adjust to their new community, become self-sufficient, and plan their future and that of their young children.

Two-generation approaches that offer services to both mothers and children, including those with an aim of raising families out of poverty and promoting children's learning, can be an effective way of addressing young children's wellbeing holistically.

Programs targeted specifically toward refugee families, such as Articolo 10, as well as those that serve a wider population of vulnerable families, have effectively adopted two-generation strategies to serve refugee children and parents. [Mamme a Scuola](#) (Mothers at School) and Save the Children's [Spazio Mamme](#) (Mother's Space) project are two programs that serve refugees alongside other vulnerable families. Mamme a Scuola provides services to support mother-child relationships, parenting, and integration, including orientation to local services, help with navigating and building relationships with local schools, language courses, and skills training. It also has a children's space, Spazio Bimbi (Children's Space), for infants and toddlers (ages 0 to 3), with a child neuropsychiatrist and child psychoanalyst among its staff. Spazio Mamme provides welcoming spaces, located in disadvantaged suburban areas and open Monday through Friday, where mothers can participate in mother-child activities, access legal assistance, participate in self-help groups, and undertake employment-focused training. The overall aim of the project is to decrease the risk of child poverty and promote children's education. Such services are particularly important for families who may not otherwise have access to nurseries or kindergarten, and their comprehensive approach works to assist children both directly and indirectly by promoting parental self-sufficiency and wellbeing.



Appendix F. The Netherlands¹²⁸

A significant number of asylum seekers have arrived in the Netherlands since 2014, when the annual number of asylum applications nearly doubled to 24,000. This figure almost doubled again, to 45,000, in 2015.¹²⁹ Following this peak, the number of asylum applications filed in the country decreased to 21,000 in 2016. Between January and November 2017, almost 16,000 people claimed asylum.¹³⁰ Of the asylum applicants in the Netherlands from 2014 to 2016, the majority hailed from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Albania.¹³¹

The increase in asylum seekers has created significant space constraints in reception centers across the Netherlands. Consequently, many asylum seekers have been forced to relocate multiple times as shelter is available, increasing stress on children and families and complicating access to services, which is already limited.¹³² While the number of asylum seekers arriving in the Netherlands is now decreasing, newcomers continue to arrive through a recent increase in entries through family reunification channels, which has created new family dynamics as well as challenges for service providers.¹³³ As arrivals have decreased, providers have also had to contend with a decrease in funding for refugee supports and, at times, a deprioritization of refugee and asylum-seeker issues on the part of municipalities.¹³⁴

As of the end of October 2017, 1,700 children ages 0 to 3 and 3,400 children ages 4 to 11 resided in Dutch reception centers (Asielzoekerscentra, AZCs).¹³⁵ Asylum seekers remain in reception centers until a decision is made on their application or appeal, which in principle can take up to one year.¹³⁶ Due to limited system capacity, those granted protection could wait an additional 9 to 12 months to be provided with housing in a municipality, during which time they may remain in reception centers.¹³⁷ Not every asylum center provides ECEC services; according to one survey, 40 out of the 68 total municipalities that have reception centers offered some form of ECEC for children ages 2 to 4 inside these centers.¹³⁸ The quality and structure of these services varies significantly, from locations in which children play in an unstructured environment to those that offer extensive programs.¹³⁹ For young children who have received protection status and moved out of reception centers, more services may be available.¹⁴⁰

In the Netherlands, children ages 2.5 to 4 who are found to be at risk for a language disadvantage (if Dutch is not their first language or if they have a delay in their language development, for example) may be able to access ECEC services subsidized by the national government—*voor-en vroegschoolse educatie (VVE)*—free of charge. VVE primarily serves children from non-Dutch speaking and/or low-income families and is not geared specifically towards young asylum seekers or refugees. Each municipality decides who is eligible for these subsidized services; some offer VVE services inside reception centers, others enable

¹²⁸ This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted by MPI researchers Caitlin Katsiaficas, Hania Mariën, and Maki Park between September and October 2017.

¹²⁹ Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Annual Aggregated Data."

¹³⁰ Eurostat, "Asylum and First Time Asylum Applicants by Citizenship, Age and Sex. Monthly Data."

¹³¹ Dutch Ministry of Security and Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Asylum Trends: Monthly Report on Asylum Applications in The Netherlands, December 2016* (Amsterdam: Dutch Ministry of Social Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2016), https://ind.nl/en/Documents/AT_December_2016.pdf.

¹³² MPI author interview with NGO, October 2017.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ MPI author with policymaker, October 2017.

¹³⁵ Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, "Personen in de opvang uitgesplitst naar leeftijd en land van herkomst," updated October 30, 2017, www.coa.nl/nl/over-coa/cijfers.

¹³⁶ Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, "Living at an Asylum Seekers' Centre," accessed November 7, 2017, www.coa.nl/en/asylum-seekers/living-at-an-asylum-seekers-centre.

¹³⁷ Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, "Leaving the Reception Centre," accessed November 7, 2017, www.coa.nl/en/asylum-seekers/leaving-the-reception-centre.

¹³⁸ Sandra Beekhoven and Paulien Muller, *Educatief aanbod voor asielzoekerspeuters en peuters met een status* (Utrecht: Sardes, 2016), www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2016/07/14/educatief-aanbod-voor-asielzoekerspeuters-en-peuters-met-een-status/edoc-1044511-v1-rapport-sardes-educatief-aanbod-voor-asielzoekerpeute.pdf.

¹³⁹ Paulien Muller and Eline Koliijn, *Peuters in de asielopvang naar de peuterspeelzaal* (Utrecht: Sardes, 2016), www.sardes.nl/uploads/handreiking_gemeenten_11juli16.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ Beekhoven and Muller, *Educatief aanbod voor asielzoekerspeuters en peuters met een status*.

those living in reception centers to participate in VVE off site, and still others do not provide access for families in reception centers at all.

By law, all 4-year-olds in the Netherlands are eligible to enroll in preprimary education free of cost, while children under age 3 are meant to be able to obtain free access to such programs based on need.¹⁴¹ Overall enrollment rates in ECEC services in the Netherlands increase with age: 56 percent of children under 3 are enrolled, 81 percent of children age 3, and 96 percent of children age 4—though data regarding asylum seekers and refugees specifically are unavailable.¹⁴² Despite the existence of programs to provide ECEC services to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, the participation rates of students eligible for these programs tend to be lower; in 2014, 78 percent of children eligible for VVE were enrolled.¹⁴³ Most children in the Netherlands who attend ECEC services do so part time—on average spending less than 22 hours in formal child care during the week—which is lower than the OECD average of 30 hours per week.¹⁴⁴

No national, targeted supports exist for young refugee or asylum-seeker children (ages 4 and under), and the provision of ECEC services for children under the compulsory schooling age of 5 remains largely unregulated by public policy. However, there is more support for refugee and asylum-seeker children of compulsory schooling age, with children over age 5 required to attend school within three months of documented arrival in the country.¹⁴⁵ How these students are educated depends largely on the type of school in which they are enrolled; schools may be located in a reception center and exclusively serve newcomers, may have only a few reception classes for students who are not native Dutch speakers, or may integrate newcomer students into regular classes.¹⁴⁶ A national agency, Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (Central Organization for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, COA), provides information to municipalities about the number of newcomer children expected to arrive in the community. Further support is then provided by the National Network Supporting the Education of Newcomers (Landelijke Ondersteuning Onderwijs Nieuwkomers, LOWAN), Primary Education Council (Primair Onderwijs-Raad, PO-Raad), and Secondary Education Council (Voortgezet Onderwijs-Raad, VO-Raad). These organizations are NGOs that provide support to primary and secondary schools on teaching practices, financing, and rules and regulations surrounding the education of asylum-seeking students.¹⁴⁷

The lack of a national policy for the education of young refugee and asylum-seeker children ages 0 to 4 (whether inside or outside reception centers) contributes to variation in the availability, quality, and structure of responsive early childhood services. Much depends on the motivation and resources of municipalities and local authorities. Providing ECEC services and support to families with young children in more rural areas can pose additional transportation challenges for families and service providers alike. Other factors that currently affect the expansion, accessibility, and quality of ECEC offerings for these young children were identified through surveys, visits, and interviews with staff at ECEC service centers. These include cost (for both families and municipalities) and questions about who is responsible for creating and leading educational opportunities for young asylum-seeker children, where and by whom these services should be offered, and how to prepare educators to engage with students who may have

141 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

142 Ibid.

143 Government of the Netherlands, *Eindrapport Monitor kwaliteit VVE in 37 grote steden* (Amsterdam: Government of the Netherlands, 2016), 19, www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/12/06/eindrapport-monitor-kwaliteit-vve-in-37-grote-steden.

144 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

145 Government of the Netherlands, “Gaan kinderen van asielzoekers naar school?,” accessed October 26, 2017, www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/onderwijs-asielzoekerskinderen.

146 Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, Inspectorate of Education, *De Kwaliteit van het onderwijs aan nieuwkomers, type 1 en 2, 2014/2015* (Amsterdam: Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, 2016), www.rijksoverheid.nl/binaries/rijksoverheid/documenten/rapporten/2016/05/01/de-kwaliteit-van-het-onderwijs-aan-nieuwkomers/de-kwaliteit-van-het-onderwijs-aan-nieuwkomers.pdf.

147 Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, Inspectorate of Education, *Informatiedocument onderwijs aan asielzoekerskinderen* (Amsterdam: Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science, 2016), www.coa.nl/sites/www.coa.nl/files/paginas/media/bestanden/informatiedocument_asielzoekers_en_nieuwkomers_po_en_vo_februari2016.pdf.



experienced trauma, have a different cultural background, and are learning Dutch as a second (or third) language.¹⁴⁸

Promising Practices

Several promising initiatives have emerged in response to the recent arrival of refugees and asylum seekers in municipalities across the Netherlands and the lack of consistent services at a systemic level. Among these are innovative pilot programs that aim to expand in the future. Many of the projects also rely significantly on volunteers. As municipalities play a key role in organizing ECEC services for refugee and asylum-seeker children, several initiatives focus on gaining the buy-in of municipalities and increasing local government capacity to serve these families—strategies that can be particularly beneficial in areas that have little prior experience working with these populations. The practices described below represent promising approaches to improving access to high-quality ECEC services for young refugees and asylum seekers.

National-level technical assistance and support enables the broad provision of training and resources that can be tailored to meet varying local needs.

[VoorleesExpress](#), for example, is a national NGO that works across several municipalities to assist libraries, social services, and other local organizations that match volunteers with families to support children’s language development. It provides materials to its local partners for use during home visits, assists local coordinators in reaching more families, and is currently developing an online platform to connect volunteers and parents to games and other learning tools in a variety of languages to support parents in becoming more involved in their children’s learning. Another benefit of this national and local partnership model is that a pilot conducted by one local branch can be evaluated and replicated elsewhere with assistance from the national office. For instance, VoorleesExpress is working with its partner [Stichting Hoedje van Papier](#) to increase opportunities for parents with low levels of literacy in their native language to participate in the education of their children through targeted activities; lessons learned from a study of this initiative will be incorporated into future work with lower-educated parents.

Initiatives that address information and cultural gaps encountered by refugee communities can facilitate improved access to health care and other public services that are vital for refugee children.

The [Dutch Council for Refugees](#) (VluchtelingenWerk), an NGO focused on supporting refugees during their asylum procedure and integration into Dutch society, launched a parent-coaching pilot program. It features a series of information sessions for parents that aims to address information gaps and promote refugee access to ECEC, health, and other public services. While much of the assistance provided focuses on practical settlement issues, these sessions are also meant to provide a space in which parents can discuss and learn about social issues and psychosocial services. This pilot is currently underway in three locations in the eastern part of the country; following an evaluation, it may be expanded to other locations. More broadly, the Dutch Council for Refugees works to normalize help-seeking behavior among communities that may not be used to accessing support services by sharing stories of people of similar backgrounds who have done so and by building trusting relationships between refugees and volunteers. At the national level, [VNG](#) (the Association of Netherlands Municipalities), the [Community Health Services Regional Medical Emergency Preparedness and Planning](#) (Gemeenschappelijke Gezondheidsdienst Geneeskundige Hulpverleningsorganisatie in de Regio, GGD GHOR), and [Pharos](#) (the Dutch Center of Expertise on Health Disparities) are working together to raise awareness among refugees and service providers of health issues and health services available. In this joint initiative, trained refugee community leaders, also known as [Sleutelpersonen](#) (Key Leaders), serve as cultural mediators to improve outreach to refugees and facilitate their access to services, while also providing support to service providers and municipalities.

¹⁴⁸ Muller and Koliijn, *Peuters in de asielopvang naar de peuterspeelzaal*.

**A focus on training can help volunteers and service providers better understand and support refugee families.**

Several technical assistance and service providers emphasized the need for volunteers and professional staff alike to understand the types of experiences common to refugee families, the integration challenges many face, and strategies for working with families who may have experienced trauma. Training is especially important for volunteers, who often lack a professional background in identifying and responding to signs of trauma. In its volunteer trainings, the Dutch Council for Refugees focuses on the identification of psychosocial challenges faced by the children and families with whom they work and how to provide referrals to professional services. Interviewees also noted the necessity of training professionals in integration-related fields, such as educators and social workers, to be responsive to refugee families. [Bureau MUTANT](#), for example, provides trainings, resources, and advice for ECEC professionals and local authorities throughout the country with the aim of fostering a welcoming attitude towards all families. This NGO's services often include a discussion of stressors affecting young refugee children and how educators can support their unique needs. VNG launched a temporary initiative entitled [Program to Support the Health of Refugees](#) (Ondersteuningsprogramma Gezondheid Statushouders) in response to the influx of asylum seekers that is set to run from November 2016 through spring 2018. The project, which also includes Key Leaders, builds awareness among municipalities of the physical, psychological, and psychosocial issues that affect refugees so that this information can be incorporated into local services.

Adapting existing curricula to the needs of refugee children and families promotes their inclusion while recognizing and valuing their experiences.

Bureau MUTANT has also adapted an international curriculum designed for primary schools, [Peace in Your Hands](#), for preschoolers and has added a specific chapter in its training materials on serving refugee children. This program guides children through calming self-care strategies such as breathing, slow movements, and yoga. Separately, MUTANT also supports the implementation of the Documentation of Families (Families in Beeld) project, in which children create photo collages of their families. This initiative is intended to help children feel recognized, encourage them to talk about their families, foster a welcoming and inclusive environment, and avoid triggering stress in refugee children in their classrooms.



Appendix G. Sweden¹⁴⁹

Immigration to Sweden has increased over the past decade,¹⁵⁰ with a particularly sharp rise between 2014 and 2016 due to the Syrian refugee crisis. In 2015, Sweden received more than 160,000 asylum applications, double the number the country received in 2014.¹⁵¹ The largest share of these applications came from Syrian asylum seekers.¹⁵² Sweden also has large refugee populations from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Somalia, Palestine, Ethiopia, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey.¹⁵³ Out of all applications for asylum in 2015, 11.4 percent were for children under age 6.¹⁵⁴

All children in Sweden, including refugee and asylum-seeker children, are entitled to an optional free half day of *förskola* (preschool) from age 3 to age 5. For children whose parents are either working or studying, this entitlement begins at age 1. Parents also have the option to pay a small fee on a sliding scale for full-day enrollment. At age 6, children have the option of enrolling in *förskoleklass* (preschool class), a one-year school preparation program. School is compulsory from age 7 onward. In 1990, the Swedish government changed its education funding system from funding individual schools to awarding block grants to municipalities, which then distribute funds based on local needs. At the same time, Sweden has seen the introduction of *friskola*, which are privately owned, government subsidized independent schools, at all levels of the educational system.

At the preschool level, families also have additional options. Parents can enroll their children in a form of pedagogical care, an umbrella term for any home-based provider, including family and friend care and parent daycare cooperatives. These providers can replace or supplement preschool, and they may be either privately owned or offered through the municipality.¹⁵⁵ About 20 percent of all children in preschool were in independent preschool in 2013; the rest were in public preschool.¹⁵⁶ Overall, Sweden has one of the highest rates of ECEC enrollment among 3- to 5-year-olds, at 94 percent.¹⁵⁷

In comparison to most other countries, Sweden has an impressive array of supports dedicated to newcomer students embedded within its mainstream education services, including at the preschool level. Since 2011, for instance, legislation has been in place to make provisions for *modersmål* (mother tongue) instruction and teacher training. The law reaffirms the right of every Swedish resident to free preschool education and instructs that students whose mother tongue is not Swedish should have opportunities to develop both their mother tongue and Swedish in preschool.¹⁵⁸ However, while children are supposed to receive instruction in their mother tongue, these services are not always requested or provided. In 2015,

149 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted by MPI researchers Caitlin Katsiaficas, Maki Park, Sarah Schwartz, and Lauren Hodges between January and May 2017.

150 Andrey Nonchev and Nikolai Tagarov, eds, *Integrating Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Children in the Educational Systems of EU Member States* (Sofia, Bulgaria: Center for the Study of Democracy, 2012), 183, www.emnbelgium.be/sites/default/files/publications/integrace_handbook.pdf.

151 Swedish Migration Agency, “Statistics,” updated October 3, 2016, www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Statistics.html.

152 Swedish Migration Agency, “History,” updated January 13, 2016, www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Facts-and-statistics-/Facts-on-migration/History.html.

153 Swedish Migration Agency, “Statistics—Asylum Decisions” (fact sheet, Swedish Migration Agency, n.d., accessed November 29, 2016), www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.7c00d8e6143101d166d1aad/1451894587413/Avgjorda+asyl%C3%A4renden+2015+-+Asylum+desicions+2015.pdf.

154 Swedish Migration Agency, “Applications for Asylum Received, 2015” (dataset, Swedish Migration Agency, n.d., accessed November 29, 2016), www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.7c00d8e6143101d166d1aa8/1451894594488/Inkomna+ans%C3%B6kningar+om+asyl+2015+-+Applications+for+asylum+received+2015.xls.

155 Swedish National Agency for Education, “Pedagogisk omsorg,” updated April 8, 2016, www.skolverket.se/skolformer/annan-pedagogisk-verksamhet/pedagogisk-omsorg-1.196762.

156 Swedish National Agency for Education, *Private Actors in Preschools and Schools: A Mapping of Independent Education Providers and Owners in Sweden* (Stockholm: Swedish National Agency for Education, 2014), 18, www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl=http%3A%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D3356.

157 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

158 Swedish Parliament, *Skollag*, 2010:800 (June 23, 2010), www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800.



children in preschool services and contribute to the creation of a welcoming environment. Some of the key promising practices identified through research and interviews include:

Promoting positive views of newcomers and bilingualism by encouraging mixed classrooms and valuing home-language development.

In interviews with policy experts and program administrators, national and local efforts to promote social cohesion and create a positive and welcoming culture for refugee and asylum-seeker arrivals were noted as being of particular importance. With this aim in mind, Swedish policymakers resettle newcomers across multiple municipalities rather than concentrating them in a few small areas to avoid geographic segregation. This approach is intended to ensure not only that classrooms are mixed—a strategy that promotes better outcomes for refugees as well as their peers—but also that Swedes in every corner of the country have an opportunity to interact with refugee families. In this way, societal support for newcomers is more likely to be widespread, according to interviewees. Moreover, national efforts to explicitly recognize the value of bilingualism and to support home-language development are proving critical to fostering a welcoming environment for newcomers and to developing a culture that views cultural and linguistic diversity as an asset.

Building professional capacity at a systems level to respond to shortages of qualified ECEC workers.

As in other countries, one of the biggest challenges reported by Swedish interviewees was the shortage of professional capacity in the ECEC field. Not only are several municipalities experiencing a shortage of preschool teachers generally due to the large number of new arrivals, but the Swedish National Education Agency has identified a particular shortage of teachers with linguistic and cultural skills. In response, the Swedish Public Employment service has created a [fast track](#) for newly arrived immigrants to become teachers and preschool teachers. This fast track is one in a larger program of pathways designed to combine Swedish language instruction, job training, and workforce placement to assist immigrants in entering a variety of in-demand industries. The teacher-training fast track is a partnership among a number of agencies and organizations, including the Swedish Public Employment service, the Swedish Teachers' Union, and several institutes of higher education.¹⁶⁶ The program's pilot class of 15 students started a 26-week program at Stockholm University in April 2016, and additional cohorts were scheduled to begin in August and November/December of 2017 at the Universities of Gothenburg, Linköping, Malmö, Örebro, and Stockholm.¹⁶⁷

Two-generation approaches to newcomer support and language learning can provide complementary integration supports for children and their parents.

At the local level, Stockholm recently opened the first [introduktionsförskola](#) (introductory preschool), a two-generation program specifically tailored for newcomer families. Children attend preschool while their parents take Swedish and integration classes. This program will likely expand to sites in some Stockholm neighborhoods with significant immigrant populations, including Rinkeby-Kista and Spånga-Tensta.¹⁶⁸ Sweden's NGO sector is also contributing to the support and integration of refugee families through innovative two-generation approaches. [Svenska med Baby](#) (Swedish with Your Baby) is a privately run program for newcomers, operating in 13 cities and municipalities. All centers offer parent-

¹⁶⁶ Government Offices of Sweden, "Fast Track – A Quicker Introduction of Newly Arrived Immigrants," updated June 10, 2016, www.government.se/articles/2015/12/fast-track--a-quicker-introduction-of-newly-arrived-immigrants/.

¹⁶⁷ Stockholm University, "Snabbspåret för nyanlända lärare och förskollärare," updated November 28, 2016, www.su.se/lararutbildningar/1%C3%A4rare/snabbsp%C3%A5ret-f%C3%B6r-nyanl%C3%A4nda-1%C3%A4rare; Stockholm University, "Drömmen om en väg in i svensk skola möjlig genom Snabbspåret för nyanlända lärare och förskollärare," updated November 9, 2016, www.su.se/lararutbildningar/1%C3%A4rare/snabbsp%C3%A5ret-f%C3%B6r-nyanl%C3%A4nda-1%C3%A4rare/aktuellt-fr%C3%A5n-snabbsp%C3%A5ret/dr%C3%B6mmen-om-en-v%C3%A4g-in-i-svensk-skola-m%C3%B6jlig-genom-snabbsp%C3%A5ret-f%C3%B6r-nyanl%C3%A4nda-1%C3%A4rare-och-f%C3%B6r-skoll%C3%A4rare-1.295187; Stockholm University, "Snabbspår för nyanlända lärare presenterat," updated June 15, 2016, www.su.se/lararutbildningar/samverkan/snabbsp%C3%A5r-f%C3%B6r-nyanl%C3%A4nda-1%C3%A4rare-presenterat-1.270060.

¹⁶⁸ *Dagens Nyheter*, "Språkklass och förskola i ett för nyanlända," *Dagens Nyheter*, September 27, 2016, www.dn.se/sthlm/sprakklass-och-forskola-i-ett-for-nyanlanda/.



and-baby classes in which parents learn Swedish, socialize, and participate in educational activities with their children, with all programming offered free of charge.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁹ Svenska med baby, “Välkommen till Svenska med baby!” accessed December 6, 2017, http://svenskamedbaby.se/om_oss/.



Appendix H. Turkey¹⁷⁰

Du primarily to displacement driven by the conflict in neighboring Syria, Turkey has seen an enormous spike in arrivals of people seeking international protection. From 2014 to 2016, Turkey has been host to the largest number of refugees in the world: 2.9 million refugees as of the end of 2016, 98 percent of whom were from Syria.¹⁷¹ The Government of Turkey is the largest provider of aid to Syrians under temporary protection and is responsible for leading and coordinating the overall in-country crisis response.¹⁷² Additionally, Turkey received 78,600 asylum applications from persons of other nationalities in 2016, the fourth highest number in the world,¹⁷³ with asylum seekers hailing mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Iran.¹⁷⁴ Of the more than 2.8 million Syrian refugees in Turkey in 2016, 11 percent (321,460) were between the ages of 0 and 4, and 15 percent (411,046) were between the ages of 5 and 9.¹⁷⁵ In the early childhood realm, the government works closely with several partners, including UNICEF, to carry out humanitarian-response activities.

While Syrians receive *prima facie* temporary protection under the government's Temporary Protection Regulation, those of other nationalities can receive conditional refugee status after an individual refugee status determination.¹⁷⁶ Refugees granted temporary protection may utilize public education¹⁷⁷ and health services; however, accessing such services may be difficult in practice, particularly for those living outside of camps. The majority of Syrians reside in Istanbul and in cities along Turkey's southern border, and more than 90 percent live outside of camps, a trend that has led to significant population growth in some municipalities and put pressure on public services, including education and health care.¹⁷⁸

Compulsory schooling in Turkey begins at age 6, with voluntary preschool available for children ages 3 to 5. Refugee children are permitted to attend ECEC services in Turkish schools alongside Turkish children. However, given shortages in space and resources, many participate in NGO-run ECEC programs, if at all. According to UNICEF, for example, approximately 12,800 Syrian children ages 3 to 5 were enrolled in their ECEC services as of June 2017.¹⁷⁹ For younger children, the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) offers services for all children ages 0 to 3, including refugee children, that aim to support cognitive and socioemotional development as well as language skills. However, utilization of these services is also far from universal, and Turkey exhibits one of the largest ECEC enrollment disparities between socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged children (34 percent of advantaged students, defined as those in the top quarter, compared to 10 percent of disadvantaged students in the bottom

170 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted in Turkey by consultant Doğuş Şimşek, postdoctoral researcher at Koç University, between January and April 2017.

171 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 3, 14.

172 UNICEF, "Turkey CO Humanitarian Situation Report #10" (fact sheet, UNICEF, New York, June 2017), 6, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Turkey%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20%2310%20-%20June%202017%20%20.pdf>.

173 UNHCR *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 3.

174 *Ibid.*, 40.

175 Turkish Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management, *2016 Türkiye Göç Raporu* (Ankara: Turkish Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General of Migration Management, 2017), 76, www.goc.gov.tr/files/files/2016_yiik_goc_raporu_haziran.pdf.

176 Turkey is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, but maintains a geographical restriction, meaning it only recognizes those refugees fleeing from (not to) Europe.

177 Non-Syrians face additional obstacles, including accessing education. See Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Education Barriers for Asylum Seekers," updated May 31, 2017, www.hrw.org/news/2017/05/31/turkey-education-barriers-asylum-seekers; Izza Leghtas and Daniel Sullivan, "Except God, We Have No One": Lack of Durable Solutions for Non-Syrian Refugees in Turkey (Washington, DC: Refugees International, 2017), www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2017/2/turkey; Kemal Kirişçi, "Don't Forget Non-Syrian Refugees in Turkey," Brookings Institution, Order from Chaos, June 22, 2017, www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/06/22/dont-forget-non-syrian-refugees-in-turkey/.

178 Kathleen Newland and Brian Salant, "Turkey," in *Forced Migration in the OIC Member Countries: Policy Framework Adopted by Host Countries* (Ankara: Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, 2016), 72, http://ebook.comcec.org/Kutuphane/Icerik/Yayinlar/Analitik_Calismalar/Yoksullugun_Azaltilmasi/Toplantisi8/files/assets/basic-html/page-2.html; M. Murat Erdoğan, "Thinking Outside the Camp: Syrian Refugees in Istanbul," *Migration Information Source*, August 9, 2017, www.migrationpolicy.org/article/thinking-outside-camp-syrian-refugees-istanbul.

179 UNICEF, "Turkey CO Humanitarian Situation Report #10."



quarter).¹⁸⁰ Overall ECEC enrollment rates for children ages 3 to 5 in Turkey are also among the lowest in OECD countries,¹⁸¹ indicating that access for disadvantaged and hard-to-reach families is severely limited.

MoNE, with assistance from the European Union, has been working to improve and expand high-quality ECEC services for Syrian and vulnerable Turkish children by working closely with UNICEF and other partners to increase system and institutional capacity. MoNE also works with UNHCR and UNICEF to promote refugee children's enrollment in Turkish schools.¹⁸² At the same time, NGOs providing ECEC services to refugee children receive funding from a range of national and international donors, including Turkey's Open Society Foundation (Açık Toplum Vakfı), Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Administration (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, foundations in Germany, the European Union, a variety of embassies, and Siemens. However, much of the funding NGOs receive is short-term, rendering it challenging to provide long-term ECEC services and to measure outcomes over time.¹⁸³ Given the many actors involved in ECEC provision and the lack of data specific to refugee children, it is difficult to pinpoint participation rates and other information for this group.

Working to increase refugee children's access to ECEC would provide critical sources of support for them and their families. However, refugee families can be hard to reach in Turkey, as is the case elsewhere, due to obstacles such as transportation costs (particularly in Istanbul) and cultural attitudes regarding the participation of children or mothers in early childhood programs, indicating a need to increase outreach and information for refugee families.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, public schools and health services will need to increase their capacity in terms of physical space, equipment, and a trained workforce in order to successfully accommodate refugee children. The large number of families who have arrived in recent years have made cooperation between the Turkish government and NGOs and sustained funding essential if these challenges are to be addressed.¹⁸⁵

The majority of Syrian children have been attending primary school at Temporary Education Centers (TECs), which provide a modified Syrian curriculum in Arabic.¹⁸⁶ However, the Turkish government mandated that children enrolling in first grade must attend Turkish public schools starting in the 2016–17 school year, as part of its plans to move all Syrian students into the Turkish system by 2020.¹⁸⁷ This creates both challenges and opportunities for Syrian refugee children. On the one hand, they will now attend classes in Turkish and the government will have increased oversight over education quality, steps that may boost the integration of these children into Turkish society. However, it will likely be difficult for children to maintain and continue to develop their home-language skills under these circumstances, as the Turkish education system lacks teachers who are trained to serve bilingual children as well as children who have experienced trauma. Moreover, the capacity of public schools will likely be strained as they incorporate increasing numbers of Syrian students.¹⁸⁸

Promising Practices

ECEC programs in Turkey have worked to engage refugee families, provide supports for refugee children's learning and development and for parents' wellbeing and self-sufficiency, and encourage interactions between refugees and their Turkish neighbors. The promising practices that follow are drawn from the

¹⁸⁰ OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*, 33, 157.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 128–29, 141.

¹⁸² UNHCR focuses on promoting refugees' access to the national education system, as well to Turkish language programs, skills training, and higher education. UNICEF focuses on activities supporting early childhood, primary, and secondary education.

¹⁸³ MPI consultant interviews with NGOs in Turkey, January to April 2017.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ For more information see Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA), *Breaking Down Barriers: Getting Syrian Children into Schools in Turkey* (Ankara: SETA, 2017), https://setav.org/en/assets/uploads/2017/09/R90_Breaking-Barriers.pdf.

¹⁸⁷ Kinana Qaddour, "Educating Syrian Refugees in Turkey," *Sada*, November 20, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/74782>.

¹⁸⁸ Newland and Salant, "Turkey," 80.



NGO sector and highlight successful approaches to facilitating participation, addressing the needs of children and families, and increasing the effectiveness of service provision.

Strengthening the capacity of public institutions can be crucial in improving the provision of ECEC services to refugee children.

Increasing the capacity of public schools has become critical with the phasing out of the TECs. Schools are under pressure to secure adequate space and classroom supplies, and to recruit and train a workforce with the skills needed to work with refugee children who may not speak Turkish and who may have experienced trauma. The [Mother Child Education Foundation](#) (Anne Çocuk Eğitim Vakfı, AÇEV) is one NGO working to increase state preschool capacity through teacher training and the provision of educational materials as part of its First Step Ahead Program.

Providing trauma-informed supports for families and training for staff helps services recognize and address the stressors experienced by refugee children.

Several NGOs, including AÇEV, [Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants](#) (Sığınmacılar ve Göçmenlerle Dayanışma Derneği, SGDD-ASAM), [Support to Life](#) (Hayata Destek), [Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity](#), and [Yuva Foundation](#), provide ECEC services alongside psychosocial or mental-health supports. These supports are essential, as ECEC and NGO staff members interviewed report high levels of trauma and other stressors among the children and families they serve, which if left unaddressed can result in a range of mental-health issues.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, NGO staff receive training on child protection, including skills for working with people who have experienced trauma, that is critical for providing sensitive care that avoids retraumatization and supports children's resiliency and healthy development.

Offering a comprehensive range of services, including parent-focused supports, facilitates a holistic approach to family wellbeing and integration.

Several programs in Turkey provide a variety of supports for parents of young children, including seminars on parenting skills and assistance with school registration that are important for facilitating children's learning and development, as well as language courses and vocational training that can support families' wellbeing more broadly. For instance, SGDD-ASAM provides Syrian children and their families with a range of services including psychosocial, legal, and counseling services, as well as parenting trainings. Mavi Kalem serves Syrian women and children, providing psychosocial support and assistance with education, health-care, and employment issues. And the Yuva Foundation's community centers offer case management and counseling services, legal assistance, language instruction, computer trainings, and vocational trainings aimed at increasing refugees' self-sufficiency. While services are aimed at Syrians, they are also available to Turkish families, and the Yuva Foundation works to facilitate interactions between the two communities. Such parent-focused services help parents navigate a new culture and school system and help to improve the family's economic situation overall, thus benefiting their children's wellbeing.

Establishing partnerships can enable the provision of holistic services.

NGOs providing ECEC services have established partnerships to increase the range of supports offered and to boost the capacity of organizations to effectively serve refugee children. For example, AÇEV collaborates with government and civil-society institutions that work with Syrian refugees to provide training on how to better serve young Syrian children. Yuva Foundation, which provides livelihoods programming, partners with the Goethe Institut and other national and international NGOs to offer preschool education. Additionally, several NGOs cooperate to hold social activities that also include Turkish and refugee families, aiming to increase interaction between different communities.

¹⁸⁹ MPI consultant fieldwork in Turkey, January to April 2017.



Collocating services can facilitate access and participation.

The collocation of services enables families to access a variety of supports in one location, which can help reduce barriers to participation and decrease transportation costs for families. For instance, SGDD-ASAM is establishing multiservice support centers in cities throughout Turkey, which allows it to provide comprehensive services for children and their families. Yuva Foundation similarly provides a range of services for children and adults at its community centers, including case management, legal assistance, language instruction, computer courses, and vocational training.

Conducting home visits as an outreach and service strategy can help programs reach the most vulnerable families.

Home visits and home-based curricula enable ECEC programs to reach families that may be more vulnerable or who are unable to participate in center-based services and may otherwise remain isolated, providing an important bridge between home and classroom environments. Such an approach can also allow ECEC staff to gain a more thorough understanding of child and family needs. SGDD-ASAM, for instance, conducts home visits as part of its outreach efforts for vulnerable families. And AÇEV has developed its Mother Child Education Program to provide support for mothers of 4- to 6-year-old children in their homes.



Appendix I. United States¹⁹⁰

The United States operates the world's largest resettlement program, admitting nearly 85,000 refugees in 2016—approximately two-thirds of all refugees resettled worldwide.¹⁹¹ More than 275,000 refugees have been resettled to the United States since fiscal year (FY) 2014,¹⁹² with large shares from Burma, Iraq, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Bhutan, and Syria.¹⁹³ However, refugee admissions decreased significantly in FY 2017 to 50,000—the lowest number since FY 2007—due to efforts by the Trump administration to pause and reduce refugee resettlement. For FY 2018, the administration has set the admissions ceiling at 45,000, the lowest level since the U.S. refugee resettlement program was launched in 1980.¹⁹⁴ In addition to resettling refugees from countries of first asylum, the United States is among the countries that receive the highest number of asylum applications, ranking second in 2015 and 2016, after Germany.¹⁹⁵ More than 115,000 affirmative asylum applications were filed in the United States in FY 2016, an increase of 39 percent from FY 2015.¹⁹⁶ A significant share of asylum applicants in recent years have come from Central American and Mexican migrants, including large numbers of unaccompanied children and families, though these flows have decreased significantly since their peak in 2014.¹⁹⁷

As the U.S. program has shifted from resettling refugees from a limited to a wider range of countries, the U.S. refugee population has come to exhibit wide diversity in language, culture, and experiences.¹⁹⁸ Refugees resettled in the United States in 2013 alone spoke 162 different languages, with 92 of them spoken by fewer than 50 newcomers.¹⁹⁹ Additionally, some of the largest groups resettled in recent years have lower rates of literacy and educational attainment.²⁰⁰ These characteristics pose challenges for social-service and education providers, who must adjust their linguistic and cultural capacity accordingly.

Refugee resettlement in the United States is implemented by nine private agencies, often referred to as “Voluntary Agencies” or VOLAGs.²⁰¹ These NGOs have agreements with the U.S. State Department to provide reception and placement services for refugees and may also receive contracts from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide job placement, English language training, and other social services aimed at facilitating refugee integration. The work of VOLAGs is highly focused on improving refugees’ employment outcomes and includes few, if any, supports for young children. Those child-focused services that are available are generally directed at older children ages 5 to 18. The refugee resettlement process provides funding and support for a very limited time (eight months after arrival), after which few targeted resources or services are available to this population.

Schooling is compulsory for all children in the United States without exception, though the age from which school attendance is required varies by state. Free, public education is typically available beginning

190 This case study was informed by original fieldwork conducted by MPI researchers Maki Park, Caitlin Katsiaticas, and Lauren Hodges between January and August 2017.

191 Michael Fix, Kate Hooper, and Jie Zong, *How Are Refugees Faring? Integration at U.S. and State Levels* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2017), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/how-are-refugees-faring-integration-us-and-state-levels.

192 FY 2014 began on October 1, 2013 and ended September 30, 2014.

193 Refugee Processing Center, “Refugee Admissions Report.”

194 Ibid; White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” (executive order, January 27, 2017), www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states; White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States” (executive order, March 6, 2017), www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/03/06/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states; MPI Data Hub, “U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings and Number of Refugees Admitted, 1980-Present.”

195 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*, 3; UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015*, 3.

196 This number only includes principal applicants, and does not include dependents. It also does not include defensive asylum requests, which are submitted in response to removal proceedings. See Nadwa Mossaad and Ryan Baugh, “Refugees and Asylees: 2016.”

197 UNHCR, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016*.

198 Hooper, Zong, Capps, and Fix, *Young Children of Refugees in the United States*.

199 Ibid.

200 Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*, 3.

201 For a full list of these agencies, see U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Refugee Resettlement, “Voluntary Agencies,” updated July 17, 2012, www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies.



with kindergarten, which most children enter at age 5 or 6. Since the 1982 *Plyler v. Doe* Supreme Court case, all immigrant children, including those who are unauthorized, have the legal right to a public education through high school.

Early childhood services in the United States are primarily a state and local responsibility, with some states now offering state preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-olds, often targeted toward low-income families. For children under the age of 3, child care and other ECEC offerings are largely private, and there is little consistency or meaningful oversight of such services by public agencies. While free public preschool and ECEC services are available in some states and for some populations, based primarily on income eligibility, provision remains far from universal. According to the OECD, 67 percent of 3- to 5-year-olds and 28 percent of children under age 3 are enrolled in some kind of ECEC program in the United States,²⁰² with children of immigrants less likely to access ECEC services than their peers.²⁰³

Some early childhood services are provided by federal agencies, though their reach is limited. Most notably, Head Start and Early Head Start, which offer early learning opportunities, health, and other supports from prenatal to children age 5 based on income eligibility, are available at no charge to qualifying low-income families, including young children of refugees. The program takes a two-generation approach, providing access to comprehensive services that support family stability and self-sufficiency, which can be particularly beneficial to refugee families. The Head Start program, however, serves less than half of its eligible population,²⁰⁴ and complex enrollment processes can impede participation for many newcomer families, particularly those who lack English proficiency.

The Federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program (MIECHV) also provides limited funding for free, voluntary home visiting services that target low-income and vulnerable families. Home visiting models can be highly effective as a means of engaging hard-to-reach refugee families as they are rooted in community-based strategies and make a strong effort to meet families where they are, both geographically and culturally. Finally, the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) program offers subsidies to low-income families to aid in the provision of more affordable child care. Only working parents or those pursuing education are eligible for the program, however, and CCDBG funds reach only 15 percent of eligible young children.²⁰⁵ While some states offer language access provisions to improve immigrant- and refugee-family access to CCDBG and other programs, these supports are significantly less likely to be available in lower incidence languages.

As the refugee program in the United States continues to inspire intense political debate, support and welcome of newcomers varies significantly at the state level, and this is reflected in approaches to ECEC. A few states, such as Illinois, have laws in place explicitly stating that schools serving a minimum number of young children who speak a language other than English must provide options for bilingual instruction, thereby promoting the importance of home language and creating a more welcoming culture for diverse families. With a wide range of often low-incidence minority languages spoken among refugees, however, the provision of bilingual instruction may either not be applicable to them or pose significant logistical and financial challenges. On the other hand, a few states such as Arizona have legislation prohibiting bilingual instruction and mandating an English-only approach. This divergence reflects the broad spectrum of public and political sentiment regarding policies that support inclusion and diversity in classrooms across the United States.

202 OECD, *Starting Strong 2017*.

203 Maki Park, Margie McHugh, Jie Zong, and Jeanne Batalova, *Immigrant and Refugee Workers in the Early Childhood Field, Taking a Closer Look*, (Washington DC: MPI, 2015), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-and-refugee-workers-early-childhood-field-taking-closer-look.

204 Stephanie Schmit and Christina Walker, *Disparate Access* (Washington DC: Center for Law and Social Policy, 2016), www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Disparate-Access.pdf.

205 Ibid.



At the program level, many ECEC providers in the United States, including many Head Start programs, have a long history of working successfully with refugees and other newcomer populations and have tailored their services based on experience. Such programs still cite many challenges related to working with young refugees, however, including difficulties related to transportation, a shortage of linguistic and cultural skills among staff, lack of training and resources to support trauma-informed care for young refugee children, and inadequate long-term resources, given that working with refugee families in particular often requires a higher intensity of services.²⁰⁶

Interviews with service providers conducted for this report as well as anecdotal reports in the media also suggest that immigrants and refugees are currently experiencing greater stress and anxiety due to the pervasively negative political climate. Some may also hesitate to access social services, even in cases where they or their children are legally eligible, due to misinformation or a heightened wariness of authority.

Promising Practices

Due to the United States' limited national ECEC infrastructure and low levels of federal and state support of ECEC programs, public funding and resources are largely insufficient to provide high-quality ECEC services in a way that effectively responds to the cultural, linguistic, and other needs of young refugee children and their families. The success of many programs depends on the dedication of their leaders and staff and on cooperation between organizations, with such efforts often relying on a patchwork of disparate, short-term funding sources. However, several important strategies to support this population can be identified at both the national and local levels.

At both the system and program levels, a deliberate effort to train, recruit, and hire ECEC staff from refugee communities promotes responsive services and aids in building trusting relationships between staff and families.

Across programs, administrators report the importance of hiring staff who reflect the diversity of the clientele they serve and are able to relate to the challenges and experiences of refugee families. However, recruiting a sufficient number of qualified staff from within the refugee community can be challenging. In response, several Head Start programs, such as [PICA Head Start](#) in Minnesota, have implemented grow-your-own programs. Through these initiatives, Head Start programs provide training and education for parents interested in gaining the skills and qualifications they need to become program staff, the acquisition of which may otherwise be too costly or the training too difficult to access. PICA Head Start leaders say that parents who come through this program are often their most committed and most effective staff members.

At the system level, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement runs a [Microenterprise Development Home-Based Childcare Program](#) specifically targeting refugee women who wish to start a business as a child-care service provider. This program, which provides business training, microloans, and other supports meets national goals of addressing child-care shortages as well as aiding the integration of refugee families into the labor market and increasing the availability of culturally and linguistically relevant care for diverse families. In the past two decades, 10,800 microbusinesses have been established through this program, with a survival rate of 88 percent, and 24,000 refugees have gained new entrepreneurial skills and knowledge.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ MPI author interviews with service providers conducted between January and July 2017.

²⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, "Micro-Enterprise Development: Home-Based Childcare Program," accessed August 27, 2017, www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/resource/microenterprise-development-home-based-childcare-program.



Training and professional development for ECEC staff specific to serving refugees and newcomers provided in partnership with specialists can help build essential capacity and improve program quality.

[Harrisonburg Public Schools](#) in Virginia requires all new teachers to take a course specifically preparing them to work effectively with newcomer students and English Learners. Harrisonburg also employs home-school liaisons tasked with bridging the divide between home and school environments, and all staff are offered training on supporting families who have been exposed to trauma and strategies to build resiliency. These trainings are offered in partnership with an organization called [Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience \(STAR\)](#), which specializes in this area.

Collaboration between ECEC programs and refugee resettlement agencies can facilitate needed communication and ease access for recently arrived refugees to high quality programming.

Several Head Start programs have developed a collaboration with local refugee resettlement agencies as a means of increasing the enrollment of newly arrived refugee children in Early Head Start and Head Start programs. One study indicated that these partnerships effectively increased refugee enrollment by 500 percent in one county and 200 percent in another over a six-year period.²⁰⁸ In the absence of such deliberate partnerships, many Head Start agencies cite a lack of information from the refugee-resettlement sector and few opportunities for mutual outreach as contributors to gaps in services for this vulnerable population.²⁰⁹

Collaboration at the state level can also improve access to high-quality ECEC for refugee families statewide. The Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants, for example, has a partnership with the state Department of Early Education and Care to increase immigrant and refugee access to ECEC services by increasing knowledge of refugee and Dual Language Learner²¹⁰ needs among ECEC programs and promoting awareness of available ECEC services among refugees.²¹¹

Partnerships at the local level between ECEC programs, school districts, and other service providers can position schools as community hubs and gateways to holistic supports for refugee and other families.

Collocating services such as physical and mental-health care alongside early learning programs can significantly promote access to these crucial resources for recently arrived refugee families. The [Educare Arizona](#) program, for example, has a full-service health clinic on site at one of its locations that has a high concentration of refugee families. The clinic offers dental care, well visits, health education, and behavioral support in addition to primary medical care, and is open to the wider community. The program also offers an extensive family engagement program and access to a resource library for parents.

At the national level, the [Full-Service Community Schools](#) program, run by the U.S. Department of Education, provides grants for schools to provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students as well as their family members and community members in an effort to improve educational outcomes for children through a comprehensive approach. Programs offered through schools as part of these projects can involve family literacy, parent leadership, and other parent education programs including English classes, as well as nutrition services, primary and mental-health services, and dental care. Initiatives such as these allow schools to expand on their natural role as a touchpoint for newcomer families who may otherwise have difficulty connecting with social service providers.

208 Morland, Ives, McNeely, and Allen, *Providing a Head Start*.

209 MPI fieldwork conducted between January and July 2017.

210 The term Dual Language Learner refers to children under the age of 8 who have at least one parent who speaks a language other than English at home.

211 Jeff Gross and Christine Ntagengwa, *Challenges in Accessing Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Refugee Families in Massachusetts* (Washington, DC: MPI, 2016), www.migrationpolicy.org/research/challenges-accessing-early-childhood-education-and-care-children-refugee-families.



Established “welcome centers” run by school districts, which offer a centralized location for newcomer intake and registration, ensure that parents are referred to the services they specifically require.

Both Harrisonburg Public Schools in Virginia and [Portland Public Schools](#) in Maine have welcome centers that offer support for newcomer families to assist them in the school registration process and ensure that they receive the support they need, particularly in regard to language learning and linguistic supports. As part of the intake process, center staff gather information on family history, an important strategy and first step in thoughtfully serving refugee children. These centers also coordinate translation and interpretation services across schools and ensure that school staff receive the professional development and technical assistance they require to serve newcomer students effectively. The centralized organization of these services is essential for these districts’ ability to respond to shifting newcomer demographics and quickly locate and deploy translators and interpreters for newly emerging languages in the community. A designated space with knowledgeable staff trained on cultural issues also provides a critical support for parents who may be unfamiliar with the U.S. education system and might otherwise be uncomfortable reaching out for the assistance they need for themselves and their children.

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The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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