

# The European benchmark for refugee integration:

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



**NIEM**  
ALL IN FOR INTEGRATION

Evaluation 2: Comprehensive Report



ALEXANDER WOLFFHARDT, CARMINE CONTE  
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# **THE EUROPEAN BENCHMARK FOR REFUGEE INTEGRATION:**

A COMPARATIVE  
ANALYSIS OF  
THE NATIONAL  
INTEGRATION  
EVALUATION  
MECHANISM  
IN 14 EU COUNTRIES

EVALUATION 2:  
COMPREHENSIVE REPORT



INSTITUTE OF  
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# **PART I**

## Introduction & Key Results





# 1. NIEM Evaluation 2: Capturing change 2019 to 2021

## 1.1. Introduction

This is the third comparative report of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) providing evidence on the quality of government support for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (BIPs). By focusing on long-term inclusion and well-being beyond the reception phase, NIEM acknowledges the reality that in most cases a majority of BIPs will not be able to return to their home country and need a secure perspective for a self-sustained life. The research helps governments, civil society and other stakeholders to identify gaps in the refugee integration policies of their country, take inspiration from other EU member states and improve the framework in place. Based on defined indicators and a scoring system, its results can serve as a roadmap towards comprehensive refugee integration policies in each of the countries involved.

The comparative results presented in this report are intended to inform NIEM's outreach to authorities, civil society and experts and to stimulate debate on how to reform refugee integration based on evidence. To avoid social exclusion, poor integration outcomes and low levels of acceptance in the receiving society, prudent refugee policy must consider all persons granted protection as potentially staying for a sustained period, and very possibly, for good. Denial of an early start into the integration process and of substantial support for BIPs to eventually stay on their own feet can prove costly for governments. The less is invested in integration pathways, the higher the long-term costs will be in terms of needs for state assistance to refugees and their children.

Following the NIEM Baseline Report based on 2017 data and the NIEM Evaluation 1 Comprehensive Report based on 2019 data,<sup>1</sup> the Evaluation 2 Comprehensive Report analyses the situation as of 2021 and highlights key trends. Below, **Part I** of this report presents key comparative results, an analysis of change from 2019 to 2021 and a brief description of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on refugee integration policies in this period. Detailed results are presented in **Part II** in 12 chapters relating to the various dimensions of refugee integration analysed in the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism. Each of these chapters

- ▶ presents the key data and developments in the 2019 to 2021 period as they are reflected in the scored outcome of research conducted in the 14 participating countries;

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<sup>1</sup> Wolffhardt A., Conte C. and Huddleston T. (2020), *The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries. Evaluation 1: Comprehensive Report*. Brussels/Warsaw: MPG and IPA; Wolffhardt A., Conte C. and Huddleston T. (2019), *The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries*. Brussels/Warsaw: MPG and IPA. This Baseline Report further elaborates on the background, objectives and methodology of NIEM and includes further references.

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

While **Part III** of this comparative report presents the individual profiles of each of the 14 countries with an overall scoring and across all dimensions, the NIEM national reports, published in parallel, elaborate on the key developments and challenges in the countries participating in NIEM.

The countries included in the research are Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Results can be compared with the results of the previous NIEM Evaluation 1, thus allowing for a monitoring of recent developments.

NIEM's current analysis of national refugee integration frameworks focuses on a variety of legal and policy indicators. Other indicators included measure mainstreaming, collaboration across levels of government and with NGOs, as well as efforts aimed at the participation and involvement of the receiving society. Overall, 120 robust indicators are being assessed through a comparative scoring listed in the thematic chapters of Part II as well as in the introduction to Part III of this report. The indicators are geared towards the specific needs of BIPs, paying special attention to, for example, vulnerable groups, the implications of the protection-related residence status or the consequences of forced migration in areas such as employment and health.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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<sup>2</sup> This sensitivity to refugee-specific integration needs distinguishes NIEM from MIPEX, the widely used Migrant Integration Policy Index measuring the integration framework in place for third-country nationals in general. NIEM and MIPEX overall scores for a particular country differ because NIEM's model of aggregation gives greater weight to the range of socio-economic and socio-cultural dimensions of integration in relation to the legal dimensions of residency, family reunification and citizenship. On the other hand, MIPEX includes a specific anti-discrimination strand which as such is not part of NIEM. Cf. Solano G. and Huddleston T. (2020), *Migrant Integration Policy Index 2020*. Brussels/Barcelona: MPG and CIDOB, [www.mipex.eu](http://www.mipex.eu).

In addition, overall country results incorporate a few indicators related to the impact of the reception phase on integration. The average duration of asylum procedures as well as the identification of applicants as being vulnerable and having special reception needs are considered to strongly influence the prospects of successful integration later on.

## 1.2 Depiction of results and methodology

### Stepstones towards a comprehensive integration framework

Results are presented in relation to the concrete steps policymakers need to take in order to establish a framework that is in line with the standards required by international and EU law. Due to widespread data gaps, NIEM's Evaluation 2 remains focused on those stepstones of a comprehensive approach to refugee integration related to the legal, policy and collaboration frameworks in place. These "steps", relating to corresponding types of indicators, structure the depiction of results throughout the report and are intended to guide attention to the different kinds of action – law-making, policy development or fostering governance and social involvement – needed to achieve a better integration framework.

Comprehensive integration, however, also entails the availability of data to plan and evaluate policies, the commitment of sufficient budgets to accomplish policy goals, as well as actually achieving positive integration outcomes. To get closer to a complete refugee integration index, this NIEM monitoring round comprises 12 indicators on integration outcome in the comparative analysis. Related results are based on qualitative research which also involved BIPs. While these indicators are not included in the scored indicators due to a lack of direct comparability, they provide important additional information which puts the results on the legal, policy and collaboration frameworks in perspective (see yellow textboxes at the end of the pertinent chapters). Published in a separate NIEM Special Analysis, the 2021 evaluation also mapped data availability and data gaps in comparison of the 14 countries, drawing on the 44 data-related indicators included in the NIEM instrument.<sup>3</sup>

### Data included

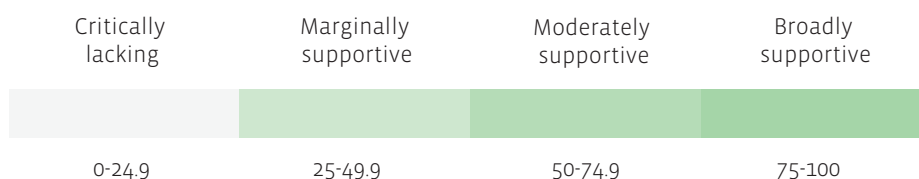
Results presented in this report refer to both *recognised refugees* and *beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (BSPs)*, the two main protection groups in the EU in the 2019 to 2021 period. Throughout the residency, family reunification and citizenship dimensions, results for the two groups are presented separately to highlight the often significantly different conditions for recognised refugees and BSPs in these areas. In the remaining dimensions, scores shown represent an average of the results for the two groups. Next to these categories, NIEM analyses the framework in place for other groups in dedicated reports, since, for

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<sup>3</sup> Yilmaz S. (2022), *Data gaps in refugee integration in Europe: A comparative assessment of data availability in 14 EU countries. NIEM in-depth analysis*. Brussels: MPG.

example, persons with humanitarian status make up a considerable portion of the population under international protection in several countries.<sup>4</sup>

All NIEM Evaluation 2 data refer to the legal and other provisions in place as of 31 March 2021, two years after the cut-off date of the previous Evaluation 1. Results have been scored on a scale from 0 to 100, ranging from the least advantageous to the most advantageous provisions. To highlight the practical meaning of the scores, they are related to four broad ranges in which the framework in place can be considered as being critically lacking (score below 25), marginally supportive (score below 50), moderately supportive (score below 75) and broadly supportive (score up to 100) for the integration of BIPs.



The analysis of change between 2019 (Evaluation 1) and 2021 (Evaluation 2) takes into account all dynamics that resulted in a difference of more than two points in the aggregated scores of a single dimension for a given country. Developments that resulted in a difference of less than two scoring points are only highlighted in Part II when they reflect a significant shift in government approaches.




### Comparing countries

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



Countries in the north and west of Europe that have a longstanding tradition of receiving refugees. Asylum policies and integration frameworks tend to be well established, accepting of a long-term integration perspective and rooted in domestic policy traditions of dealing with immigration. In the flows of the 2019 to 2021 evaluation period, these Member States primarily figured as countries of final destination.

<sup>4</sup> Conte C. (2021), *The uneven legal and policy framework facing persons with humanitarian status in Europe: current gaps and possible solutions for improving integration policies*. NIEM in-depth analysis. Brussels: MPG.

	<p>Countries in southern Europe that have more recently developed into destinations for people seeking international protection while also retaining the position of transit countries. Asylum and integration policy frameworks have become more comprehensive over the last decades. In the 2019 to 2021 period, these countries have mostly found themselves in a first line position dealing with arrivals to EU territory.</p>
	<p>East-central European countries with rather recent asylum systems adopted in the context of joining the EU and with weaker linkages to longer-term integration frameworks. EU legal provisions and support has often been instrumental in the development of policies. Neither frequent destination countries nor in a transit position, the numbers of beneficiaries in these countries were small in the 2019 to 2021 period.</p>
	<p>Countries in central/south-eastern Europe that share most features with the other east-central European countries assessed. Some of them differ in that they have been exposed to significant movements of persons seeking protection in the EU during recent years, leading to challenges for their reception systems. Nevertheless, the numbers of BIPs in these countries have remained comparatively small in the 2019 to 2021 assessment period.</p>

### Assessment and scoring

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

In addition, the NIEM questionnaire differentiates between the various sub-groups of beneficiaries of international protection. This allows for a fine-grained analysis and comparison of the protections and integration framework in place for recognised refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, resettled refugees, persons under temporary protection, and persons under humanitarian protection.

For a score to be assigned (to an indicator) and eventually aggregated (for a “step”, a dimension, overall results), simple averages are used. For instance, if a country provides favourable provisions to recognised refugees (score: 100),

but only in a limited way to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection (score: 50), the overall score for that indicator is 75. For aggregated scores per “step” within a dimension, the indicator scores are averaged together. The total score for a country in a certain dimension is the average of the scored “steps” included in the dimension. The overall country score is the average of the country’s total scores in all dimensions. The scoring of indicators is presented as part of the analysis of results in Part II and Part III of this report.

Data gathering involves practitioner interviews in the government and civil society realms, desk research and analysis. Expert focus groups and surveys are used to gain additional insights. After validation and verification on the national level, the data are submitted and processed by NIEM’s transnational research partner. Data are screened from a comparative point of view and further validated in clarification loops with the national researchers before scoring and comparative analysis.

## **ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES**

For the first time since the start of the NIEM research, the 2021 monitoring includes a comparative assessment of the outcome indicators included in the instrument. Researchers across the involved countries made a special effort to collect and validate data of overall 12 indicators in eight dimensions which refer to the situation and living conditions of BIPs in the legal and policy context under which their integration takes place. Results aim to indicate whether the share of BIPs affected concerns either few (i.e., 0-20%), some (21-40%), around half (41-60%), most (61-80%) or nearly all (81-100%). In addition, the analysis draws on open questions on what the most frequent problems for BIPs are in each of the eight dimensions. While in previous NIEM editions such results were widely used in national reports, the focus of Evaluation 2 on outcomes led to comprehensive data on whether governments actually achieve integration goals. They are presented in textboxes in the chapters on the related dimensions in Part II of this report.

### **METHODOLOGICAL NOTE**

NIEM researchers used both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather and provide data on the outcome indicators. Qualitative data sources included semi-structured interviews and focus groups with experts and practitioners working with BIPs (such as teachers, lawyers and social workers), focus groups with recognised refugees and BSPs, as well as peer discussions in the framework of NIEM national coalition meetings. Desk research on policy and legal documents, academic articles, research reports as well as consultations based on online queries sent to public and official authorities also contributed to the qualitative research. Quantitative data sources comprised surveys among BIPs, surveys with stakeholders working with BIPs, and statistical data published by relevant governmental

authorities. In Hungary, Menedék compiled a sample from its client data base.

Samples are varied in terms of gender, education level, employment status, countries of origin and family situation. The participants were approached through various channels including local NGOs that work with the target group, reception facilities, personal contacts, UNHCR, cultural mediators, social media platforms and data bases of organisations. Participation was voluntary and no compensation was provided. Interpretation was provided during most of the interviews and focus groups.

The biggest challenge in the field work was reported to be the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of interest in participating in such studies. For example, many reception facilities were facing problems in meeting peoples' basic needs and, thus, they were less available for the research. Due to pandemic-related restrictions, it was, across the involved countries, more complicated to arrange in-person meetings. Online interviews turned out to be less productive than in-person interviews, mainly due to issues of trust. Furthermore, some country-specific challenges had to be addressed by researchers, such as small numbers of BIPs or that state institutions and NGOs in their work and in their programmes may not differentiate between holders of refugee status and subsidiary protection.



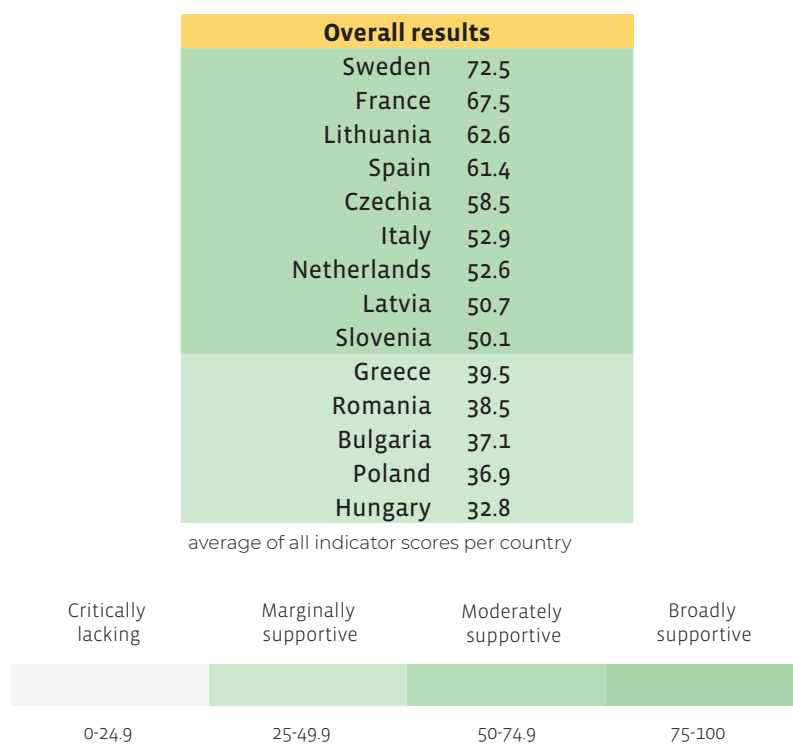


## 2. Key results: State of play 2021

### 2.1 The strong divergence persists

The quality of governments' efforts at refugee integration diverges strongly amongst EU countries. The 2021 NIEM comparative results confirm previous findings since 2017 of countries offering very different levels of support to beneficiaries of international protection. Across all the 12 dimensions measured, the average distance between the highest and the lowest-scoring country is 59.4 points on a 0-100 scale. The widest margin is found in language learning and social orientation with 92.7 points separating the countries on the top and the bottom end of results. Even in family reunification, the dimension with the smallest spread, 37.8 points lie between the highest and the lowest-scoring country.

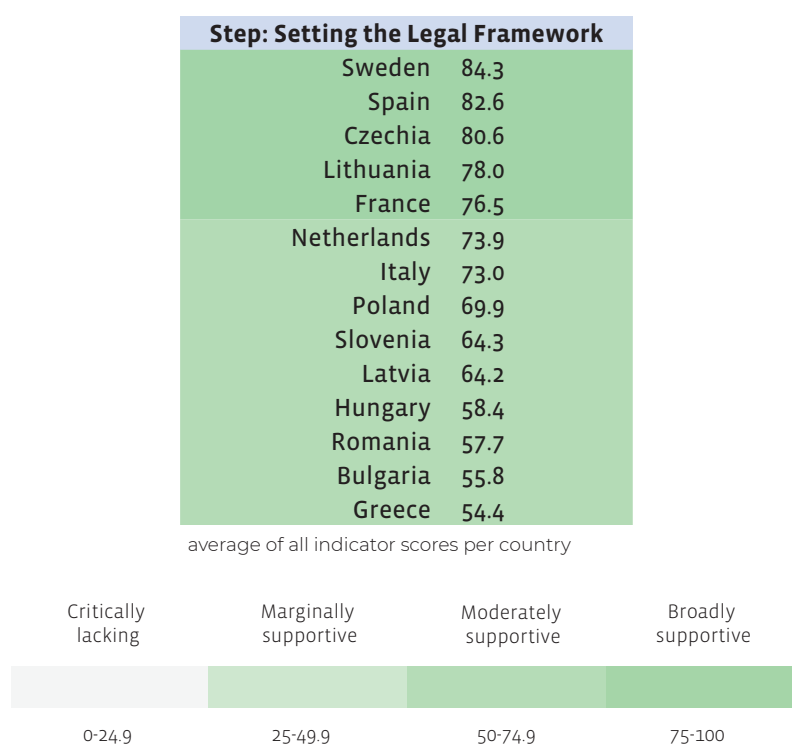
This pattern holds true in all three assessed facets of comprehensive refugee integration, concerning the legal framework, policies which actively support integration and the collaborative implementation of policies. In an overall aggregation of these distinct types of indicators, the wide spread of results among the 14 countries becomes visible as well. One should note that this overall ranking still does not additionally measure public budgets spent on refugee integration, data availability, evaluation and integration outcomes – indicators foreseen in the NIEM instrument, but which cannot be assessed comparatively due to persisting data gaps. Nevertheless, it sheds a sharp light on the achievements and the deficiencies of government responses to the refugee integration challenge in Europe.



While the overall results suggest that all 14 countries have either moderately supportive or marginally supportive integration frameworks, a differentiated depiction of aggregated results reveals a wider variation. Throughout the NIEM comparative report, results are presented in relation to the concrete steps policymakers need to take in order to establish a framework that is in line with the standards required by international and EU law.

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

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

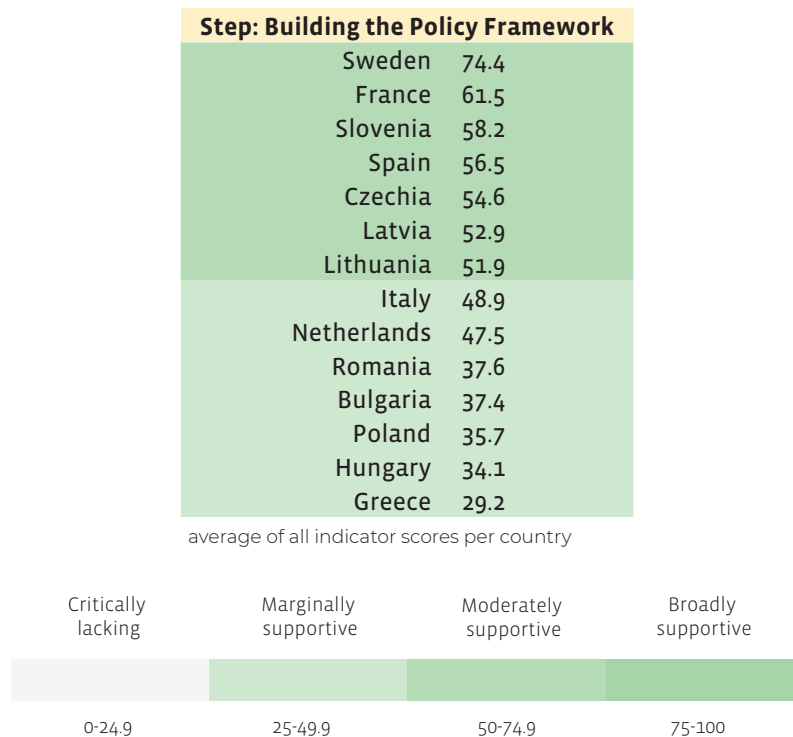


In this stepstone towards comprehensive integration, related to legal provisions that foster integration of recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, countries generally achieve their best results. Five countries score broadly supportive results, and all the other countries fall within the range of moderately supportive conditions. On the one hand, these rather positive results reflect the common EU asylum legislation with its binding rules for residency, family reunification and equal access to key rights such as education, employment, health or social security. On the other hand, the still significant differences among country results beg the question of proper implementation

of the common legal framework and whether current EU legal obligations are sufficient to ensure harmonised standards across member states.

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

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

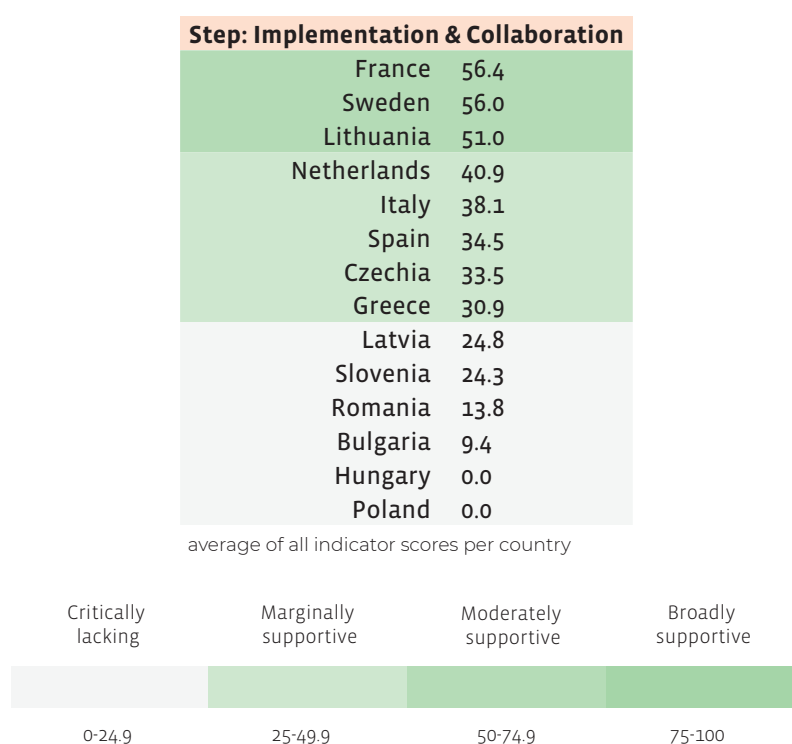


The results related to policies supportive of integration reveal to what extent governments go beyond the passive implementation of an appropriate legal framework and towards the active assistance of persons under international protection in the process of settling in and achieving long-term inclusion and well-being. To ensure equal opportunities, targeted policies and services, where needed, as well as barrier-free access to basic public services are at the core of a comprehensive approach to integration. While none of the NIEM countries is doing better overall than providing moderately supportive conditions, half of the 14 countries make do with a policy framework that is only marginally supportive.

**Step: Implementation & Collaboration:** This element of a comprehensive approach to the integration of BIPs refers to the efforts towards developing,

coordinating and implementing an all-of-government and all-of-society response. It implies the existence of an overall strategy, cooperation within government and with social actors, the fostering of participation and the recognition that integration is also a challenge for the receiving society. Across the various dimensions, the step includes indicators on

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



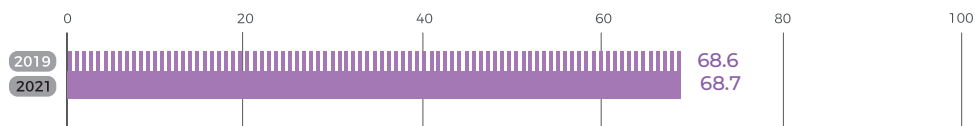
In a sense, looking at the indicators subsumed under the heading of implementation and collaboration is most revealing. Put simply, they lay bare whether a government is serious about comprehensive integration: with long-term commitments, lasting adaptation of mainstream policies to respond to the needs of BIPs, true collaboration across levels of government and with civil society, enabling of participation, and investments in the capacity of the receiving society to accommodate refugee immigration. In that respect, only three countries at least pass the half-way score and can be considered to provide moderately supportive conditions. Six countries are even seen to critically lack provisions under this stepstone.

## 2.2 From 2019 to 2021: Stagnant overall development and patterns of incremental change

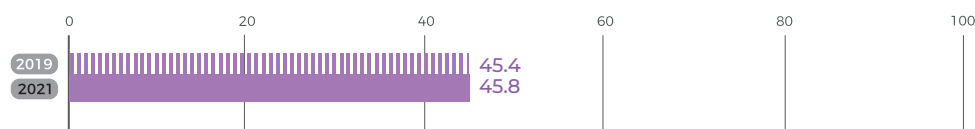
Little has changed in the refugee integration frameworks of the 14 countries in the 2019 to 2021 period. In a globally very static picture, changes came incrementally and, while somewhat more pronounced in some dimensions, did not result in any significant overall positive development. As a general pattern across the countries, minor advancements were offset by minor backslidings. These results, however, must be seen in the context of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. As chapter 3 will show, the health, economic and social crises had major negative effects on refugee integration which are not fully captured by NIEM's indicators that focus on the legal, policy and implementation frameworks in place.

### Overall change 2019 to 2021

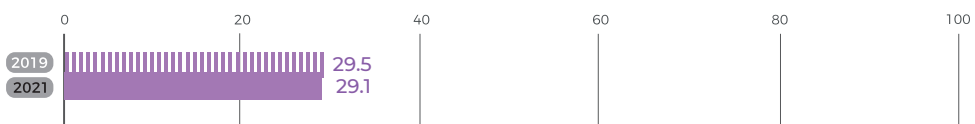
Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Step: Building the Policy Framework



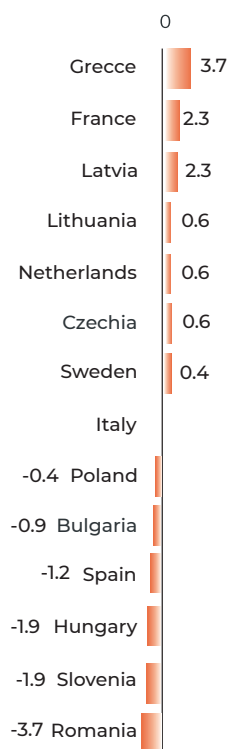
Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step (excluding impact of reception). Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

Looking at overall averages of the scores which the 14 countries achieve in the three assessed stepstones towards comprehensive refugee integration in 2019 and 2021, the dynamic is miniscule and amounts to stagnation. This stands in marked difference to the results of NIEM Evaluation 1, which for the 2017 to 2019 period identified at least slight advancement in the step related to policies and somewhat stronger improvement in the step related to implementation and collaboration. As far as the NIEM-14 can be seen as a representative sample of EU member states, one could say that half a decade after the arrivals of 2015/16, the process of improving the patchy and often deficient conditions for refugee integration in the EU has come to a standstill.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

None of the 14 countries has seen a development, positively or negatively, that would result in an overall change of more than four scoring points. If at all, Greece, France and Latvia stand out as achieving some progress, and Hungary, Romania and Slovenia as losing ground between 2019 and 2021. In contrast, the previous 2017 to 2019 evaluation period saw France, Latvia and Lithuania making significant gains of more than ten scoring points each due to reforms leading to substantial improvements. As of 2021, however, striving for better integration support for beneficiaries of international protection had evidently become less of a priority for governments.

Another way of assessing the dynamic of change in the 2019 to 2021 period is to look at instances of meaningful change. We do so by analysing in how many cases a country reported either a positive or a negative development resulting in a scoring change of more than two points at the level of aggregated dimensions and for each of the three assessed step-stones towards a comprehensive integration framework.

	Countries with negative changes	Countries with positive changes
Mainstreaming	BG HU RO	GR
Residency	CZ GR HU LV ES	
Family reunification		GR LV NL SE
Citizenship		BG GR LV LT SE
Housing	CZ PL SL ES	GR RO
Employment	ES	FR GR LV
Vocational training	PL SL	RO
Health	PL	CZ FR RO
Social security	BG GR RO SL	FR LV PL
Education	SL	LV RO
Language learning & social orientation	LV SL	CZ GR NL SL
Building bridges	HU PL RO	BG CZ FR LV PL

referring to developments resulting in a change of more than 2 points

In seven of the twelve dimensions, there are more countries which saw positive developments in the 2019 to 2021 period than countries with negative changes. In the dimensions of mainstreaming, residency, housing, vocational training and social security, however, countries which saw negative developments outnumber those with positive changes. Noteworthy is the dynamic in the three dimensions related to legal integration, where in residency, five countries are found with negative changes, while no country recorded a positive development. In family reunification and citizenship, however, there is a reverse trend, with four and, respectively, five countries recording positive changes versus no country seeing a negative development in either dimension. Overall, positive developments predominate, with 36 instances of a country recording positive change in one of the dimensions in one of the three steps (involving 11 countries), versus 28 instances of a country recording negative change (involving 9 countries). The countries with no positive developments at all are Hungary, Italy and Spain; the countries seeing no negative developments are France, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands and Sweden.

Geographical patterns also emerge. Of the overall 36 instances in which a country recorded a positive change in one of the dimensions, in 19 cases this affected one of the eight NIEM countries in East Central and South-Eastern Europe which acceded to the EU in 2004 or later. Regarding instances of negative



developments, 22 out of 28 cases affected one of these countries, meaning this group is overrepresented in the overall dynamic of change and among negative developments in particular. When looking at countries which were most exposed to arrivals along the main migration routes to the EU (western and central Mediterranean, Balkan/eastern Mediterranean) in the 2019 to 2021 reporting period – namely, Spain, Italy, Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Slovenia – negative instances of change clearly dominate with 20 cases, as opposed to 14 instances of improvement. It must be noted, however, that Italy is the only country among the NIEM-14 which showed a completely stable framework in the 2019 to 2021 period, with neither a case of positive nor negative development. Largely stable are also the refugee integration frameworks of France, the Netherlands and Sweden, states that are traditional destination countries but are less exposed to arrivals in the EU. In this group, ten instances of improvement go along with no cases of negative development.

Number of countries seeing negative change		Number of countries seeing positive change	
Residency	5	Citizenship	5
Housing	4	Building bridges	5
Social security	4	Family reunification	4
Building bridges	3	Language learning & social orientation	4
Mainstreaming	3	Employment	3
Vocational training	2	Health	3
Language learning & social orientation	2	Social security	3
Employment	1	Housing	2
Health	1	Education	2
Education	1	Mainstreaming	1
Family reunification	0	Vocational training	1
Citizenship	0	Residency	0

ranked per dimension

Given the overall very static situation, it is also worth exploring in which dimensions a dynamic of change prevails. The areas with the highest numbers of countries that have seen some sort of change (positive or negative) are social security and building bridges (seven countries each), followed by housing (six countries). As opposed to this, the least dynamic dimensions with the lowest numbers of countries that have seen some sort of (positive or negative) developments are vocational training and education (three countries each).

The following overview shows in which dimensions the integration framework for beneficiaries of international protection saw progress or slipped back for each of the 14 countries, and to which of the stepstones towards comprehensive refugee integration these changes related (taking into account all developments that resulted in a change of more than two scoring points). Part II of this report provides detailed insights into these developments along all dimensions, including the precise change of scores for each country.

## Bulgaria

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Social security	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>	Citizenship	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
Mainstreaming	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	Building bridges	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>

## Czechia

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Residency	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Language learning & social orientation	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Housing	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	Building bridges	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Health	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>

## France

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
----		Employment	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Health	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Social security	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Social security	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>
		Building bridges	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>

## Greece

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Residency	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>	Mainstreaming	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>
Social security	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>	Family reunification	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
Social security	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	Citizenship	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Housing	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Employment	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Employment	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>
		Language learning & social orientation	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>

## Hungary

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Mainstreaming	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	----	
Residency	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		
Building bridges	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		

## Italy

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
----		----	

## Latvia

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Residency	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Family reunification	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Language learning & social orientation	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Citizenship	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Employment	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Social security	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Education	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Building bridges	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>

## Lithuania

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
----		Citizenship	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>

## Netherlands

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
----		Family reunification	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Family reunification	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Language learning & social orientation	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>

## Poland

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Housing	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Social security	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Vocational training	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Building bridges	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Health	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>		
Building bridges	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>		

## Romania

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Building bridges	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Housing	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Mainstreaming	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	Vocational training	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Social security	<i>Implementation &amp; collaboration</i>	Health	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
		Education	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>

## Slovenia

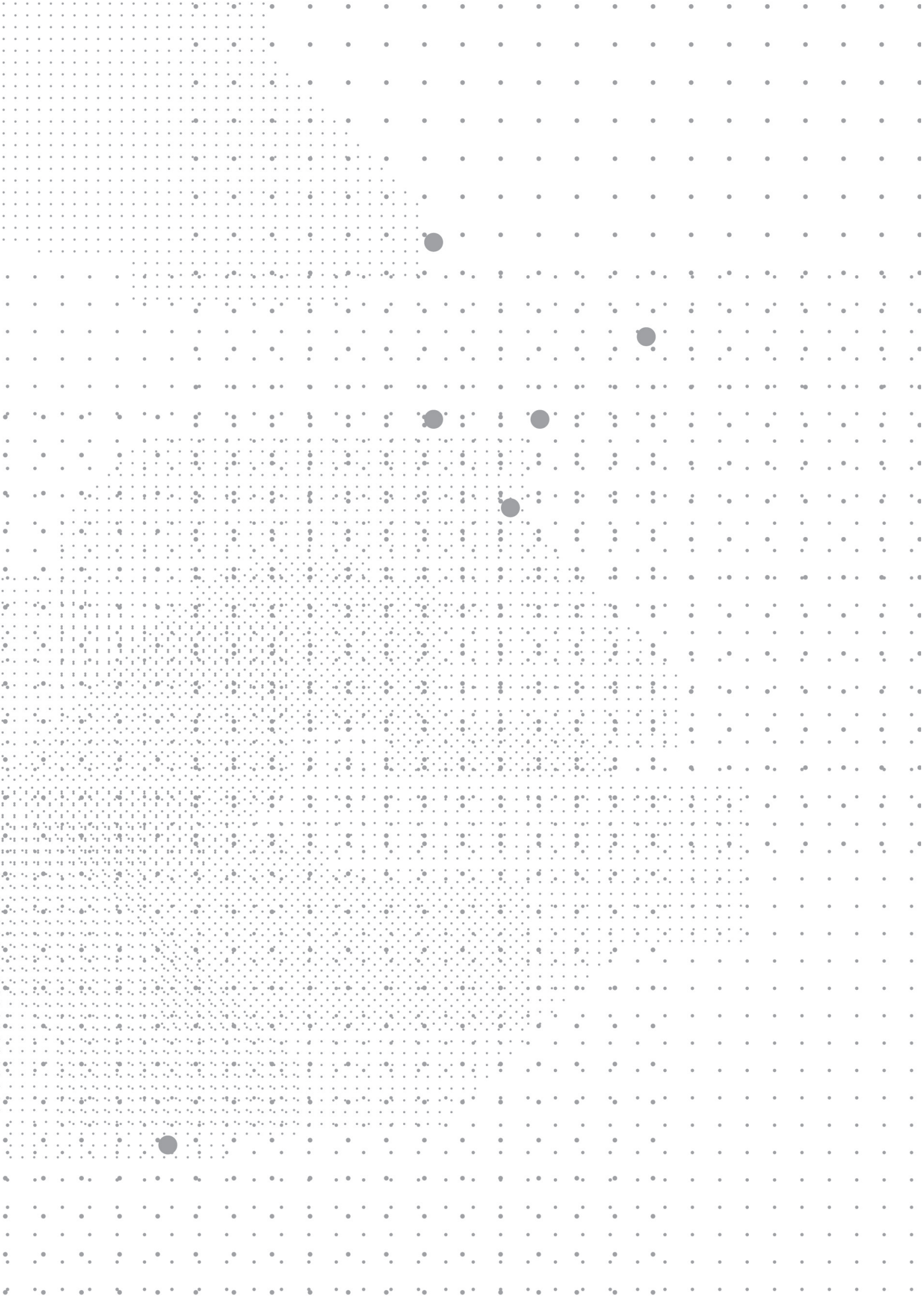
Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Housing	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	Language learning & social orientation	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>
Vocational training	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		
Social security	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>		
Social security	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		
Education	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		
Language learning & social orientation	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>		

## Spain

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
Residency	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>	-----	
Housing	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>		
Employment	<i>Building the Policy Framework</i>		

## Sweden

Dimensions with negative change & related stepstones		Dimensions with positive change & related stepstones	
-----		Family reunification	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>
		Citizenship	<i>Setting the Legal Framework</i>



## 3. The impact of COVID-19: the big setback

There is overwhelming evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic, breaking out in spring 2020, has had a disproportionately strong impact on migrants and refugees. Living highly insecure lives on the fringes of society, the vulnerabilities of refugees have been further exacerbated by pandemic measures and restrictions. The pandemic has also highlighted existing inequalities in access to basic services for refugees. Although legal, policy and implementation/collaboration indicators in this research only in few cases directly reflect the impact of the pandemic on refugee integration, negative impacts of COVID-19 on different integration areas have been observed in this evaluation round of NIEM. Overall, countries that are doing well in refugee integration in general seem to manage the adverse effects of the pandemic more efficiently, while other countries have reported facing bigger challenges in responding to the needs of refugees during the crisis. This section contextualises the overall findings presented in this report and illustrates how countries reacted to the stress test that the pandemic has been for their refugee integration frameworks.

### 3.1. Access to protection and legal integration

Official statistics across the countries show that in 2020 the number of asylum seekers has dropped significantly due to border closures and transport limitations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Asylum procedures were heavily affected, with quarantine and test-related barriers to accessing reception systems, delays and widespread suspension of ongoing procedures, as reported from Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Poland and Romania. Material reception conditions, including accommodation, had to be extended even for those who would no longer be entitled, as orderly transition to an integration trajectory for persons who have received protection status was not possible, such as in Italy and Latvia. Resettlement schemes were suspended also in Sweden, a country in which otherwise the reception system was less negatively impacted than in other countries. In Latvia as well, asylum requests continued to be accepted, and all the social services were provided either online or in adjusted conditions after the government declared a state of emergency in March 2020. In that respect, the Latvian situation resembled those in Czechia, France and the Netherlands.

Hungary, on the other hand, was still detaining asylum applicants in transit zones when the state of emergency was introduced in March 2020. Closed in May 2020 following the decision of the CJEU classifying the placing of asylum seekers in such zones as unlawful detention, admittance was already very sporadic between January and March 2020, and the government decided to suspend the transit zones completely in March 2020. Thus, while there were asylum seekers in the zones until May 2020, there were no new arrivals during the state of emergency.

## Residency and citizenship

The majority of the countries extended the validity of residence permits which expired during lockdowns. However, in general, significant delays were reported in administrative units where resident permit applications, renewals and naturalisations are issued. For example, in Slovenia, NGOs reported delays and difficult access to administrative services. Before the pandemic, NGOs would have accompanied BIPs to in-person appointments if they needed support. In addition, some potential applicants for naturalisation faced obstacles in fulfilling the requirements due to COVID-19 measures (e.g., job losses affecting continuous financial means, suspension of language courses). In Sweden, on the other hand, the pandemic did not have any impact on residency-related issues due to the absence of lockdowns.

## Family Reunification

Family reunification has been severely affected by COVID-19 as there was a de-facto freeze of procedures and visas and longer administrative procedures in most of the countries. The lack of information on when and how the situation would change increased psychological pressure for many BIPs. In France, even after most of the embassies and consulates that were closed during the first lockdown in 2020 had reopened, access to the territory was limited to certain motives not including family reunification. This decision was suspended by order of the French Council of State in January 2021, which considered that it represented a serious violation to the right to family life. Sweden, on the other hand, continued to issue residency permits abroad and allowed those with a valid permit to enter the country.

## 3.2. Mainstreaming and responses across integration policy areas

### Mainstreaming

The pandemic highlighted the importance of mainstreaming by further revealing the gap between planning and implementing in practice the various dimensions of a refugee integration framework. In some countries, adoption of new strategies was delayed during the pandemic, which hampered mainstreaming of integration policies. For example, while mainstreaming has been considered a key issue in the Latvian integration policy, even the ongoing pandemic was not considered reason enough to call for a meeting to coordinate solutions to various problems which at the time depended on the capacity of NGOs to deal with them. Eventually, the urgency of better coordination during the pandemic did cause the related parliamentary commission to call on the Ministry of Welfare to convene such a meeting as soon as possible. While this ultimately did not happen, it nevertheless laid the ground for a discussion on other solutions and scenarios for coordinating policy.



## Housing

Overall, housing issues – difficult access, discrimination, high costs, insufficient housing support - were exacerbated for BIPs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Often living in overcrowded accommodation, they were more exposed to the risk of infection. Taking into account that in many cases BIPs struggle financially – facing high rents and deposits often significantly exceeding their financial capacity – the economic fallout of the pandemic generally worsened the housing situation and increased the risk of homelessness. As a countermeasure, France raised its mainstream emergency accommodation capacities to reduce the number of homeless persons and many BIPs living in camps or on the streets benefited from this measure. In Latvia, the inability to find appropriate and affordable housing has sometimes meant that people with a refugee or subsidiary status were forced to stay in an asylum seeker centre, though technically this is not legal. This has proven to be risky, as an outbreak in the centre in April 2021 forced some families to quarantine. On a larger scale, overcrowding in the camps of Greece – especially in the so-called hot spots – posed severe health risks.

## Employment, vocational training and social security

The pandemic has had a great impact on the labour market, especially in sectors in which BIPs often find employment (e.g., catering, hospitality, construction, manufacturing). For example, in Romania, many BIPs have reported that they were among the first to lose their jobs when companies were affected by the pandemic. Pandemic-related measures have made access to vocational training and employment-related education even harder for BIPs across countries, with complete or partial suspension of vocational training offers (or failure to realise online formats) reported from Bulgaria, Czechia, France and Romania. In Greece, COVID-19 delayed any advances in the implementation of the vocational education plan. Online training, widely replacing face-to-face programmes, created disadvantages for BIPs who did not have access to digital devices. Job centres in Poland, according to BIPs, limited their offer due to the restrictions. In Slovenia, the two specialists at the employment service for assisting BIPs were seconded to work on other cases and topics. Access to state social support, including in cases of job loss, was reported to be difficult and insufficient in Bulgaria, Poland and Slovenia. Contrary to that, Sweden provides information in different languages and all county administrative boards are commissioned by the state to work towards spreading information through different channels. Italy, to ameliorate the labour market situation and in order to ensure adequate levels of individual and collective health protection, introduced the regularisation of foreign workers in specific sectors. The procedure was opened to asylum seekers, allowing to change their status into a work permit.

## Health

With its severe threats to health, limitations on the access to certain healthcare services, restrictions regarding the number of patients, etc., the COVID-19



pandemic has affected BIPs as much as the general population. But across countries, numerous findings suggest that migrants were hit harder, in terms of confirmed cases and the number of people treated in intensive care and fatalities. Informing BIPs about measures in place, sanitary guidelines and vaccination campaigns emerged as a major challenge. Some countries adopted extra measures to inform migrants and BIPs – for example, Italy created a multilingual portal which contains rules and regulations about COVID-19. However, some countries were late in providing relevant up-to-date information in different languages about the pandemic and vaccination campaign, which increased the health risks among BIPs. For example, in Hungary, Bulgaria and, to some extent, in Latvia, NGOs had to collect and provide information on COVID-19 and the measures adopted by the government in English and other languages. On the positive side, when the COVID-19 vaccination schemes got under way, asylum seekers and BIPs were placed on equal footing as citizens throughout the 14 countries.

## **Education**

The impact of COVID-19 in the area of education has been considerable. The major challenges BIPs had to face were securing the equipment needed to attend distance education when classes moved online in 2020, the lack of adequate technical skills and ICT competence of parents to help their children using online communication tools, and the language barrier, which often meant that parents were unable to help their children with the remote curriculum. As a good practice, the state integration programme in Czechia allowed its funds to be used for needed equipment, such as notebooks and web cameras. In Poland, educational materials dedicated to foreign students were developed and made freely available on an integrated educational platform in the context of remote teaching. Amidst many problems in Latvia, a project led by the Red Cross saw a teacher working with 17 children both inside and outside an asylum seeker centre, supporting their individual needs in the distant learning situation. The project has been overwhelmingly deemed a success.

## **Language learning and social orientation**

The majority of the countries suspended language and social learning programmes during lockdowns and have later converted them to online programmes, which posed severe challenges to the integration process. In France, a real decline in learning has been observed. As a consequence, BIPs' language skills regressed rapidly within a few months. During the second lockdown, French teaching was organised in semi-staffed rotational classes which involved slower progress, with consequences for further steps in the integration process (access to vocational training, employment, housing, etc.). Assessments also showed that distance learning has been effective only with BIPs that already had an intermediate level of French and basic digital skills. Transition to online tools was sweeping across the NIEM countries. In Sweden, the transition was somewhat less difficult, as it already had many digitalised learning tools prior to the pandemic. In

Hungary (where publicly funded language and social orientation courses are non-existent), NGOs providing free language courses pointed out that online courses also had positive effects. More people volunteered to provide online Hungarian language teaching, and BIPs who were not able to participate in face-to-face classes joined in spite of the harsher living conditions under which BIPs had even less motivation or capacity to learn Hungarian. Similarly, in Czechia, with regard to social orientation, it has been reported that moving online has been beneficial for the organisation of seminars. The fact that people from all over the country could attend the courses easily was seen as positive.

### **(Re-)Building Bridges**

The pandemic and the lockdowns meant a loss of social connection and interactions between members of the receiving society and refugees, increasing their isolation. The majority of the countries suspended most of the programmes fostering the participation of BIPs in civic activities and the engagement of members of the receiving society during lockdowns. In France, however, the Volont'R programme (i.e., state-sponsored volunteering in civic services) was adapted so that young BIPs could carry on their missions by translating the COVID-19-related public and protective hygiene measures for other BIPs. In Latvia, although opportunities to engage with the local community were reduced, the singular success of the one-to-one mentorship programme in the integration system was further affirmed during the pandemic. The mentors were creative and inventive in their ways of providing assistance to BIPs, including distanced meetings and consultations. In Hungary, most of the NGOs and church organisations working with BIPs started online programmes to connect BIPs with each other and/or with the host society during the pandemic. In another pattern reported from NIEM countries, organisations run by people with refugee experience reacted to the pandemic in a very active way and consequently gained recognition in their local communities. A good example is the Women on the Road Foundation in Poland which started sewing protective masks for medics and elderly people living in and around Gdansk.



## **PART II**

Results in the NIEM  
integration dimensions

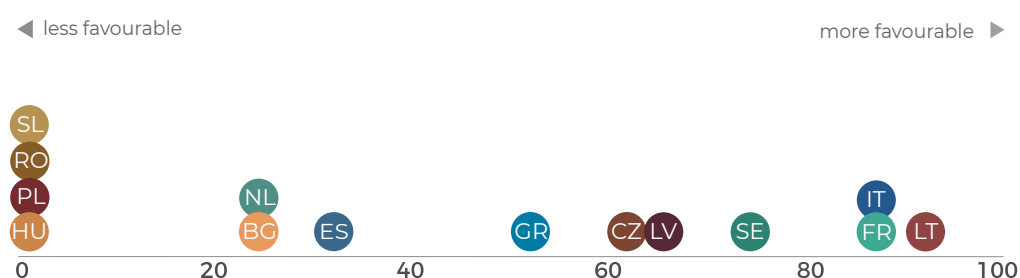


## 4. Mainstreaming

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

### 4.1. 2021 Results by country

#### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

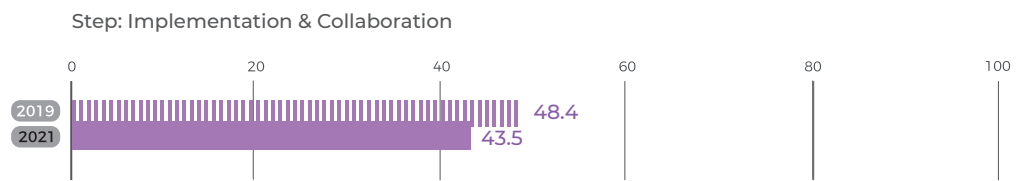
### 4.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

To address the specific integration needs of BIPs in a comprehensive way, governments require a national strategy to guide policies and actions implemented across all relevant policy fields. As of spring 2021, among the countries included in NIEM, Czechia, Italy, France, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania,<sup>1</sup> Spain and Sweden had such a national strategy for the integration of BIPs, while Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania had failed to renew their national strategies on refugee integration. The Netherlands, Slovenia<sup>2</sup> and Poland did not have a dedicated strategy for the integration of BIPs.

<sup>1</sup> In Lithuania, two legal acts have been adopted on integration: i) the Action Plan on Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society and ii) the Decree on State Support of the Procedure for the integration of foreigners granted asylum. These two acts are considered in this report as part of a national strategy for integration of BIPs.

<sup>2</sup> In 2019, Slovenia adopted a strategy in the field of migration. One chapter of this strategy focuses on integration but does not specifically address BIPs.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Greece**, a new National Strategy for Integration was published in July 2019 by the Greek Ministry of Migration focusing on the integration of third-country nationals, including BIPs. Among others, it aims to involve the local authorities and enhance their role in social integration policies. It also seeks

to raise public awareness for social inclusion and to better coordinate the activities of public and private actors towards the implementation of the common national strategy. In addition, the Ministry of Migration will annually evaluate the integration of third-country nationals based on quantitative and qualitative indicators. All ministries and local authorities will submit a report to monitor their integration policies and actions based on these indicators. A working group will then evaluate the policies and actions and prepare recommendations for improvements.

- ▶ In **France**, the 2018 “National Scheme for the reception and integration of refugees” and its multi-stakeholder implementation and evaluation process (cf. the progress reported in NIEM Evaluation 1) has been supplemented with a new “National Strategy for the reception of asylum seekers and integration of refugees (SNADAR)” for the 2021-2023 period, an action plan adopted in December 2020.

### Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, the prolonged discussion around a new National Strategy on Immigration (2020-2024) led to its delayed adoption for the 2021-2025 period in August 2021, after the reference period of this NIEM evaluation. The temporary lack of a national strategy did not necessarily affect the basic services offered to BIPs regulated by existing laws. However, it did have a negative impact on the cooperation between various bodies, leading to poor service provision in areas not covered by the General Inspectorate for Immigration, the main responsible institution. For example, the Ministry of Education delayed crucial measures to facilitate access to education.
- ▶ In **Bulgaria**, the previous National Strategy on Migration, Asylum and Integration for 2015–2020 used to include yearly action plans with specific measures for the integration of BIPs. However, the term “integration” is absent in the title of the new National Strategy on Migration of the Republic of Bulgaria 2021-2025, and the strategy lacks specific commitments for the integration of BIPs.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, the Migration Strategy for 2014-2020 expired and the government has not adopted any strategic policy document focusing on the integration of BIPs for the current period.

## 4.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

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



## In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

### In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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

CZ ES FR IT LT SE

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

FR IT SE

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

LV LT

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

### IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

#### A NEW INTEGRATION AGENCY AND COORDINATION MECHANISM

LV

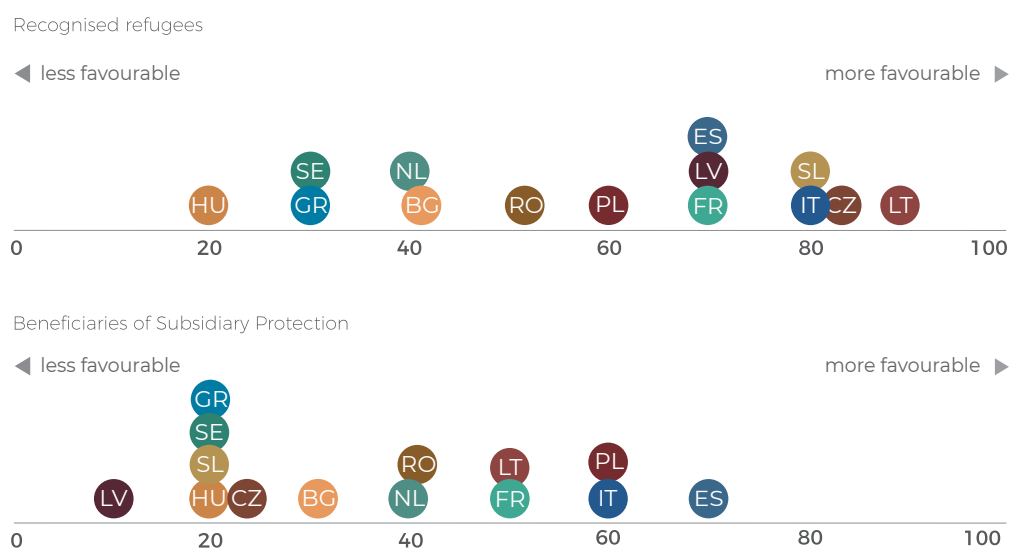
In **Latvia**, in December 2021, the Society Integration Fund (SIF) was established as a coordinating institution for the socioeconomic inclusion of BIPs. A “one stop shop” will be developed under the auspices of SIF in 2022 and will come into operation in 2023. The main objective of the agency is to coordinate different integration and social inclusion measures for BIPs in cooperation with all relevant institutions involved. The “one-stop-shop” will help offer coherent and qualitative services to BIPs, thus eliminating the problem of until now decentralised and fragmentary assistance to the target group. In effect since after this report’s cut-off date, this reform is not reflected in Latvia’s score as of 2021.

## 5. Residency

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

### 5.1. 2021 Results by country

#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

## Step: Building the Policy Framework

Recognised refugees

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Assessed indicators:

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

### 5.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

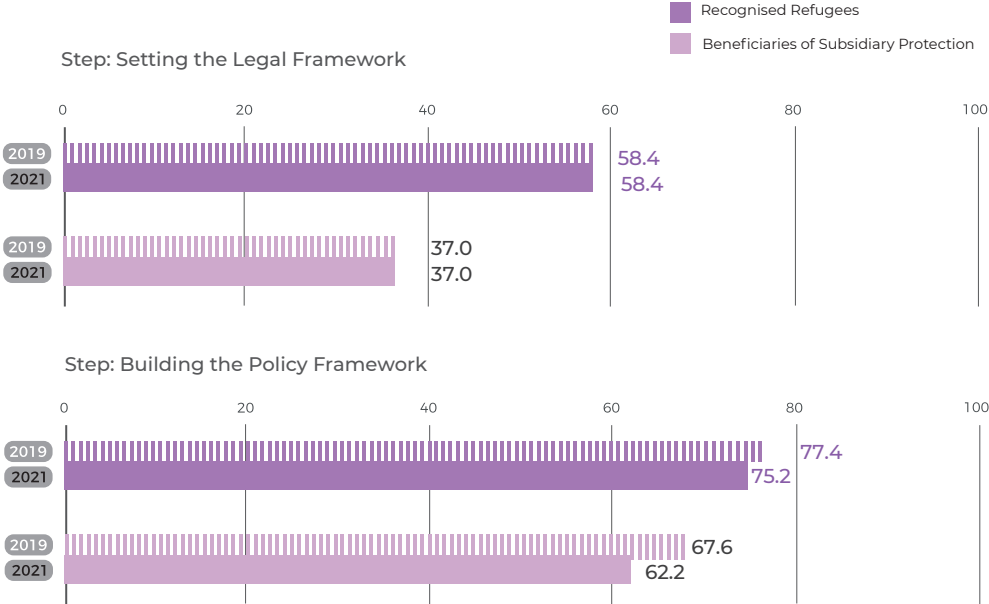
Across the 14 countries, the results related to the residency legal framework do not show major developments in the 2019 to 2021 period. With the exception of Greece, no changes in the legal provisions for BIPs occurred. In general, most of the countries have enacted rather restrictive rules for accessing residency rights, in particular for BSPs, who generally face more obstacles for obtaining longer-term residence permits. For instance, in several countries, the residence permit for recognised refugees is valid for five years, while for BSPs it lasts only three years or less.

The highest legal standards are found in Spain which ensures the same level of protection to recognised refugees and BSPs. Here, the residence permit lasts five years for both groups and it is renewed upon simple application. The best absolute scores on the residence indicators for recognised refugees have been obtained by Lithuania, Czechia, Slovenia and Italy, which, however, apply more restrictive provisions to BSPs.

Policy-related indicators in the residency dimension refer to administrative barriers to long-term/permanent residence and fees for residence procedures. No relevant improvements can be noted, and conditions deteriorated in Greece, Czechia and Spain. A favourable policy practice is found in Latvia, where if the first application for international protection is successful, beneficiaries are not required to pay any fee for the residence permit (a small fee applies for BSPs upon the renewal of their residence permit). In Lithuania, the procedure is also free of charge, but excessive administrative delays and waiting periods can pose a barrier for obtaining permanent/long-term residence for BSPs. Equal treatment

of recognised refugees and BSPs is ensured in the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden. Fees for residence procedures are relatively low in the Netherlands and Spain, and the Netherlands additionally does not report administrative barriers.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden, there are no fees but some administrative delays and waiting periods can sometimes slow down the procedure to permanent/long-term residence.

**Overall change 2019 to 2021**



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step. Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

<sup>5</sup> NIEM indicators related to fees are evaluated and scored against the monthly minimum social assistance level for single persons in a given country according to MISSOC data: [www.missoc.org/missoc-database](http://www.missoc.org/missoc-database). In the Netherlands, fees for obtaining long-term/permanent residence correspond to 18% of this benchmark. In Spain, the fees for applying for a residence permit are lower than 10% of this point of reference.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

### Negative developments




- ▶ In **Czechia**, there has been an increase of the fees for BSPs when applying for a residence permit.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, the permanent residence procedures slowed down drastically in 2020 due to the lockdown rules during the COVID pandemic. The immigration authority even requested foreigners not to apply for permanent residence during this period and several administrative requirements posed a barrier to applying for residency.
- ▶ In **Spain**, the required documentation is very hard to obtain and can represent a barrier for obtaining permanent or long-term residence for BIPs.
- ▶ In **Greece**, following the entry into force of new legislation in January 2020, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection no longer have the right to receive a three-year permit. They can only obtain a one-year residence permit, renewable for a period of two years.










### 5.3. Best practices in refugee integration

#### What EU and international law requires

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

#### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework	for recognised refugees	for BSPs
... provide, upon recognition, a residence permit valid for at least 5 years.		
... renew the residence permit automatically or make renewal not necessary.		—

<p>... count, when granting permanent/long-term residence, all time waiting for the asylum decision towards the resident requirement (if not granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition).</p>		
<p>... waive for BIPs the conditions for acquiring permanent/long-term residence which normally apply for third-country nationals. (economic resources, language knowledge, housing, integration, fees etc.; if not granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition)</p>		<p>—</p>
<p>... ensure facilitated conditions for groups of vulnerable BIPs applying for permanent/long-term residence, by waiving conditions or by granting permanent/long-term residence already upon recognition.</p>		
<p><b>In the Step: Building the Policy Framework</b></p>		
<p>... pose no administrative barriers to permanent/long-term residence with regard to required documentation, delays/waiting periods and discretionary decisions.</p>		
<p>... ask no fees to obtain a residence permit, renew the residence permit or become permanent/long-term resident which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary).</p>		

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## 6. Family reunification

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

### 6.1. 2021 Results by country

#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees

◀ less favourable

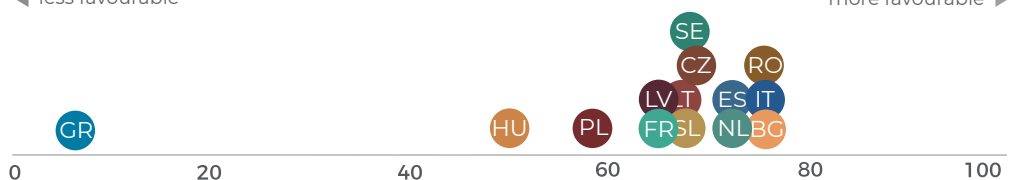
more favourable ▶



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



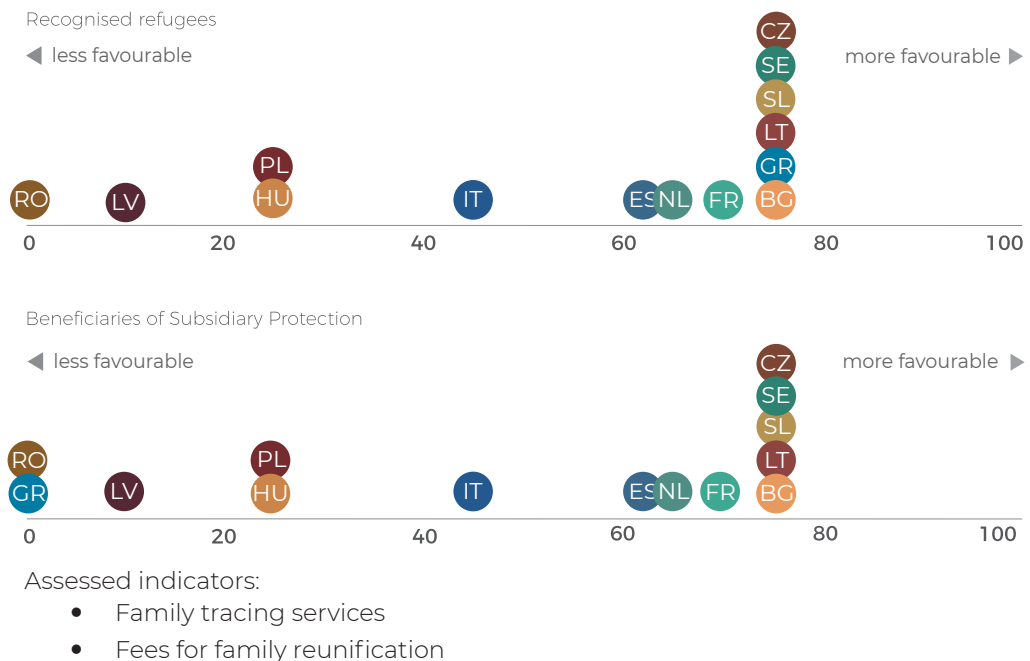
Assessed indicators:

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



- Status of family members
- Autonomous residence permits for family members
- Access to services for family members

### Step: Building the Policy Framework



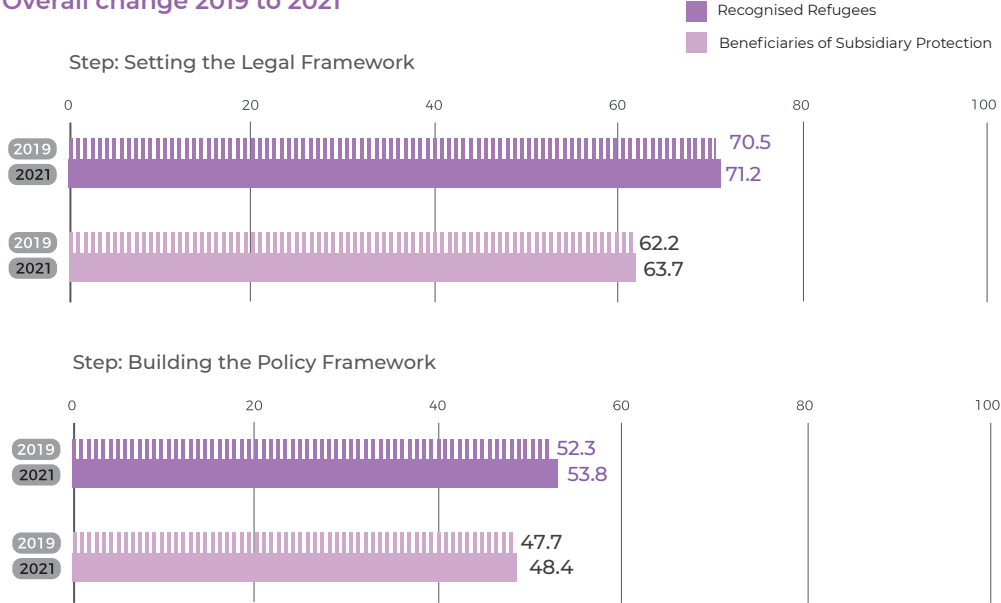
## 6.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

A number of countries saw changes in the legal framework concerning family reunification across the 14 reporting countries between 2019 and 2021. By and large, most of the national laws are in line with the EU Family Reunification Directive. However, restrictive provisions still affect vulnerable persons, as facilitated conditions are generally not provided and only minors are covered by some special provisions. Romania and Italy are the countries with the highest score on family reunification, as they provide legal provisions which are highly favourable for all BIPs without discriminating between recognised refugees and BSPs. In these countries, there is no minimum duration specified in the law for the beneficiaries of any form of protection to apply for family reunion. Moreover, there are no economic, housing, integration, language or health requirements to comply with, and there is no time limits for enjoying these facilitated conditions. Notably, Sweden has introduced more favourable conditions for BSPs to reunite with their family.

Policy-related indicators, related to fees and the availability of family tracing services, do not show any significant changes between 2019 and 2021 in most of the assessed countries. In most countries, these policies in practice still jeopardise the right to family reunion as enshrined in their legal frameworks. Only two countries refrain from asking for fees for family reunification. Sweden does not apply any fees for family members of BIPs. Similarly, in Lithuania, fees and

charges are not collected for the issuance and renewal of the residence permit to persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection and their family members.

**Overall change 2019 to 2021**



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step. Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

**Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country**



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Poland**, the economic resource requirement no longer applies to a foreigner who has been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection when the application for reuniting with a family member has been submitted within six months from the date of obtaining refugee status or subsidiary protection. After six months, the same requirements apply as for ordinary TCNs.
- ▶ In the **Netherlands**, the average amount of the fees for applying to family reunification has been slightly reduced, lowering the barriers for BIPs to access the procedure.
- ▶ In **Sweden**, a decision to extend the temporary migration law in place since 2016 for the July 2019 to July 2021 period brought an important improvement. The law now grants persons under subsidiary protection the right to family reunification immediately and without imposing any income requirements, largely on the same terms as for recognised refugees.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, the fees for family reunification have changed in favour of recognised refugees.

## 6.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires







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




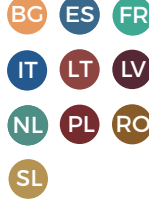










Among the various requirements, integration measures can only be applied for refugees and their family members once family reunification has been granted, meaning that, for example, family members cannot be required to take integration or language tests prior to their arrival. Specific attention should be given to refugees' individual circumstances to assess if they can be exempted from taking language or civic integration tests. This assessment should take into













account their age, education level, economic situation and health. The European Commission Guidelines on the Family Reunification Directive stipulate that the purpose of these measures is to verify the willingness of family members to integrate. A disproportionate level of integration measures is considered to be a barrier to this purpose. Language and integration courses should be offered in an accessible manner in several places, for free or for an affordable price, and be tailored to individual needs, taking into account, for example, the vulnerability of the refugees.

Under international law, the right to family life is secured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 16) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Art. 8), establishing a positive obligation on states to render this right effective. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child protects family unity and prescribes that a child cannot be separated from his or her parents against their will (Art. 9). The Convention requires States to deal with family reunification requests in a positive, humane and expeditious manner (Art. 10). The Geneva Convention underlines that family unity is an essential right of refugees and makes recommendations for respecting the principle of family unity (Final Act of the United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons).

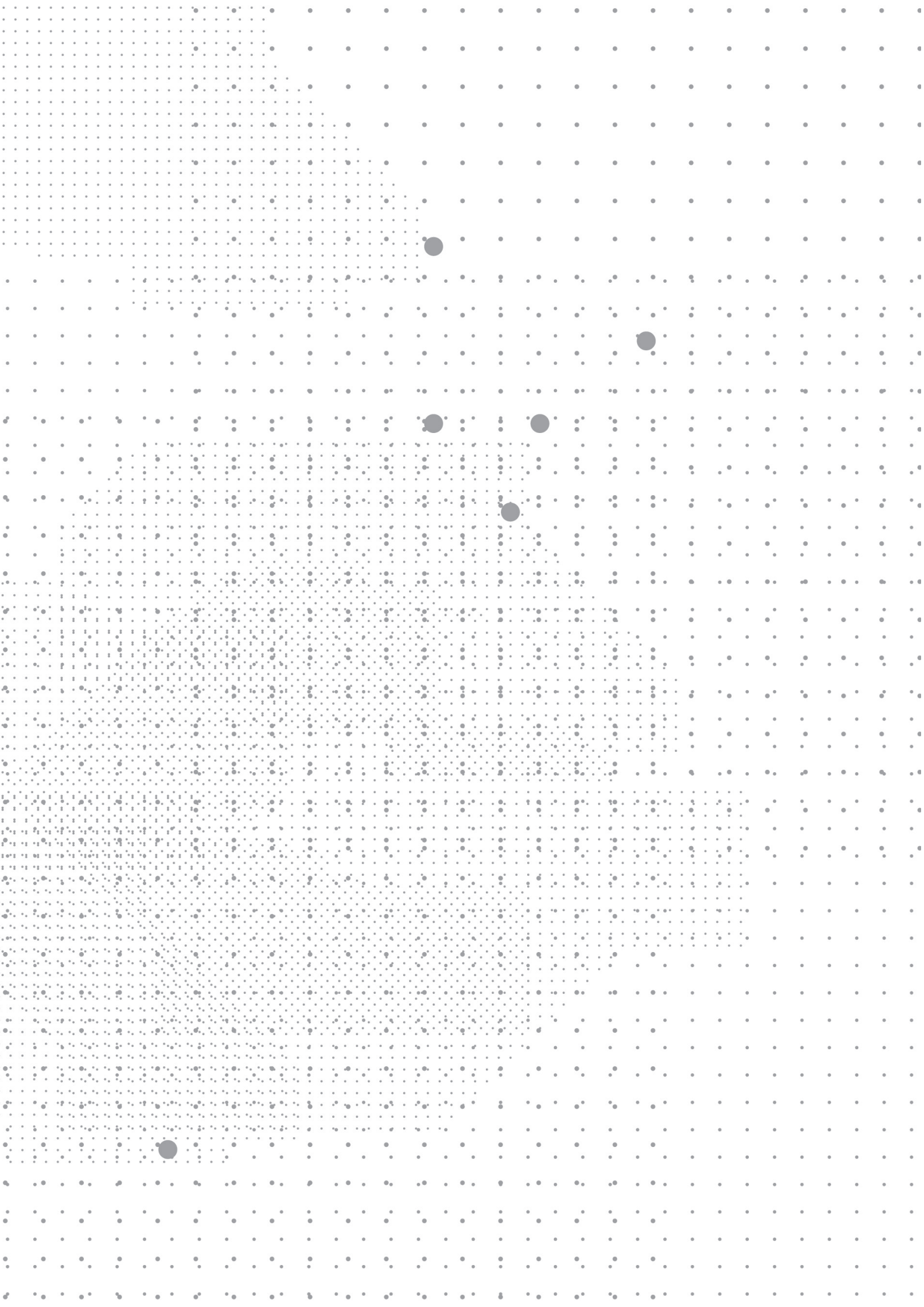
**In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...**

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework	for recognised refugees	for BSPs
... enshrine a broad definition of family unity for family reunification (minor and adult children, spouse/partner, parents or grandparents, other family members in justified circumstances).		
... enshrine a broad definition of family unity for family members who do not individually qualify for protection but for a derivative status.		
... not impose a residency requirement for family reunification.		

... not impose an economic resource requirement for family reunification.		
... not impose a housing requirement for family reunification.		
... not impose a health insurance requirement for family reunification.		
... not impose a language assessment requirement for family reunification.		
... not impose a requirement to comply with integration measures for family reunification.		
... not impose a time limit for facilitated requirements for family reunification.		
... provide for exemptions from the documentation requirement and alternative methods when documents are missing.		

... not impose DNA/age tests to verify family links.		
... provide for facilitated conditions for vulnerable persons applying for family reunification.	—	—
... entitle family members to the same legal status as their sponsor.		
... allow family members to wait less than 3 years to obtain a residence permit which is autonomous of their sponsor.		
... to provide family members with the same legal right as their sponsor to access services.		
<b>In the Step: Building the Policy Framework</b>		
... provide for government-sponsored family tracing services.		
... ask no fees to obtain family reunification which are higher than 20% of the minimum amount of monthly social assistance benefit (for a single beneficiary).		

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator



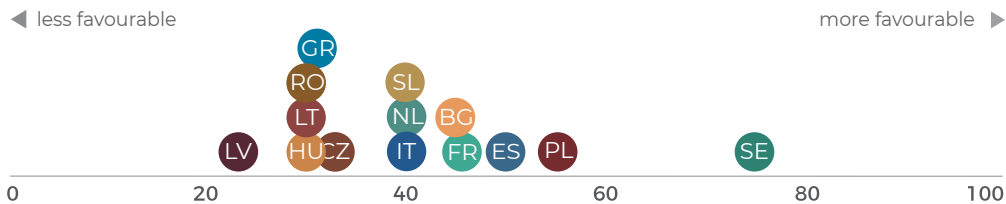
## 7. Citizenship

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

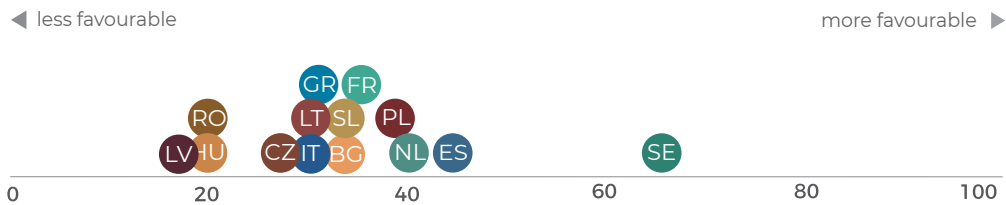
### 7.1. 2021 Results by country

#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

Recognised refugees



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection

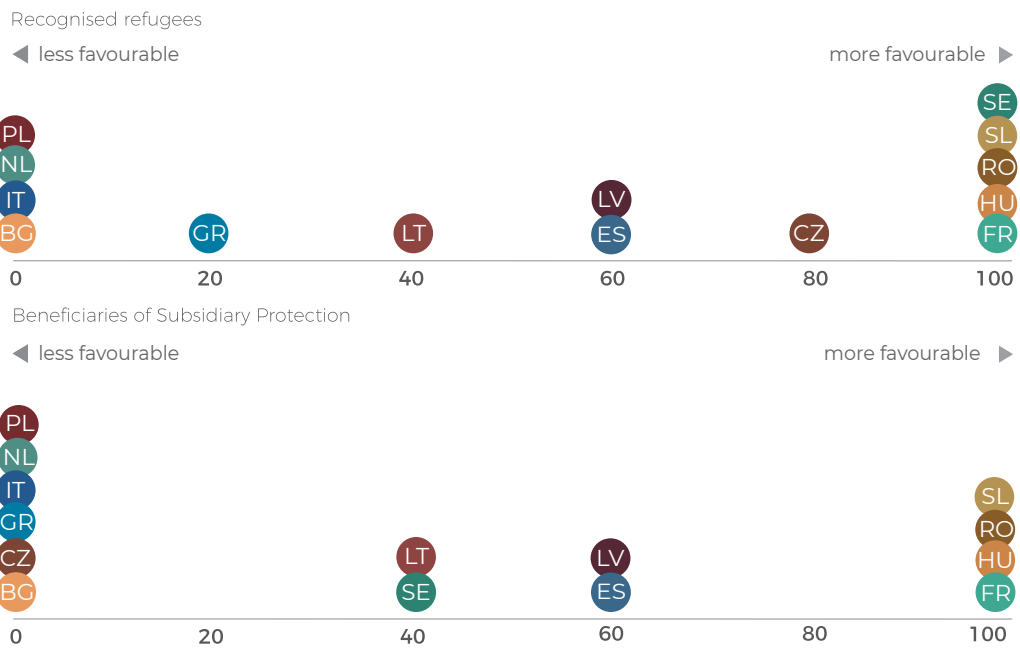


Assessed indicators

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



## Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicator:

- Fees for naturalisation

### 7.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Few changes affected integration laws concerning the naturalisation of BIPs between 2019 and 2021, with most developments being of minor nature. While there have been slight improvements in the naturalisation procedures in Sweden and Bulgaria, in Greece, access for BIPs to citizenship has become somewhat harder.

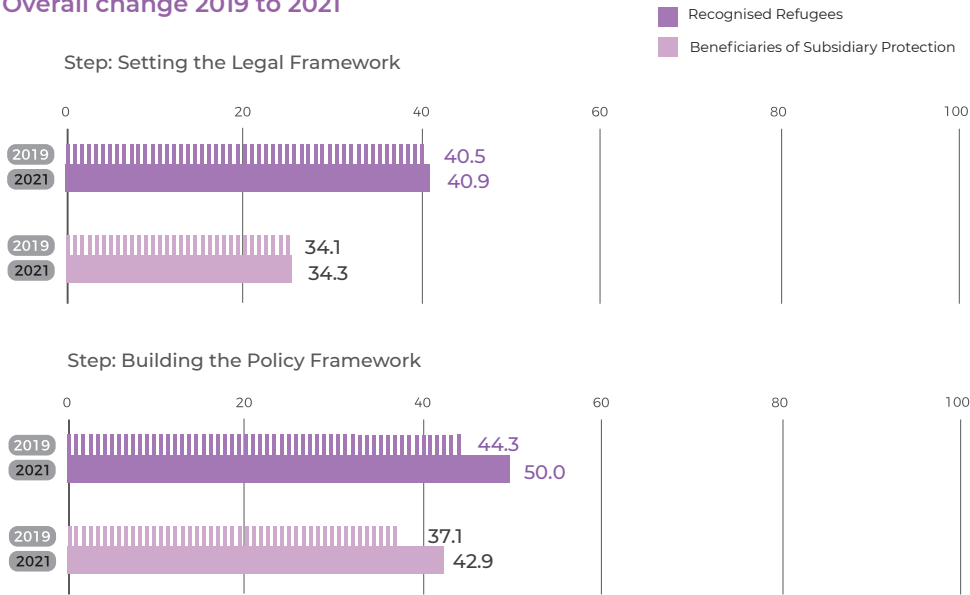
Overall, none of the countries' legal frameworks are advantageous when it comes to the acquisition of citizenship, with the only exception being Sweden which obtains a significantly higher score and which applies the highest legal standards to both recognised refugees and BSPs. Among others, the duration of residence required to obtain citizenship is reduced for recognised refugees compared to other third-country nationals and the legal stay while awaiting an asylum decision is also included in the timespan. For BIPs there are no economic, integration and language requirements to obtain citizenship, and facilitated conditions apply to vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors and stateless persons.

Across the assessed countries, in most cases less favourable provisions are in place for BSPs than for recognised refugees. For instance, more favourable residence requirements compared with the requirements for other third-country nationals are typically provided only for recognised refugees. It is common practice that recognised refugees receive a longer-term/permanent residence permit upon awarding their status, while persons under subsidiary protection are only eligible for temporary permits and can apply for a permanent residence

permit after five years of prolonged temporary residence in the country. This means that the time period for naturalisation for persons under subsidiary protection can be twice as long.

Fees for naturalisation are assessed as a policy-related indicator. As NIEM indicators on the affordability of fees are generally measured against the level of monthly minimum social assistance benefits, changes in these benefits can also influence NIEM scores. In the citizenship dimension, this led to visible improvements of the scores for Latvia and Lithuania, while the fees actually remained the same (Latvia) or even increased slightly (Lithuania).<sup>6</sup> In most of the countries, naturalisation fees can represent an obstacle for BIPs to obtain citizenship as it amounts to more than 50% of the monthly minimum social assistance benefit for a single person. Only in France, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia do the fees not pose an obstacle to apply for citizenship, with fees less than 20% of the benchmark used here.

**Overall change 2019 to 2021**



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step. Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

<sup>6</sup> In Latvia, the amount of fees has not changed (around 28 euros), but minimum social assistance benefits for a single person have increased from 53 to 109 euros per month in comparison with 2019. Lithuania slightly increased the fees for naturalisation (from 51 to 62 euros), but the level of benefits also went up from 122 to 175 euros; MISSOC data [www.missoc.org/missoc-database](http://www.missoc.org/missoc-database).

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

### Positive developments

- ▶ In **Sweden**, a new administrative law came into effect imposing a maximum length of time for the naturalisation procedure. In particular, the law sets out that “if a case that has been initiated by an individual party has not been decided in the first instance within six months at the latest, the party may request in writing that the authority shall decide the case. The authority shall, within four weeks from the date on which such a request was received, either decide the matter or reject the request in a special decision.”

### Negative developments

- ▶ In **Greece**, a new law in March 2020 has drastically increased the residence requirement to apply for citizenship to seven years, on the same grounds as for ordinary TCNs, despite the legal obligation under article 34 of the Geneva Convention 1951 to “facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees” and “in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings”. Before this amendment, refugees could apply for citizenship under the condition that, *inter alia*, they resided lawfully in Greece for a period of only three years.

### 7.3. Best practices in refugee integration

#### What EU and international law requires

The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (Art. 34) and the European Convention on Nationality (Art. 6.4 in conjunction with Art. 16) requires states to provide for special acquisition procedures or facilitated naturalisation for recognised refugees. In the EU, every country has the ultimate competence to establish the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality. Member States therefore retain full control over who can be recognised as a citizen. However, any person who holds the nationality of any EU country is automatically also an EU citizen, and EU citizenship is conferred directly on every EU citizen by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. EU citizenship is additional to and does not replace national citizenship. It also confers a number of additional rights and privileges. For instance, citizens of the Union have a primary and individual right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, subject to the limitations and conditions laid down in the Treaty and to the measures adopted to give it effect.

#### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework	for recognised refugees	for BSPs
... allow for naturalisation after three years of residence or earlier.	BG FR HU	
... count all years as a permanent/long-term resident, as a BIP as well as awaiting an asylum decision towards the residence period required for naturalisation.	FR ES NL RO SE SL PL	FR ES NL RO SE SL PL
... impose no economic resource requirement for naturalisation.	ES NL PL SE	ES NL SE
... impose no language assessment for naturalisation.	SE	SE
... impose no integration/citizenship assessment requirement for naturalisation.	BG IT LT PL SE SL	BG IT LT PL SE SL
... reduce the criminal record requirement for naturalisation.	FR PL	FR PL
... provide for exemptions from documentation requirements and for alternative methods where documents are not available.	ES GR SE	ES GR SE

... waive conditions for vulnerable persons applying for naturalisation (UAMs, the elderly, victims of violence and trauma, the disabled).	LT	LT
... provide for the automatic naturalisation of the second generation.	IT SE	IT SE
... commit by law to treat applications for naturalisation as soon as possible, prioritising BIPs.	—	—
<b>In the Step: Building the Policy Framework</b>		
... exempt BIPs from naturalisation fees or provide for a fee that amounts to less than 20% of the monthly minimum social assistance.	CZ HU FR RO SL	HU FR RO SL

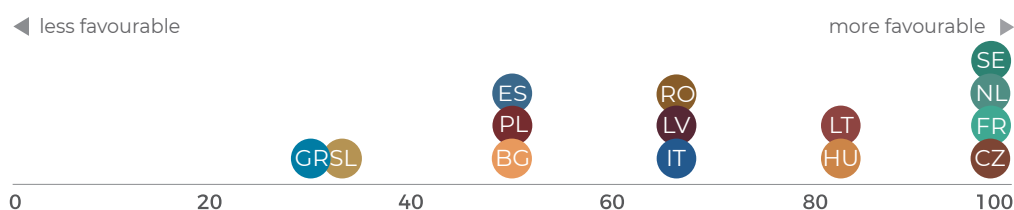
status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## 8. Housing

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

### 8.1. 2021 Results by country

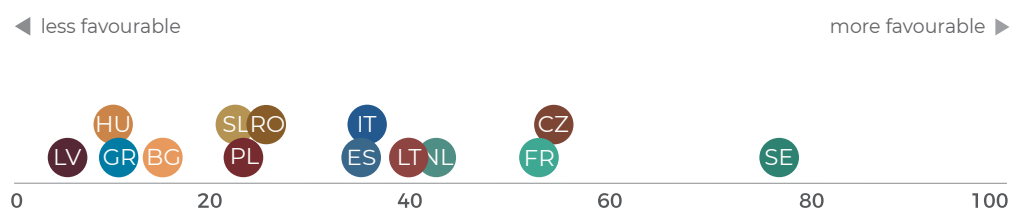
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

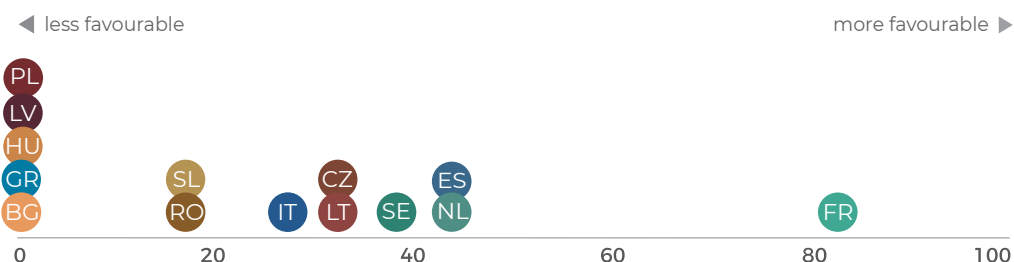
#### Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

- Access to housing for vulnerable persons
- Awareness raising about the specific challenges of beneficiaries of international protection on the housing market
- Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation
- Provision of temporary housing support
- Provision of mainstream housing support
- Period of targeted housing support
- Administrative barriers to accessing public housing
- Housing quality assessment

## Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

### 8.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Most of the countries, with the exception of Greece and Slovenia, have favourable laws to ensure access to housing for BIPs. The legal framework on housing has not been affected by any changes in the majority of countries in the 2019 to 2021 period, with the exception of Greece and Spain.

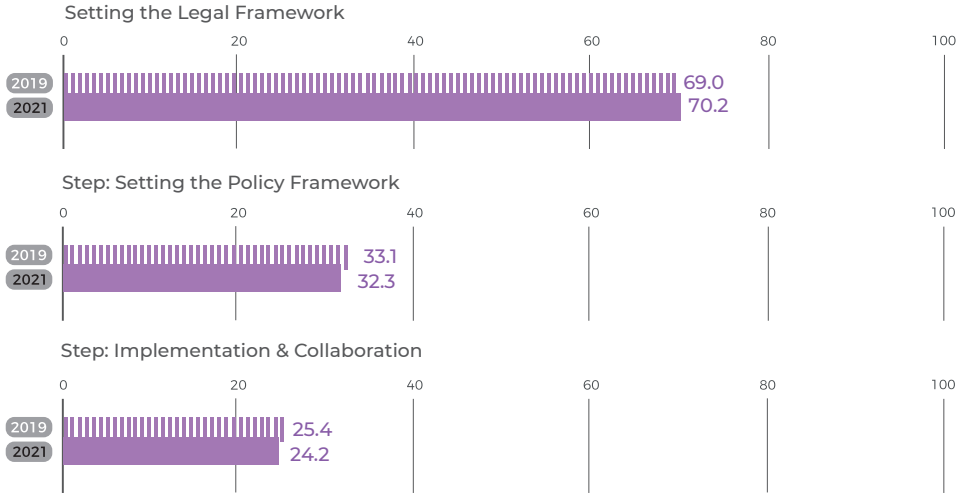
The legal framework for accessing housing continues to be marked by stark differences among the assessed countries. Czechia, France, the Netherlands and Sweden provide the highest legal standards, implying that BIPs have freedom of movement and choice of residence within the country, full access to housing and housing benefits as well as full access to property rights on an equal basis with nationals. In Greece and Slovenia, in particular, there is a clear need to improve on these standards. As Greece indeed booked some progress in the 2019 to 2021 period, access to housing became more difficult in Spain.

Likewise, the majority of countries has deficient policy frameworks which hamper availability of housing for BIPs, with Czechia, France and Sweden being most supportive in comparison. Policy-related indicators show negative developments in Poland and Slovenia, with minor improvements in Romania. Sweden provides the best conditions among the assessed countries with regard to policy-related indicators in the area of housing. Regions and municipalities are annually allocated a certain number of beneficiaries based on specific criteria, to accommodate them and work with public and private housing actors to raise awareness and secure housing. Besides the availability of in-cash housing benefits, BIPs receive information on housing and legal issues related to housing.

With regard to implementation and collaboration, countries generally achieve low results, with Czechia even witnessing steps backwards. Overall, most of the assessed countries still lack mainstreaming, multi-level-coordination and cooperation with civil society to promote the integration of BIPs in the housing dimension. France provides a model, with the adoption of the National Scheme for the Reception and Integration of Refugees (SNADAR) that aims to identify 14,000 accommodations for BIPs in 2021, including resettled ones, across all regions. Regular steering committees involving regional, local authorities and

public housing bodies have been set up in all regions in order to meet the above objective. Regional and local authorities have a key role to address the housing needs of BIPs and regional prefects have to report monthly the number of BIPs who have accessed accommodation. The SNADAR Action Plan also includes awareness raising of public housing bodies as a priority.

**Overall change 2019 to 2021**



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step. Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

**Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country**



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



## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Greece**, according to new legislation coming into force in 2019, beneficiaries of international protection can now enjoy the right to free movement under the same conditions as other third-country nationals and freely decide their residence within the country.
- ▶ In **Romania**, housing support for BIPs has been extended from 6 to 12 months and can be prolonged for another 6 months for duly justified good reasons. In addition, since 2019, BIPs can receive direct monetary support to cover rent expenses when the residential centres have reached 90% of their capacity.

## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Czechia**, as a result of the cessation of the previous measures of the State Integration Programme, there is no longer systematic coordination of the national government with regional and local authorities on housing for BIPs. The measures in place only focus on cooperation with municipalities for the provision of housing for BIPs of retirement age and the disabled in social service facilities. These measures include provision of means to address housing needs of BIPs and additional support for municipalities.
- ▶ In **Spain**, newcomers are unable to meet the general conditions to access housing and housing benefits. For instance, they need to have a long-term resident permit, formal residency in the municipality and a bank account opened under special conditions.
- ▶ In **Poland**, while the Ministry of Investment and Development adopted a programme of financial support for local authorities and public organisations that seek to provide sheltered housing for BIPs, there are no campaigns for raising public awareness about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, from November 2021, BIPs are only able to access targeted housing support if they conclude an integration agreement. BIPs who are unemployed or lack own financial means are entitled to benefits for renting private housing for up to 12 months and under certain conditions, for an additional 12 months. To receive the support, at least 80% attendance of a Slovene language class, a course for discovering Slovene society and monthly meetings with a social worker are required.

## 8.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, beneficiaries of international protection are only brought into the mainstream housing support system once they are recognised. Before recognition, the main rule of the Reception Conditions Directive is to guarantee freedom of movement for asylum seekers, although Member States are allowed to decide on asylum seekers' place of residence for reasons of public interest or public order

or for the swift processing of the asylum application. Member States can also link the provision of material reception conditions to an assigned residence (Art. 7). Beneficiaries of international protection receive access to housing equal to that of national citizens and can enjoy free movement within the country after recognition (Art. 32 Qualification Directive). As the CJEU confirmed in its judgement in *Alo & Osso*, this right can only be limited in specific circumstances, for example, by the use of dispersal policies when, compared to other third country nationals, beneficiaries of international protection face greater integration difficulties. The sixth EU Common Basic Principle for Immigrant Integration, calling for access to public and private goods and services on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way, also applies to the housing area.

**In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...**

**In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework**

... ensure free movement and choice of residence within the country.	
... ensure same access to housing and housing benefits as nationals, with general conditions that newcomers can meet.	
... ensure equal treatment with nationals in property rights	

**In the Step: Building the Policy Framework**

... ensure access to housing for all vulnerable persons.	—
... raise awareness about the specific challenges of BIPs on the housing market.	—
... provide targeted housing advice, counselling, representation.	 <i>FR: partially</i>
... provide targeted temporary housing support without further eligibility rules.	
... provide targeted long-term housing support without time limit.	
... not impose any administrative barrier to accessing public housing (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).	—
... provide country-wide housing quality assessment.	

**In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration**

... mainstream the integration of BIPs into housing policies (multi-stakeholder strategy, monitoring, policy review).	
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... coordinate with regional and local authorities on housing for BIPs by providing both immaterial (e.g. guidelines, training) and material (funding) support.



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



*ES: most BIPs not covered*

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status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

### SPECIFIC TOOLS AND STRATEGIES FOR A BETTER INCLUSION OF BIPs INTO THE HOUSING SYSTEM



In **Italy**, the **FRA NOI** project funded by the national AMIF programme supports integration into the housing system of BIPs who have to leave reception facilities. The second round of the project began in July 2020 and will end in June 2022. The main objective is to implement a set of tools and strategies for a new system of the reception and inclusion of migrants in Italy. In particular, the actions aim to provide economic support in terms of payment of rent and utilities; brokerage of intermediaries to facilitate the matching of housing supply and demand on the private rental market; training courses on financial and housing management as well as civic education; and “social planning” to use vacant houses in public or private residential buildings with a view to renewed use.

### SUPPORT TO ACCESS HOUSING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



In **Latvia**, in December 2021, amendments to housing legislation were passed stating that municipalities can provide housing assistance to recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection who do not have officially declared residence in the municipality in question. It is worth noting that this practice has been implemented after the cut-off date of this report and therefore has not impacted the scoring of Latvia in the housing dimension.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – HOUSING

### INDICATORS AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Share of beneficiaries of international protection living in the area of their choice
- Housing disadvantage (high rental costs burden/overcrowding/substandard conditions/remote location/discrimination)
- Most frequent problems for BIPs related to housing

Based on the available evidence on outcomes relevant to housing policies, grave problems exist in nearly all the assessed countries. A disproportionately high share of rental costs of available income, lack of affordable housing and discrimination on the housing market are identified to cause a disadvantaged situation for most recognised refugees and BSPs. Overcrowded living conditions are also frequently reported. In Bulgaria, Czechia, Lithuania, Hungary, Latvia and Slovenia in particular, language barriers seem to trigger housing market discrimination and make communication a major challenge when accessing housing.

Most BIPs seem to live in the area of their choice in the majority of the countries. However, that does not imply totally free choice. In the Netherlands, some BIPs find accommodation themselves while others are allocated to a municipality for housing. Although BIPs in Slovenia generally prefer big cities to live, the number of BIPs who have no choice but move to outskirts of cities and nearby villages is increasing due to high rental prices and discrimination on the housing market. Living in small municipalities limits access to transportation and socializing opportunities, which hampers integration of BIPs into socio-cultural life in France. On the other hand, the majority of families in Lithuania and Bulgaria choose to live in the capital city since these municipalities provide the highest rent support, which is important especially for big families.

The individual integration programme in Poland, which lasts 12 months from the moment of receiving the status of international protection, is described by beneficiaries as insufficient to achieve appropriate adaptation to the new environment and to prepare to be able to pay free market rental costs. The government-led housing policy created in recent years does not identify BIPs as a group particularly vulnerable to problems such as homelessness or poverty. In Poland as much as in Greece and Italy, housing market discrimination limits the choices of BIPs, who are more likely to settle for overcrowded housing with poor infrastructure either in densely populated parts of cities or remote areas, leading to segregation. In Romania, BIPs complain about the government's preference for publicly funded residential centres, instead of stimulating the beneficiaries to become independent and find individual housing. Overall, such residential centres are a cheaper solution for the state, but the conditions in some of them are rather bad. Only recently, the parliament introduced, by law, the possibility to offer

monetary benefits to those renting on the free market but only when the centres occupation rate is reaching 90% of the capacity.

Families, especially those with more than two or three children, are in a more vulnerable situation on the housing market of Slovenia. Instability, short-term housing contracts and constant moving cause distress, since families need to change the schools, doctors etc. In Poland and Bulgaria, landlords often display a reluctance to rent premises particularly to multi-person families, single mothers with children, or people with disabilities.

It has been reported that some landlords tend to take advantage of the precarious situation of refugees by asking unreasonable prices for standard or low-quality housing. The biggest problem indicated in Hungary and Slovenia is that the owners do not allow them to register the address as a permanent the address, with some lease agreements expressly prohibiting the registering of address by the tenant(s). The reason for this is the popular (and false) belief that tenants with permanent addresses registered at the rented dwelling could not be evicted, even if they stopped paying the rent.

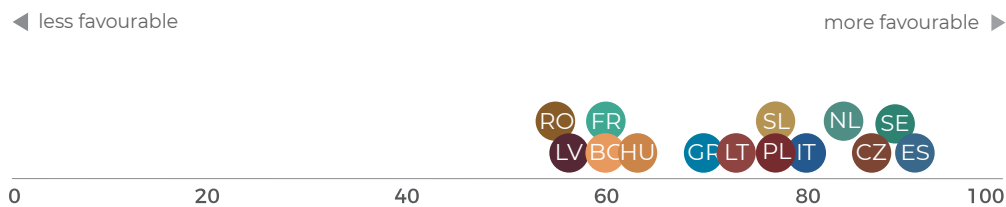
Greece only provides limited housing benefits and accommodation to vulnerable BIPs, which puts many BIPs at risk of homelessness. In Bulgaria, BIPs have only two weeks to find housing once they receive a positive decision about their refugee status, which also poses a high risk for homelessness.

## 9. Employment

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

### 9.1. 2021 Results by country

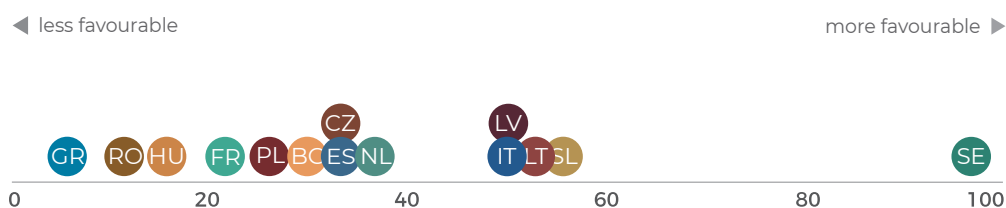
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

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

### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

### 9.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

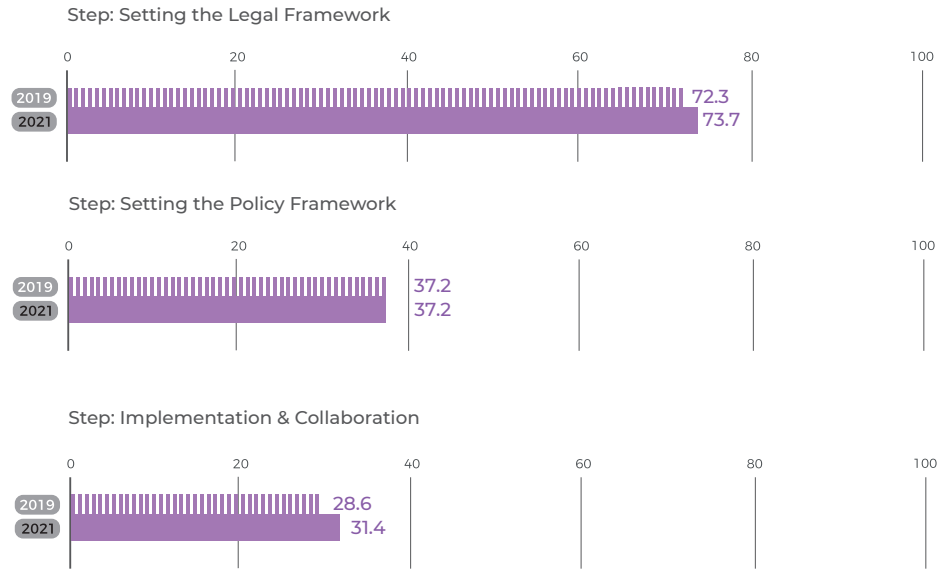
With the exception of Greece, there were no major legal developments in the employment dimension related to the access to employment and self-employment. Policy indicators also show a very stagnant dimension, characterised merely by some improvements in France and Latvia and deteriorations in Spain. Concerning implementation and collaboration, partly significant improvement took hold in Greece, while no changes have been found in the rest of the countries.

Most of the Member States apply favourable legal provisions to facilitate the access of both categories of BIPs to the job market, providing same access to employment and self-employment as nationals, without general conditions that they would be unable to meet as newcomers. Poorer results are, however, found with regard to the policy framework, where the majority of countries lack any targeted support programmes for BIPs to access employment. Indicators related to implementation and collaboration reveal significant gaps in most countries. In general, there are very few formal strategies to facilitate the integration of BIPs through employment or coordination mechanisms with regional and local authorities with the involvement of expert NGOs to assist BIPs to find employment.

Among the assessed countries, Sweden provides the most supportive framework across the three step-stones towards comprehensive integration. Labour market insertion is a cornerstone of the introduction programme lasting at least 24 months and focusing on employment services, language training and civic orientation. The programme includes validation of the newcomers' education, work experience and skills as well as several forms of subsidized employment. The Employment Service, as a co-ordinating actor, conducts regular

evaluations and reports to the government about the results of the measures. The programmes are implemented locally with regional coordination and, even if the Employment Service has the main responsibility for labour market measures, municipalities are often involved and have roles such as language training.

### Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

### Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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



## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Greece**, following recent legal developments, BIPs now enjoy equal treatment as nationals in the recognition of foreign degrees, certificates and other official titles. BIPs who are unable to provide evidence of their degrees shall enjoy facilitated access to programmes for the evaluation, authentication and verification of their previous education. In addition, the new National Strategy for Integration foresees the involvement of relevant partners in labour market integration and the monitoring of employment policies within the framework of the HELIOS 2 program implemented by local authorities. The new strategy also requires the national government to coordinate with regional and local authorities and employment bodies to support them in assisting BIPs to find employment.
- ▶ In **France**, an action plan has been elaborated in 2020 to promote the recognition of skills, professional experience and qualifications of newly arrived foreign nationals, including BIPs (see below Good Practice).
- ▶ In **Latvia**, in 2020/21, the EU-funded “Diversity promotion” programme (run by the Society Integration Foundation) included training for business managers and employees on diversity management and the prevention of discrimination of vulnerable groups (including refugees). Another programme promoted openness towards diversity in Latvian public and business organisations and the labour market in general.

## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Spain**, an already disadvantageous situation concerning administrative barriers to accessing employment was found to further deteriorate, with required documentation very hard to obtain.

## 9.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

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

immigrants and the contributions they make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible.

**In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...**

**In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework**

... ensure full access to employment in the private sector, the wider public sector as well as the core administration.

SE

... ensure full access to self-employment in general and to self-employment in the liberal professions.

ES HU IT LT SE

... establish the right to recognition of formal degrees and to validation of skills.

BG CZ ES FR GR IT LT LV  
PL SE SL

... ensure that the same procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications are available to BIPs as for nationals.

BG CZ ES GR IT LT HU LV  
NL PL RO SE SL

... accept alternative methods of assessment when documents from the country of origin are unavailable and provide assistance in the recognition procedure.

CZ ES NL SE

**In the Step: Building the Policy Framework**

... ensure full access to employment for all groups of special concern.

—

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

BG CZ HU IT LT PL SE

... raise awareness about the specific labour market situation of BIPs.

SE

... provide for high standards in the assessment of skills (country-wide criteria, translation, procedures where documentation is missing).

CZ SL SE

... provide for job-seeking counselling and positive action.

LV LT SL SE

... provide targeted entrepreneurship support.

SE

**In the Step: Building the Implementation Framework**

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

LT SE

---

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



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



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status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

### ACTION PLAN ON RECOGNITION OF FORMAL DEGREES AND SKILLS VALIDATION



In **France**, a 2020 action plan promotes the recognition of skills, professional experience and qualifications of newly arrived foreign nationals. The plan aims at carrying out a training for integration actors on the recognition of skills and qualifications of migrants. It also seeks to facilitate the access of 1,000 newly arrived foreign nationals to professional certifications, validations of prior experiences and recognition of professional know-how. The action plan intends to provide a thorough analysis of the candidate's experience through a series of questionnaires and interviews and is conceived to improve the recognition of formal degrees as well as skills validation.

### TAILORED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING



In **Greece**, the HELIOS 2 project, monitored by the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum and implemented by the IOM, aims to foster the integration of BIPs and their families. To do so, all beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from individual sessions for professional counselling which include: i) identification of the needs and interests of participants; ii) profiling of participants' skills based on the EU Skills Profile Tool; iii) compensation of the costs to obtain various certifications (e.g. Greek language certificate, drivers' license, English language certificate, etc.); iv) "career days" and networking sessions with employers of the private sector; v) acquisition of information concerning the "Greek Manpower Employment Organisation" and the rights and obligations of employees and employers in Greece. Furthermore, the project undertakes activities to inform and raise awareness about the situation of BIPs in local communities, professional unions, and among employers.

In **Italy**, the **PUOI** project (Protezione Unita a Obiettivo Integrazione) launched in spring 2019, co-supported by the EU programmes AMIF and ESF, aimed to foster the socio-occupational integration of BIPs. It activated 4,500 employment pathways and involved public and private labour market operators. The activities provided access to a series of integrated services for social and labour integration (e.g. tutoring services, guidance and supervision of job search, assessment and certification of skills) and an extracurricular internship of six months. In 2020/21, a complementary activity was added with the aim of dealing effectively with the new working conditions under the COVID-19 emergency and to tackle its negative impact on the internships.

#### BARRIER-FREE ASSESSMENT OF BIPs' SKILLS AND EDUCATION LEVEL

In the **Netherlands**, all international humanitarian status holders who are obliged to participate in the civic integration programme are entitled to a free assessment of credentials, financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, via the international credential evaluation body IDW. If the required certificates are not available or missing, recognition can still be granted (in which case it will be called “indication of educational level”). This procedure is implemented to define which Dutch educational level is comparable to that of the status holder.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – EMPLOYMENT

### INDICATORS AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Overqualification
- Difficulties in finding a job (due to language barriers/discrimination/missing or unrecognised qualifications/lack of legal access to the labour market/personal constraints)
- Most frequent problems for BIPs related to employment

According to the data collected on outcomes concerning refugee employment, finding a job matching one's qualifications remains a challenge for nearly all BIPs. To varying degrees, overqualification for the jobs they are doing seems to affect the majority of BIPs across countries. Many BIPs and (where they can access the labour market) asylum seekers are doing low qualified physical work. Even higher educated BIPs are frequently offered low skilled jobs by employment services. According to NGO representatives and BIPs in Slovenia, the biggest issue is not overqualification, but

unrecognised qualifications; here is also the problem that professions for which BIPs were skilled in their countries of origin (mainly various crafts), do not exist or are rarer in Slovenia, or that they require a certain formal qualification as a condition of employment. In Hungary, there is a demand for workforce in the labour market, therefore, BIPs may find a job relatively easily but these are mostly low-quality jobs. In addition, there is no integration support provided by the state, so BIPs do not seem to have options and have to accept low quality jobs to survive.

According to research conducted in 2016 in the Netherlands, little less than half of the BIPs were overqualified for their current jobs at that time. However, BIPs who obtained their highest diploma in the Netherlands do not tend to be overqualified for their current job (in comparison with Dutch nationals). If BIPs have recognised their diploma from their country of origin in the Netherlands, they are also less likely to be overqualified, but they tend to be more overqualified than those who obtained a Dutch diploma.

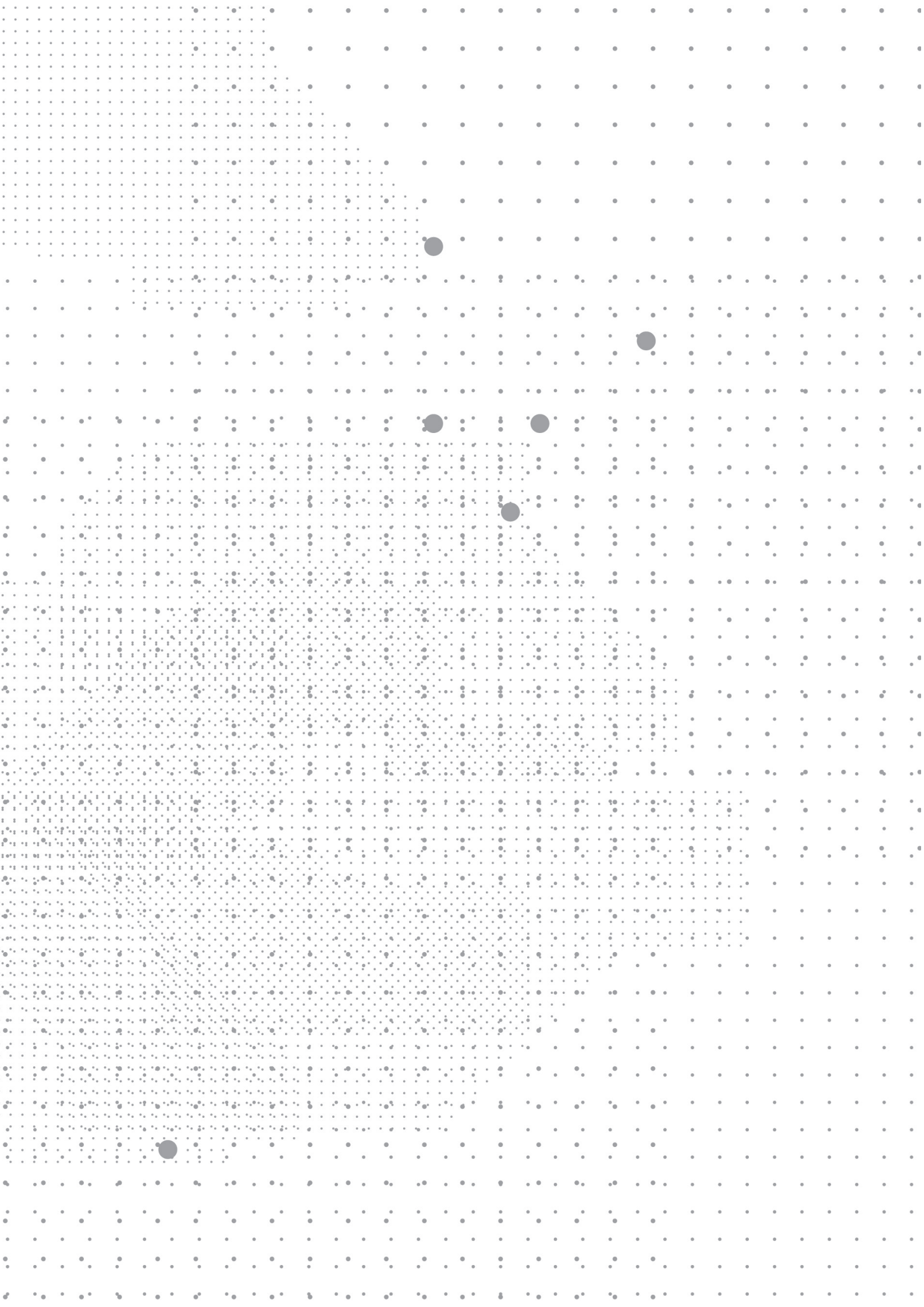
The language barrier is the most commonly mentioned obstacle encountered by BIPs in finding a job across countries. However, in Czechia, interviews with BIPs and experts suggest that lack of proficiency in the local language puts a barrier to qualified jobs but does not usually result in unemployment since BIPs might find (mostly manual) jobs in their ethnic community. Similarly, in Slovenia language is not identified as a problem for employers seeking a low paid workforce. BIPs interviewed in Czechia think that the labour market, and the legislative rules concerning their access to jobs, are too complicated. It has been mentioned that some employers prefer to employ natives due to complex administrative procedures. Interviewees in Poland pointed out that some employers do not know the regulations and they might expect BIPs to apply for the work permit, even though BIPs are already granted the right to employment in Poland. Lack of publicly funded language courses in Hungary and lack of opportunities to access training courses to improve the language level (e.g training on the job and lifelong learning courses) in Italy are other challenges BIPs encounter.

Discrimination, exploitation of BIPs in the labour market, personal constraints and precarious working conditions are other barriers mentioned by BIPs and experts across the assessed countries. Most BIPs in Slovenia are not informed about labour legislation, their rights and/or ways how to enforce them (e.g. annual leave, sick leave, paid overtime). In addition, BIPs are often not aware of the working culture. In Italy, short-term jobs and lack of permanent work contracts is another obstacle to integration ; similarly, in Czechia, where employers tend to employ BIPs only in sub-standard jobs and often with short-term contracts.

Vulnerable persons and women in Romania report obstacles related to their personal situation, while lack of childcare solutions is mentioned as a challenge for female BIPs in France. Negative public attitudes towards foreigners is another challenge for BIPs to find a proper job, as noted in Lithuania especially with regard to women wearing a veil.

All these challenges force BIPs across the assessed countries to turn to low-quality jobs and grey economic activities. While employment is a crucial part

of the integration process, it remains fraught with challenges as the other necessary components of the integration trajectory - learning the language, taking care of children, etc. - are equally difficult. Thus, having the stability to focus on finding an appropriate and well-paid job is nearly impossible for most persons under international protection.

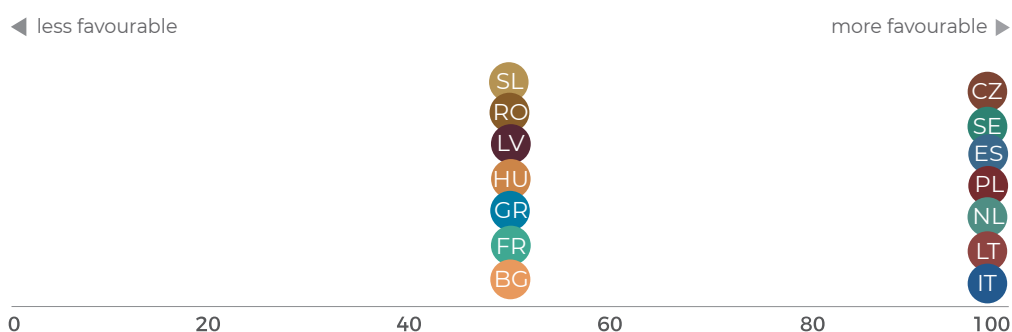


## 10. Vocational training and employment-related education

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

### 10.1. 2021 Results by country

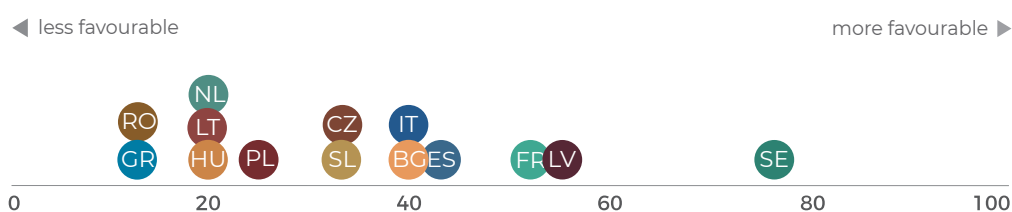
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicator:

- Access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework

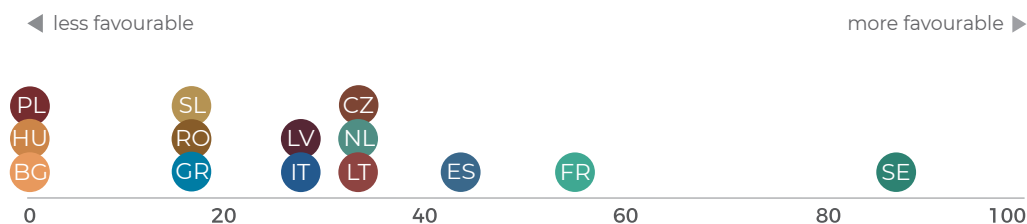


Assessed indicators:

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



## Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

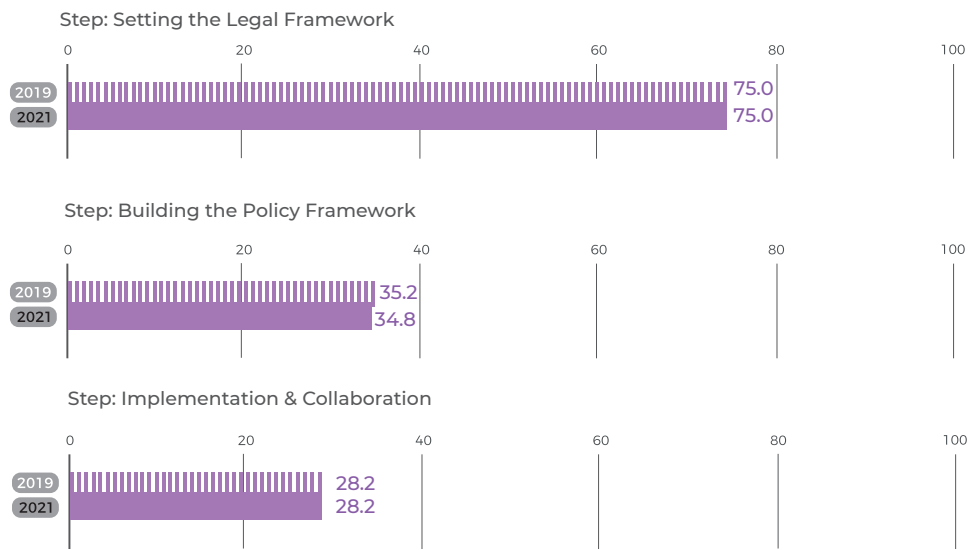
### 10.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Vocational training and employment-related education represent one of the most stable dimensions in the 2019 and 2021 period, with only three countries seeing changes. Access to vocational training is characterised, on average, by favourable legal provisions as the majority of countries ensures same access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education as nationals with general conditions that newcomers are able to meet.

The set of policy-related indicators, however, still point to mostly insufficient practices in most of the assessed countries. Positive developments have taken place only in Romania, while Poland and Slovenia took minor steps backwards. As in several other dimensions, Sweden is leading the comparative results. Education and qualification are highly encouraged during the introduction programme which includes employment preparatory measures. The Swedish National Agency for Education is running and procuring targeted programmes in close collaboration with the employment service, and local businesses are providing vocational training opportunities. The two involved state agencies carry out regular follow ups on the numbers and results of the efforts.

The three indicators related to implementation and collaboration do not show any relevant changes in the 2019-2021 period, with major weaknesses persisting in most countries. Among the best-scoring countries, France continues to implement the 2018 to 2022 Skills Investment Plan. BIPs are considered a priority target group, in particular, those under 25 years and those who arrived less than five years ago. It is being implemented in a way that provides additional means to the regional level and encourages local employers to invest in the training of BIPs.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, fewer administrative barriers to accessing vocational training are recorded, even if it is still difficult for BIPs to provide the necessary original documents attesting their level of formal education from the country of origin.

## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Poland**, no initiatives or campaigns to raise awareness about the specific situation of beneficiaries of international protection regarding vocational training have been reported during the reporting period.
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, vocational trainings were paused or postponed for a long period due to COVID-19 related measures. At the employment service staff working specifically with unemployed BIPs were obliged to take on other tasks related to the pandemic. Left to communicating only by phone or email, BIPs reported an increasing lack of information.

## 10.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

Under EU law and, to some extent, the Geneva Convention, beneficiaries of international protection are guaranteed the same treatment as national citizens and access to targeted support to address their specific needs. For access to vocational training, the Geneva Convention requires states to grant refugees at least the most favourable treatment granted to foreign citizens. The Geneva Convention establishes a general obligation to facilitate integration (Art. 34), and this duty is spelled out in the more concrete obligations under the recast Qualification Directive. Under EU law, access to vocational training remains limited until recognition, after which the recast Qualification Directive guarantees the equal treatment of beneficiaries of international protection and national citizens in terms of access to the labour market, vocational training, employment-related education, recognition and assessment procedures of foreign qualifications (Art. 26). When relevant documents are missing, beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from alternative assessment methods (Art. 28). Before recognition, the Reception Conditions Directive stipulates for asylum seekers a maximum waiting period of nine months for labour market access (Art. 15). The directive calls for Member States to decide on conditions for labour market access that ensure effective access and avoid procedural obstacles. However, Member States are not obliged to open vocational training possibilities to asylum seekers, and the directive remains silent on the recognition of qualifications (Art. 16).

## In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

### In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



SE: for some groups

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



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



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



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



### In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



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

—

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## **ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED EDUCATION**

### **INDICATOR AND QUESTION ASSESSED**

- Unmet training and further education needs
- Most frequent problems for BIPs related to vocational training and employment related education

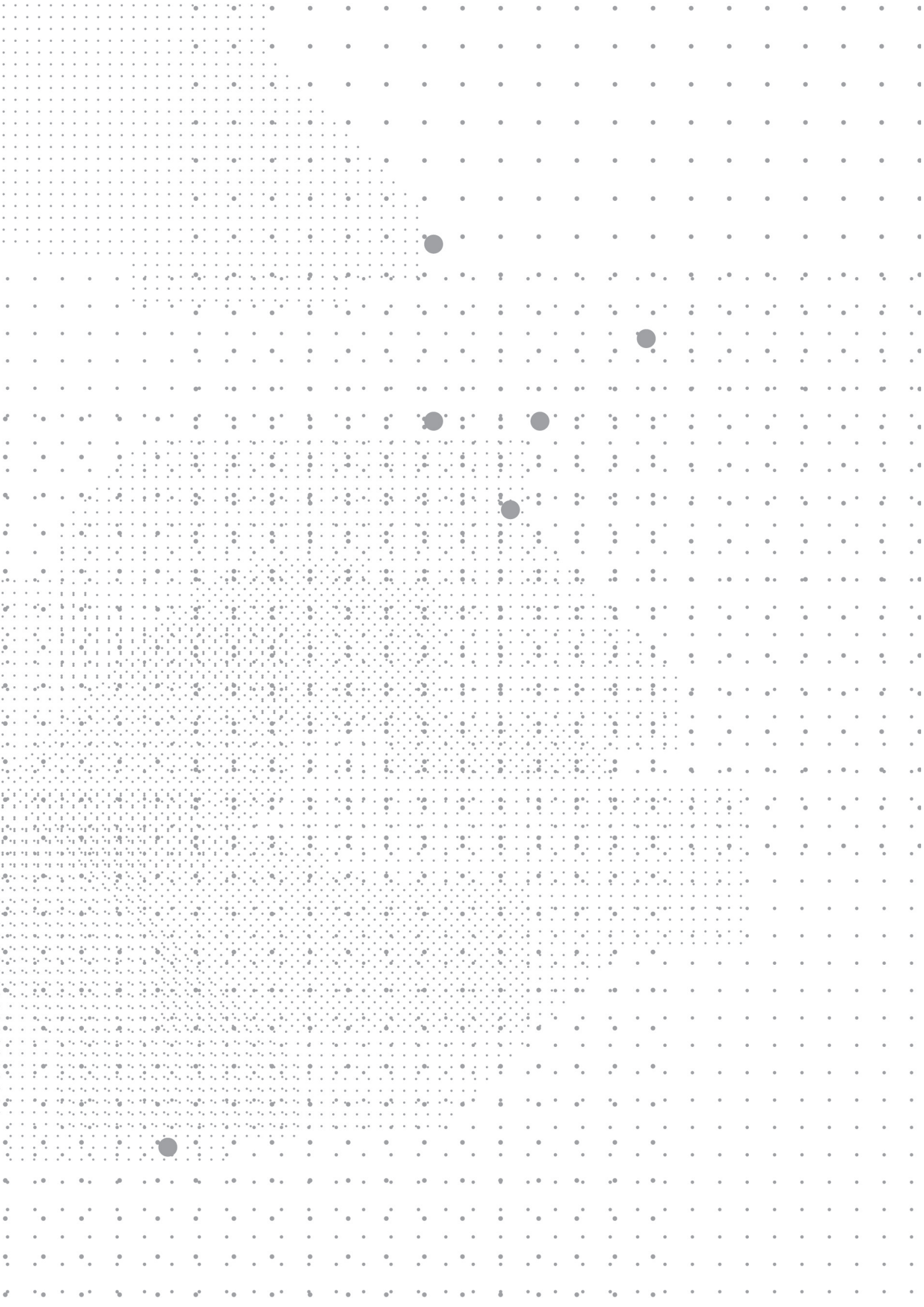
Various sources of information confirm that significant barriers accessing to vocational training and employment related education exist across the assessed countries. Low language skills is one the most commonly mentioned challenge in accessing vocational trainings since most mainstream employment-related programmes require higher levels of proficiency. The recognition of past qualifications and proving past educational certificates in order to be able to start a vocational training programme matching their qualifications is another problem commonly expressed by BIPs throughout the assessed countries.

Lack of information about vocational training opportunities is another commonly encountered barriers Where provided, information seems to remain limited to inform BIPs about availability of vocational training programmes, without further professional guidance. In general, BIPs find vocational education systems hard to navigate.

In Slovenia, apprenticeships and on the job language learning programmes are relatively limited. BIPs can only participate in the national vocational qualification if they can produce elementary school diplomas. Therefore, many grown-up BIPs tend to attend elementary school programmes for adults, but it is unlikely for the majority to complete the programme since it is found to be too long and irrelevant to their labour market integration. Similarly, in Romania access to vocational training is conditioned by attaining certain levels of formal education, which in most cases is the completion of ten or even 12 years of formal education. Since formal education is recognised solely based on official documents, and most BIPs do not have them, they are not eligible to enroll in trainings, even if they are theoretically eligible for financial support through EU funding. Educational programmes, in general, are likely to be expensive for BIPs. Although Sweden provides different options for vocational training programmes, they are very limited in terms of availability. In Greece, vocational education is one of the pillars of the National Education Strategy that was initiated in 2019. Nonetheless, this strategy has not been developed yet and there has not been any integral vocational training plan for beneficiaries of international protection so far.

Women are more likely to report obstacles related to family needs, as reported from Sweden and the Netherlands, since they are more likely to be pre-occupied with taking care of their children and accordingly have less time to focus on their training.

Research in the Netherlands shows that municipalities sometimes do not want BIPs to study but want them to start working right away or to combine a training with actual work. Consequently, BIPs may pay less attention to their training. In addition to challenges mentioned above, interviews in Slovenia and Czechia show that pursuing vocational education may not appear to be financially viable for some BIPs since they need to work to fulfill their basic needs. Interviews with BIPs in Poland also suggest that third-country labour migrants have better access to employment-related trainings compared to BIPs and there is no access to such trainings for asylum seekers.

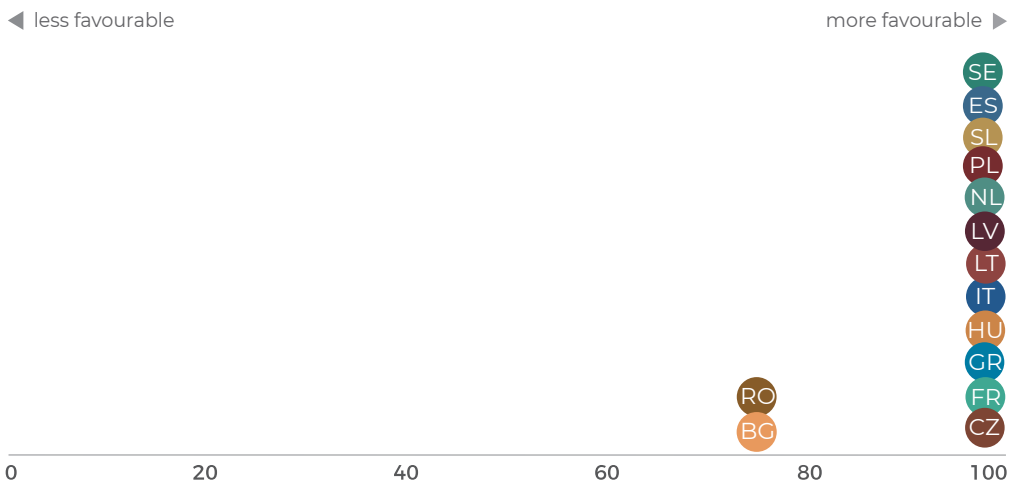


## 11. Health

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

### 11.1. 2021 Results by country

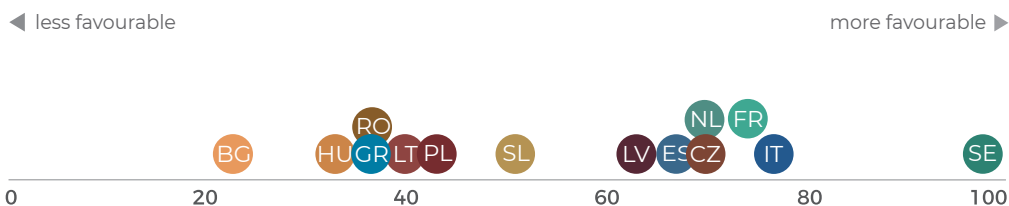
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework

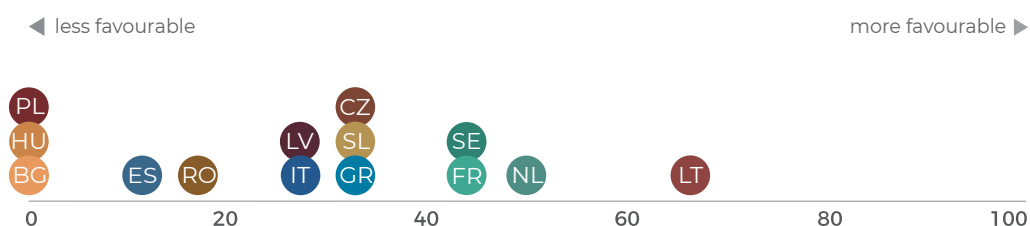


Assessed indicators:

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



## Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

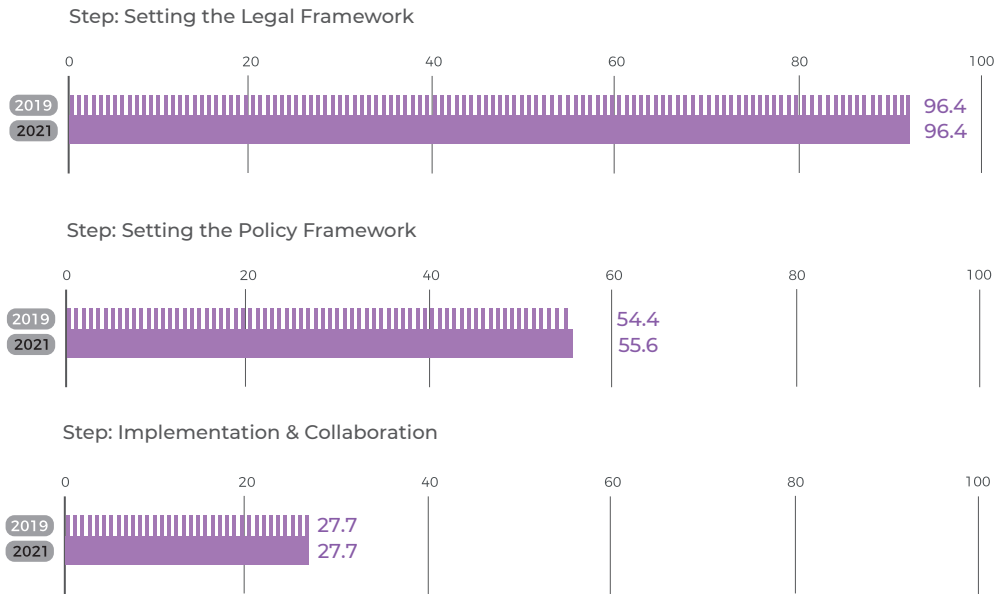
### 11.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Health is the dimension where countries obtain the highest results with regard to the legal framework. All 14 countries ensure minimum healthcare coverage for BIPs on an equal basis to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way. Legal access to health care has been stable across the assessed countries during 2019-2021, maintaining generally favourable standards.

The policy-related indicators reveal overall less supportive circumstances, which saw some improvements through developments in Czechia, France and Romania. The main two factors driving down the scores are widespread administrative barriers and the lack of information concerning entitlements and use of health services, both of which negatively affect BIPs' access to health-care assistance. Sweden obtains the highest possible score, being the only country that fulfills all benchmarks.

Mainstreaming, multi-level coordination and support as well as partnerships with expert NGOs, as measured in the indicators on implementation and collaboration, remain a weakness in the health dimension. Next to some positive developments in Czechia, negative changes were recorded in Poland and Slovenia. Lithuania sees the most favourable results in this dimension, as the Action Plan on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society involves all relevant partners to facilitate the integration of BIPs in the health field. It also requires trainings for health service workers to improve intercultural skills, reduce stereotypes and respect the values of diversity and equality.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Czechia**, the state continuously provides means for expert NGOs to implement the State Integration Programme (SIP) but also co-finances projects (AMIF) to foster access to health care and partly funds social services by means of the state budget for social services (MLSA).
- ▶ In **France**, through a Vulnerability Plan, authorities regularly inform health care providers about the entitlements and needs of BIPs (see below Good Practice). Moreover, in 2021, 1.2 million euros are expected to be spent to fund targeted structures specialised in taking care of asylum seekers and BIPs.<sup>7</sup>
- ▶ In **Romania**, there are no administrative barriers to access health care for BIPs as systematic software errors have been properly addressed. Before, there had been numerous cases of BIPs who had paid their contributions but appeared as not contributing to the national health care system. Language barriers are still occasionally reported by BIPs who are not familiar with Romanian or English.

## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Poland**, in 2020, the Office for Foreigners did not finance or co-finance the provision of medical assistance to BIPs in partnership with NGOs. In addition, there was no call for AMIF projects for the integration of BIPs.

### 11.3. Best practices in refugee integration

#### What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, asylum seekers must receive necessary and adapted medical assistance from the moment of their arrival, although they will be able to enjoy access to health care without restriction only after recognition. According to the Reception Conditions Directive (Art. 19), during the reception phase, asylum seekers must receive necessary health care, which should at least include emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses and serious mental disorders. Asylum seekers with special protection needs, such as minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of violence, must receive adapted medical assistance. Under the Qualification Directive (Art. 30.1), beneficiaries of international protection have the same access to health care services as national citizens. Vulnerable groups of beneficiaries of international protection can benefit from adapted health care services beyond mainstream access to health care (Art. 30.2).

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<sup>7</sup> It is worth mentioning that since a decree that entered into force in January 2020, during the first three months after arrival on the national territory, asylum seekers' health coverage is restricted to emergency care and essential treatments. Although this measure only applies to asylum seekers, it can have long term consequences on BIPs' health, especially for the most vulnerable ones.

## In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

### In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

... ensure full access to a system of health care coverage under conditions which can be met as newcomers.



... provide for the same health coverage as for nationals.



### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

... ensure access to special needs health care for vulnerable groups (pediatric care, care for minors who have been victims of abuse or trauma, pregnancy and childbirth, physically or mentally handicapped persons, nursing for the elderly, psychiatric/psychosocial care for victims of torture, rape or other forms of trauma).



... proactively raise awareness among health care providers about the entitlements and specific health issues of BIPs.



... not impose any administrative barriers to obtaining health care (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).



... systematically provide individualised information on health care entitlements and use of services.



... provide for free interpretation services across the health system or at least in major destination areas.



### In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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



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



... continuously provide means for expert NGOs to assist BIPs to receive adequate health care.



status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

In **France**, the Vulnerability Plan of the Ministry of the Interior includes various measures to raise awareness on the specific health care needs of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection. For instance, one action seeks to set up a kit designed for health and disability professionals on the care provided to disabled asylum seekers and BIPs. Another action aims at informing health care providers on the needs of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection, with a special focus on psychological trauma.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – HEALTH

### INDICATORS AND QUESTION ASSESSED

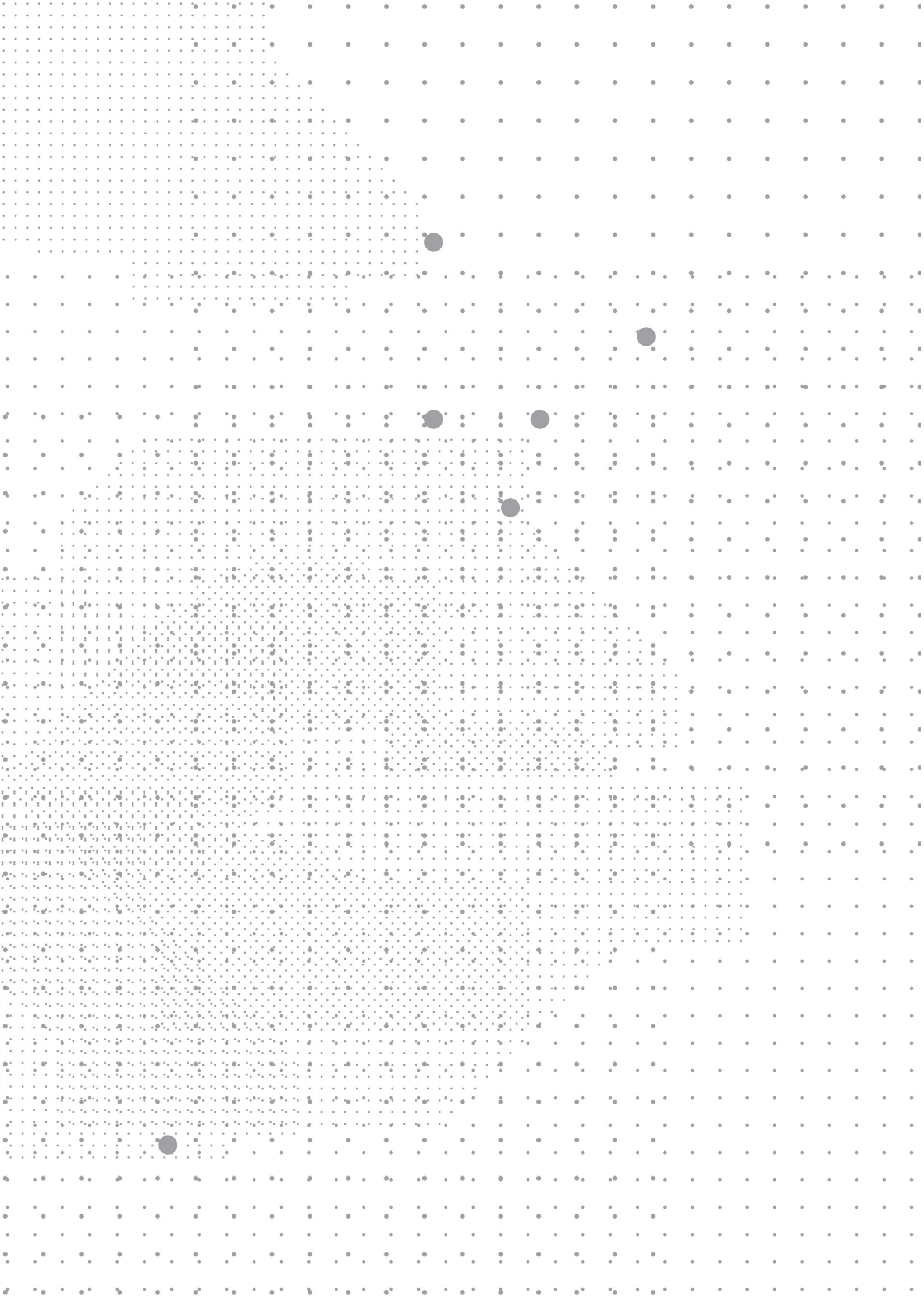
- Unmet medical needs of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection
- Unmet psycho-social/mental health needs of persons seeking or benefiting from international protection
- Most frequent problems related to health for persons benefitting from or seeking international protection

Results vary across the assessed countries when it comes to unmet medical needs. Overall, relatively few BIPs reported unmet medical needs in the majority of the countries, although in Romania and Slovenia unmet health needs are found to be a significant challenge for most BIPs. Finding a personal doctor is reported to be impossible in Ljubljana. In case people cannot choose one in other parts of Slovenia and are left without a general practitioner, it becomes impossible to get any specialist appointment. This problem is even greater for BIPs without a personal network. Although data is not available in all countries, asylum seekers are more likely to have unmet medical needs compared to BIPs. For example, as asylum seekers in Slovenia and Lithuania only have access to urgent medical assistance, many of their medical needs remain unmet. In Greece, although asylum seekers and members of their families are considered as belonging to vulnerable groups and are entitled to free access to the public health system and pharmaceutical treatment, administrative barriers and lack of awareness regarding the health system lead to a situation where many health needs are not met.

In most of the countries, BIPs have the same or very similar access to healthcare as citizens. However, in practice several barriers impact negatively on health outcomes. The language barrier, lack of professional interpreters and cultural mediators, complex healthcare systems and lack of information, long waiting periods, discrimination, shortage of general

practitioners and specialised doctors nearby, are the obstacles commonly mentioned across countries. For example, in Romania BIPs receive (free) basic health checks and access to emergency services while they are in residential centres. To get access to the public health system, BIPs need to pay the minimum insurance fee (similar to citizens), but they are discouraged to do so as long they do not have a stable income. In Bulgaria, a major obstacle to access health services is due to the reluctance of general practitioners to inscribe BIPs. Many BIPs, especially the vulnerable ones, cannot afford to pay their monthly health insurance instalments which results in a lack of access to regular and effective health care. In Hungary, social and medical cover is provided only to persons with a registered address. Since some landlords do not allow tenants to register the address of the dwellings they rent as a permanent address, in many cases BIPs have problems with accessing healthcare.

Limited data could be provided when it comes to unmet psycho-social/mental health needs. In Czechia and Latvia, some BIPs spoke about difficulties in getting proper psychological support when they needed it most. In Bulgaria, active involvement of NGOs with budgets from EU or UNHCR projects seems to be effective in decreasing unmet psycho-social/mental health needs. Data from Slovenia show that unmet health needs are even greater concerning mental health, also considering that not many refugees would feel comfortable voicing their needs for mental health support. Most BIPs in Romania tend to simply ignore psycho-social/mental health issues, fearing stigmatization and prejudices. Support is rare, only provided in the residential centres when some NGOs are active, and there is a consensus among experts that the topic is not properly addressed. In Hungary and Lithuania, access to psychological and psychiatric care is a general problem, as care and therapy provided through the state health insurance system is not accessible for most people struggling with mental health issues. This problem impacts on BIPs even harder. Italy stands out, positively, as a country where special attention is given to BIPs with specific mental health needs. But also here, long waiting periods risk undermining good intentions. Throughout the different countries and as mentioned both by BIPs and NGOs working in the field, lack of specialized therapists who can treat the traumata typically suffered by refugees, as well as language barriers, pose additional obstacles to appropriate therapy.

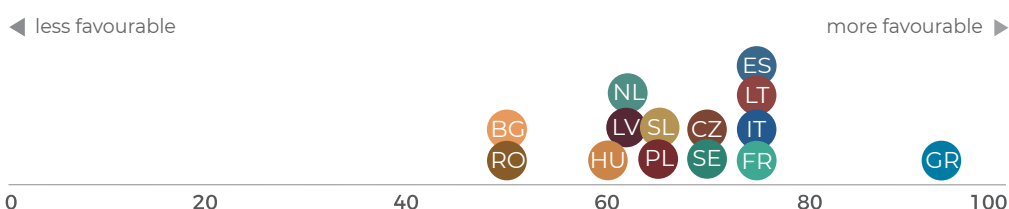


## 12. Social Security

Social security is not a privilege but a necessity for beneficiaries of international protection to rebuild their lives in a new country. National citizens are rarely in the same situation as beneficiaries of international protection, who usually lose all of their income and savings as well as their essential social and family support. Beneficiaries of international protection must be able to start a new life with hardly any financial safety net or help from family and friends. Effective protection requires not only support to meet their basic financial and daily needs, but also the investment of the necessary time, energy and resources into their integration. Together with targeted employment and training measures, individualised benefits help refugees, especially women, gain a basic degree of financial independence for the duration of the process of their socio-economic integration.

### 12.1. 2021 Results by country

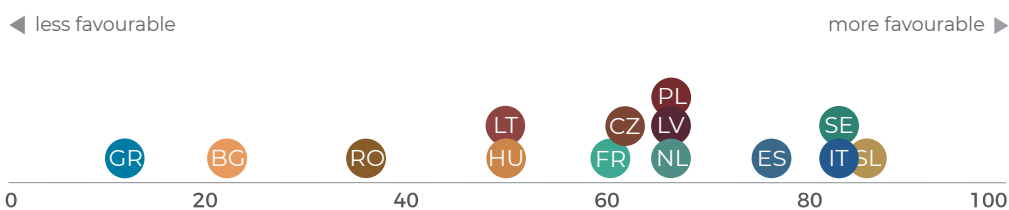
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework

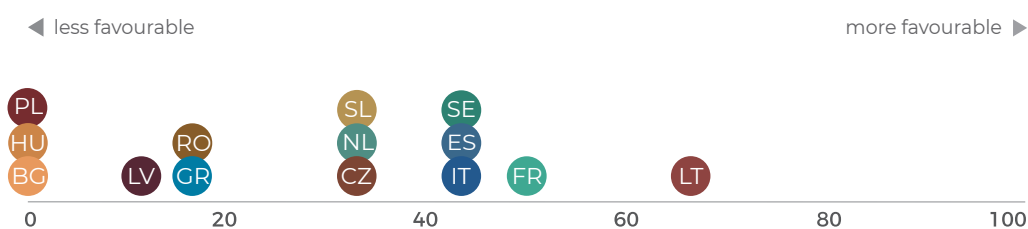


Assessed indicators:

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



## Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

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

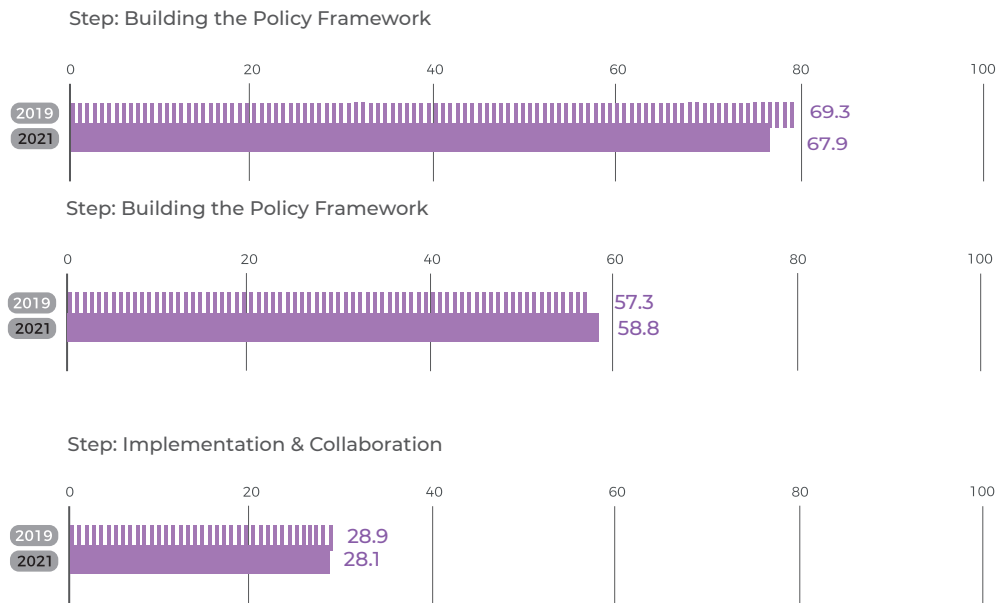
### 12.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Legal access to social security systems and entitlements for BIPs as captured by the NIEM indicators has slightly deteriorated from 2019 to 2021, mainly due to the imposition of additional requirements in Greece and Slovenia. While only France, Italy, Lithuania and Spain ensure that the conditions for BIPs are the same as for nationals, in all other countries, the law excludes BIPs from eligibility to certain benefits or requires conditions that they cannot meet as newcomers.

Overall, indicators related to the policy framework improved slightly in comparison with 2019. Positive changes affected France, Latvia and Poland, while Slovenia saw steps backwards. In general, several countries provide some sort of information on social security entitlements and use of services, although several barriers still hinder access to social benefits for BIPs.

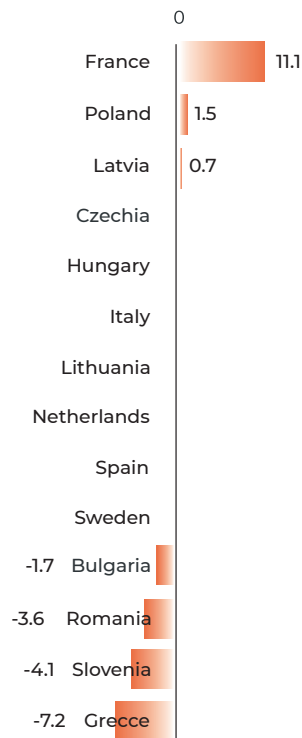
The implementation and collaboration indicators, from an overall still insufficiently low level, have been characterised by positive developments in France and unfavourable changes in Greece and Romania. Lithuania is the best-scoring country, as the Action Plan 2018-2020 on the Integration of Foreigners into Lithuanian Society also aims to facilitate comprehensive income support for BIPs and supports the local level in this task.

## Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **France**, support to welfare bodies in dealing with the social security needs of BIPs improved led to improved information of their staff on the entitlements and specific limitations of BIPs.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, since social service departments have become more acquainted with the needs of BIPs, there are no longer administrative barriers to receiving social assistance and minimum income support.
- ▶ In **Poland**, administrative barriers to access sickness and disability benefits and family and child-related benefits have been removed by recent judicial developments.<sup>8</sup>

## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Bulgaria**, in March 2019 the Parliament adopted the new Law on Social Services, which entered into force in July 2020. The new law fails to differentiate between the nationality and the legal status of the beneficiaries when it comes to providing access to social assistance and minimum income support. However, it introduces conditions that BIPs are unable to meet as newcomers.
- ▶ In **Greece**, the law provides access to social welfare for BIPs who enjoy the same rights and access to social assistance as nationals without discrimination. However, not all beneficiaries have access to social rights and welfare benefits. In particular, the family allowance is provided only to families that can demonstrate five years of permanent, uninterrupted and legal stay in Greece, excluding de facto the majority of BIPs from this benefit. Other than in the past, the government does not even support on an ad-hoc basis NGOs providing poverty relief to refugees.
- ▶ In **Romania**, the previous inter-ministerial strategy on integration ended in 2019 and was not renewed during 2020, leading to the absence of a mechanism to mainstream the integration of BIPs into social security.<sup>9</sup>
- ▶ In **Slovenia**, due to a December 2019 amendment to the Labour Market Regulation Act, a new condition is required for TCNs and BIPs to be registered in the unemployment register and access the minimum income support (social welfare). Unemployed persons must pass a Slovenian language test (level A1) within 12 months. If they do not successfully complete it, they cannot access social assistance, apart from exceptional cases.

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<sup>8</sup> To access the “500 plus” financial child benefit, the programme (under the 2016 act on state assistance in the upbringing of children) requires migrants to have a residence card with the annotation “access to the labour market”. Administrative courts ruled that the residence card merely confirms the entitlement that a person possesses. Thus, someone who has access to the labour market automatically has access to benefits. Therefore, BIPs do not have to meet the above requirement anymore.

<sup>9</sup> A new strategy was adopted in August 2021, after the cut-off date of this research.

## 12.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

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

### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

#### In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



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



#### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



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



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



### In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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

LT

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

FR NL SE

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

ES

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

### IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

#### PROVISION OF BENEFITS AND SUPPORT AT LOCAL LEVEL

LV

In **Latvia**, a one-off allowance from municipalities has been made available to BIPs without the requirement to have an officially declared residence. From January 2021, the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance includes a provision pointing out that a person without an officially declared residence (for valid reasons) can apply for support from the municipality where the person currently resides. The municipality is obliged to evaluate the material situation of the person and, if necessary, grant an extraordinary allowance to the person. The local government also has to consider the possibility of providing psychosocial assistance or granting corresponding social assistance benefits to the person.

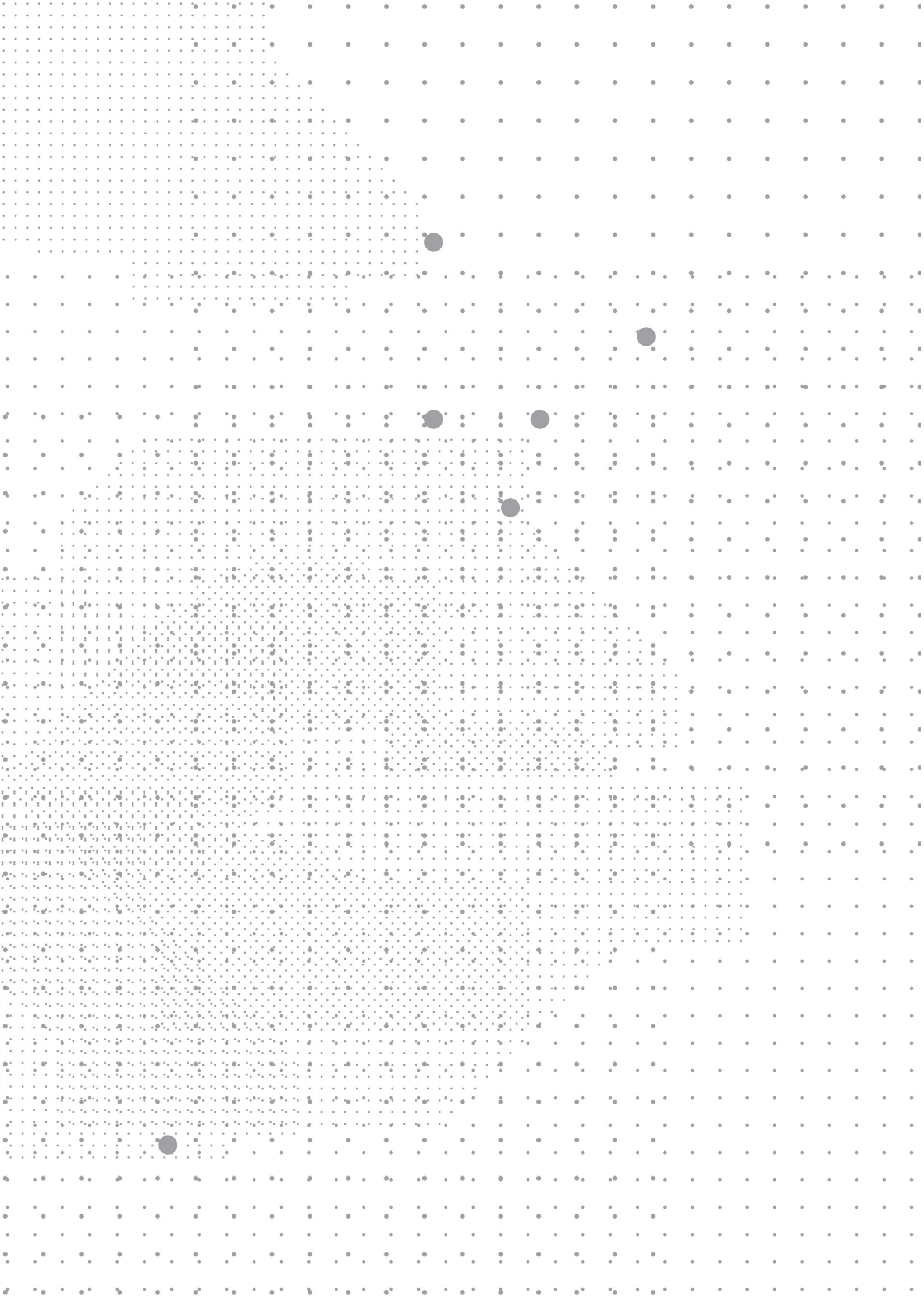
### ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – SOCIAL SECURITY

#### INDICATOR AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Beneficiaries of international protection living in poverty (income below the risk-of-poverty threshold before and after social benefits)
- Most frequent problems for persons benefitting from or seeking international protection related to social security and social assistance

As far as available through the NIEM research (data on the poverty indicator could be gathered in only seven countries), results indicate that in all assessed countries an income below the risk of poverty threshold affects a significant share of BIPs. While in Bulgaria, Czechia (for recognized refugees), Romania, Lithuania and Latvia this share - after social transfers – seems to be clearly lower than half of all BIPs, in Czechia (for BSPs), Italy

and Slovenia more than around half of BIPs are affected. In Italy, even most BIPs are considered as having an income below the risk of poverty threshold. An effect of social benefits to clearly reduce the share of BIPs receiving an income below the risk of poverty threshold is estimated to exist only in Czechia (for recognised refugees), Lithuania and Slovenia. A considerable number of refugees are either unemployed or being paid minimum salaries in most of the countries. Social benefits are unlikely to be enough to cover basic needs of BIPs in the majority of the countries. As reported from Romania, an increasing number of BIPs are involved in the so-called gig-economy (e.g. delivery services). While this may provide a decent income on the short term, it does not involve any type of social security benefits. The complexity of social security systems, lack of available information, long waiting periods to receive monthly benefits and language barriers are the most commonly mentioned challenges for BIPs. In Slovenia, the waiting period became even longer during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Greece, the help of NGOs in providing information about social entitlements was mentioned to be essential. There is no policy measure in place nor accessible official information which could assist BIPs in obtaining entitlement to social benefits. Even though the principle of equal treatment applies to BIPs, in some cases, BIPs are simply excluded from the benefits due to prerequisites that BIPs cannot meet (e.g. permanent address for a certain period). In Slovenia, although BIPs are allowed to work part-time while receiving social benefits, most BIPs are not informed about this and do not tend to work due to fear of losing social benefits. In Czechia, some BIPs even testified that they failed to obtain some of the benefits available because the system was too complex to notice the possibility in the first place. In Bulgaria, as BIPs often have difficulties in getting access to bank services, obstacles exist with regard to unemployment benefits which are paid only via bank transfer. Negative attitudes of the staff working in the institutions providing social services were specifically stated to be a challenge for BIPs in Lithuania and Poland.

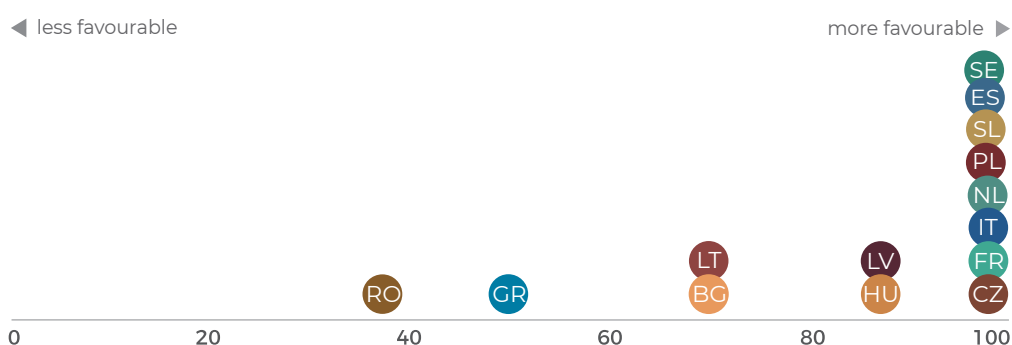


## 13. Education

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

### 13.1. 2021 Results by country

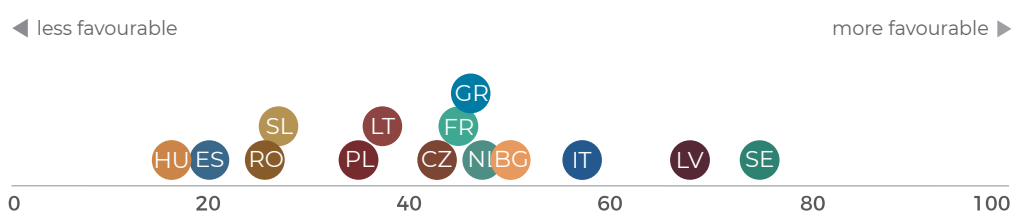
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicator:

- Access to education from pre-school to tertiary level

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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



## Step: Implementation & Collaboration

◀ less favourable

more favourable ▶



Assessed indicators:

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

### 13.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

In education, no major developments have been identified between 2019 and 2021 across the 14 countries. One of the most static areas of integration in the evaluation period, it is marked by the existence of huge gaps between laws adopted and widely missing policies and programmes to foster the inclusion of refugee pupils in practice.

Legal access to education is widely provided. In fact, almost all the countries ensure access to different levels of education to BIPs on equal basis with nationals, including access to pre-school education, primary/lower secondary education, upper secondary education and post-secondary and tertiary schools. Czechia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain<sup>10</sup> and Sweden are the countries which apply the highest possible legal standards to both recognised refugees and BSPs. They provide the same access to schooling for BIPs as nationals up to upper tertiary education level without imposing burdensome criteria that cannot be met as newcomers. On the other side, several legal conditions negatively affect the inclusion of BIPs into the education system in Greece, where minor children of asylum seekers and children seeking international protection have access to the education system only so long as there is no pending enforceable removal measure against them or their parents. Furthermore, children of third-country nationals with incomplete documentation can enrol at public schools only if a number of conditions are met.

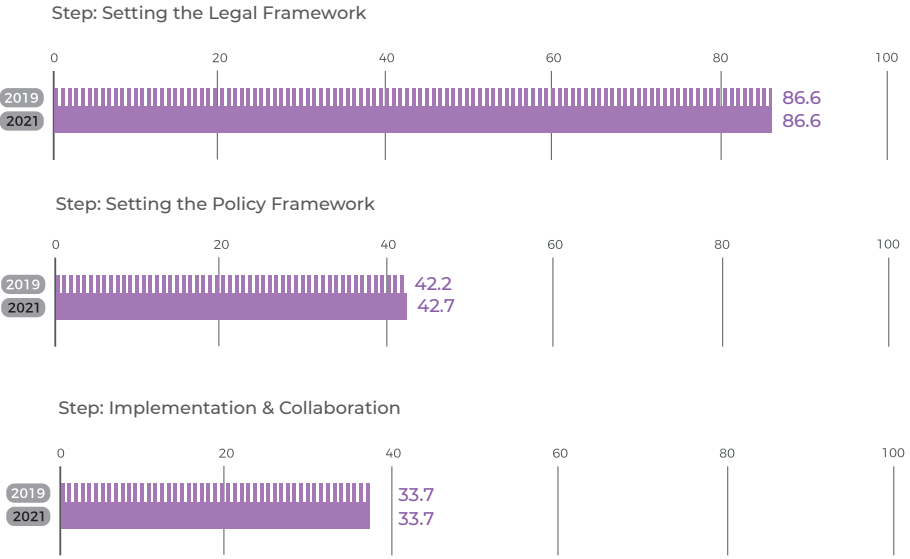
Policy-related indicators point to numerous obstacles to the effective integration of BIPs into education systems. While most of the countries do not pose administrative barriers to access primary, lower and upper secondary education, barriers to full access to higher levels of education are frequent. Only few countries have tailored policies addressing pupils' school placement. Also, provisions to ensure access to education for vulnerable groups are very

<sup>10</sup> In Spain, autonomous communities hold executive and administrative competence on education, with variation across regions. The “no presence” of the country in the charts is not due to a negative assessment, but to a “not/applicable” score.

rare in the assessed countries. One of the reasons for Sweden’s high score is its comprehensive system for placing children under international protection in the school system. It includes clear criteria to assess levels of education and prior learning, translation in the assessment procedure, guidelines where evidence from the country of origin is missing and monitoring of children placed in special needs schools. In addition, language programmes and targeted educational measures are offered in a systematic manner and receive systematic funding.

Italy, Slovenia and the Netherlands achieve the highest results with regard to implementation and coordination. In these countries, the national governments provide material and immaterial support to regional education authorities and school boards to better deal with the education needs of children and youth under international protection. In addition, these countries continuously provide means for expert NGOs. Most of the countries, however, lack a multi-stakeholder strategy to facilitate integration in the education system and a mechanism to monitor educational policies and outcomes for children under international protection. Similarly, only in a few countries is comprehensive multi-level coordination with regional and local education authorities fully implemented. Moreover, in the majority of countries, there is no systematic state support for expert NGOs on education within an established framework.

**Overall change 2019 to 2021**



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step. Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

### Positive developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, thanks to legislative changes adopted in 2019, orientation and language programmes are now offered in a systematic manner to refugee pupils. New resources for language programmes were introduced with the support of AMIF funding on which they mainly rely.
- ▶ In **Latvia**, the state now provides assessments of children's education levels with appropriate translation and, sometimes, in the first language of the child. The interpretation services are provided by NGOs that receive government funding. The assessment is performed soon after a person or family applies for asylum. Interpreting services are requested by mentors who accompany the children and their parents to the meetings with school principals and teachers.

### Negative developments

- ▶ In **Slovenia**, previous funding to raise awareness for the specific challenges of refugee pupils provided by the Government Communications Office ceased with the new government formed in March 2020. The funds were redirected towards other priorities, whilst NGOs have been negatively portrayed in the media and their activities presented as an unjustifiable public cost.

### 13.3. Best practices in refugee integration

#### What EU and international law requires

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

#### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

##### In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



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##### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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

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



... proactively raise awareness among stakeholders about the specific situation of BIPs regarding education (schools/universities informed by authorities, schools/universities inform staff, campaigns sensitize pupils and students).	—
... adopt comprehensive assessment systems and measures for the placement of children under international protection in the compulsory school system.	LV SE
... provide language support based on individual assessment until proficiency is attained or without time limit.	FR IT LT PL SE <i>IT: partly</i>
... offer in a systematic manner regular orientation and language programmes and targeted education measures which receive systematic funding.	BG FR LV LT CZ NL SE
<b>In the Step: Implementation &amp; Collaboration</b>	
... establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies.	LT
... ensure systematic coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection.	BG GR SL NL IT SE
... continuously provide means for expert NGOs within an established framework	CZ ES NL

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

### COORDINATION MECHANISMS WITH EDUCATION AUTHORITIES AND SCHOOL BOARDS ON EDUCATION

NL

In the **Netherlands**, the government supports regional authorities and school boards, and provides them with additional means to promote the integration of BIPs. The first aspect is reflected in the funding that local authorities and schools receive from the Dutch government via **LOWAN** (an organization dedicated to support newcomer education), especially for the inclusion of minor BIPs in secondary education and to prepare them for participating in the regular Dutch education system. The second aspect is reflected in the guidelines that the government adopts in close cooperation with the asylum authority COA and LOWAN to help local municipalities deal with the education of minor BIPs.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – EDUCATION

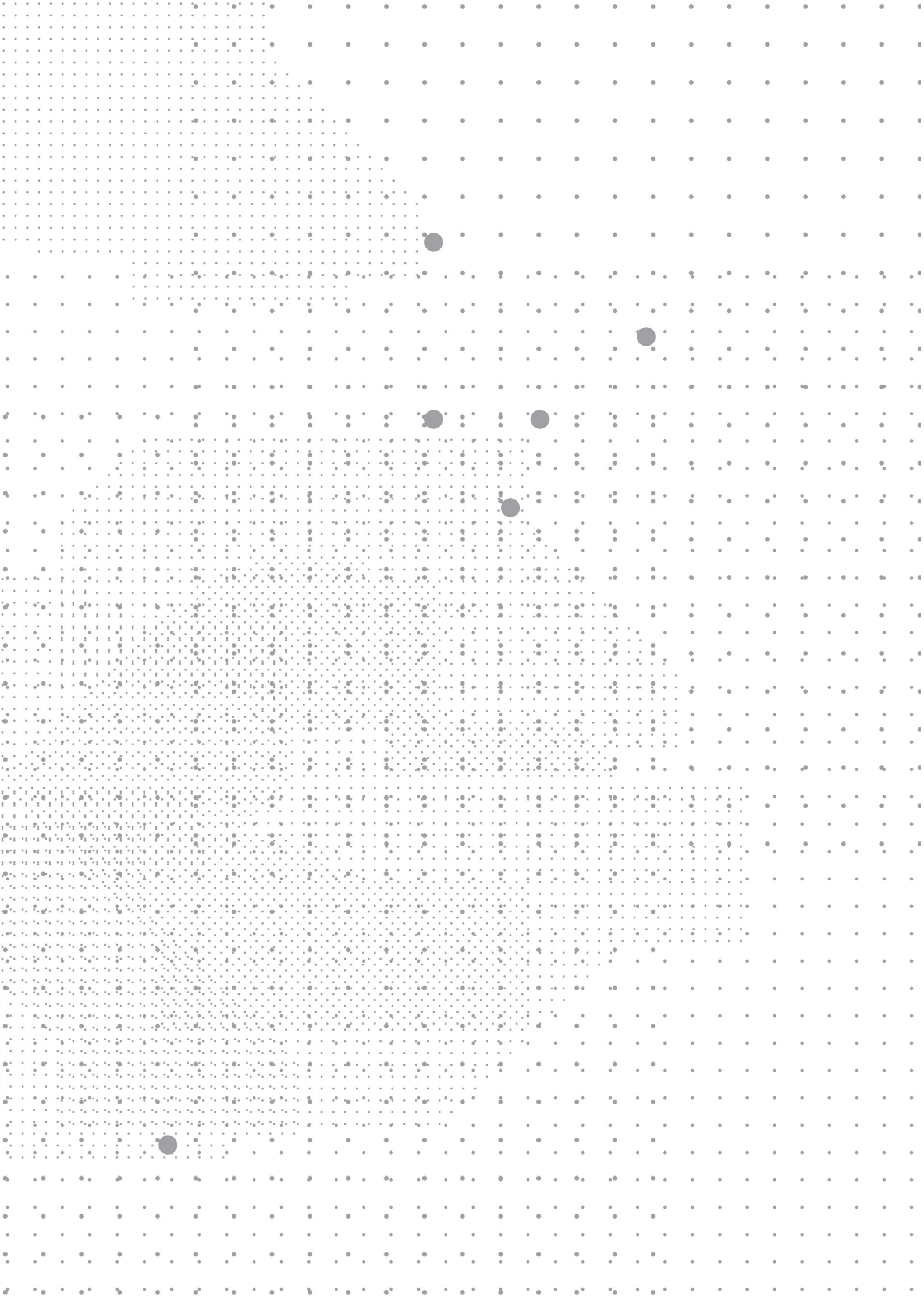
### INDICATOR AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Impact and benefits of language and learning support
- Most frequent problems for persons benefiting from or seeking international protection concerning school education

Overall, the share of respondents reporting that their children or they themselves have benefited from language and learning support in the school system is highly variable across the assessed countries. In some countries (such as Bulgaria, France, Italy, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden) most or nearly all respondents reported to have benefited from learning support, while in others (such as Czechia, Lithuania) only few respondents were able to confirm this.

Grave concerns exist in relation to educational support across countries. Lack of sufficient and effective language support, lack of tailored learning support for BIP children, administrative barriers to access formal education, lack of information and guidance about education possibilities, lack of resources to tackle integration challenges at schools, frequent moves and school change, negative attitudes and prejudices in the school environment and the lack of an integral approach to refugee integration are the most commonly mentioned challenges by BIPs and experts across countries. The Slovenian example illustrates the general picture. There, the organisation of language courses and additional programmes for BIP children are left to schools. In addition, there is no standardised access to schools for BIPs, with some schools administering written tests while others do not. Language courses are reported to be not sufficient for refugee children to be able to follow the curricula. More individual support is only possible if children are diagnosed with special needs. There is also a tendency for BIP children to be directed towards 'easier' schools and to vocational schools instead of grammar schools.

Some countries deny refugee pupils the chance to achieve better integration outcomes through targeted support in schools. The Ministry of Education in Greece is not providing sufficient language courses to meet the need of refugees, and there is no publicly financed education or language learning support for BIPs in Hungary. Also in Romania, the Ministry of Education is delaying the adoption of necessary secondary legislation that would remove some funding bottlenecks, stimulating the schools to accept and better integrate migrant children.

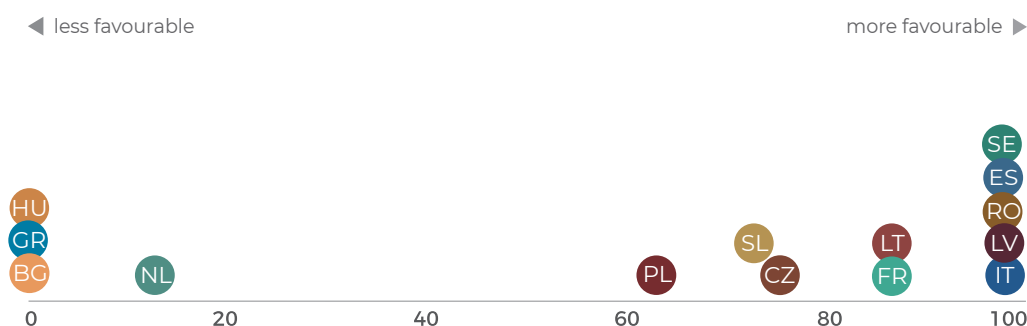


## 14. Language learning & social orientation

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

### 14.1. 2021 Results by country

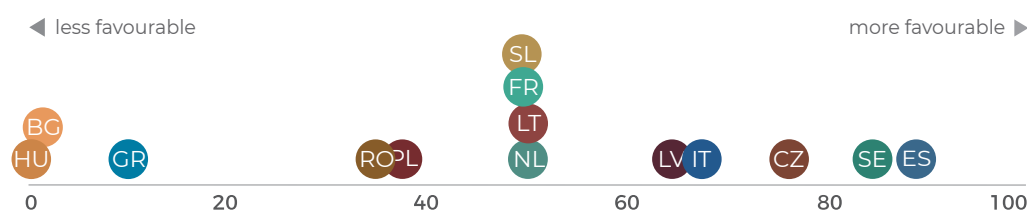
#### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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



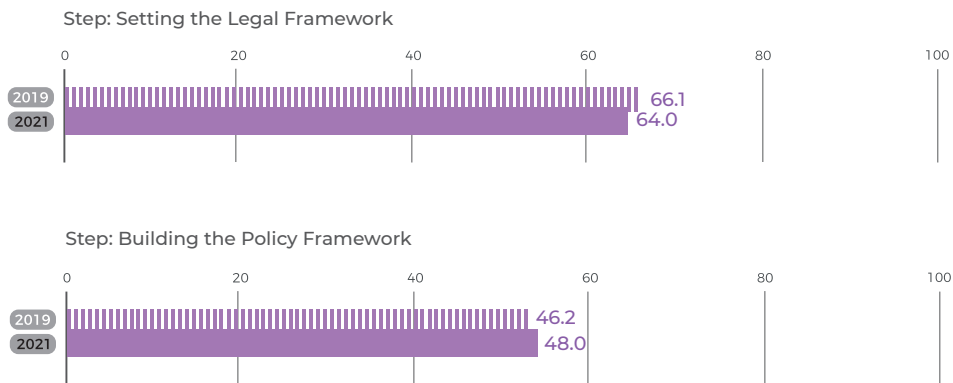
## 14.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

NIEM indicators related to language learning and social orientation captured a number of developments during the 2019 to 2021 period. With regard to legal access to host language and social orientation courses, some unfavourable changes occurred in Slovenia. As of spring 2021, free language courses for BIPs, with no further obligations such as costs and compulsory attendance attached, were provided only in Czechia, Italy, Latvia, Romania, Spain and Sweden. Most countries, however, ensured access to free social orientation courses without imposing any obligations on BIPs.

Policy-related indicators show that improvements occurred in Czechia, Greece, and the Netherlands, mostly concerning the modalities to access to language and social orientation courses, while minor negative developments took place in Latvia. In general, BIPs still encounter obstacles due to the lack of translation and interpretation assistance when dealing with public and social services. However, in the majority of countries, there are no administrative requirements that can pose a barrier for accessing publicly funded social orientation and language learning courses.

Spain continues to obtain the highest score related to the policy framework in place. Language learning, translation and interpretation assistance are all based on individual needs until proficiency is attained; and measures are taken to ensure high quality of tuition. Concerning social orientation courses, there are also no administrative barriers and tailored courses are available for a range of groups of special concern.

### Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

### Positive developments

- ▶ In **Czechia**, the quality of social orientation courses has improved. The courses are now taught according to a country-wide standardised curriculum and are regularly evaluated in the light of country-wide quality standards. Participants receive a “Your New Home” publication which is available in eight languages and provides comprehensive information.
- ▶ **Greece** still does not provide government-funded host language learning courses as a general policy for all BIPs. However, in the framework of the new National Strategy for Integration, the HELIOS 2 programme (EU-funded from AMIF) includes a pilot programme of 6-month Greek language courses, implemented since June 2019 by IOM and its partners. Language courses are also included in a number of other, still to be implemented, actions of the strategy.
- ▶ In the **Netherlands**, social orientation courses (which, however, are not free) are regularly evaluated in the light of country-wide quality standards.

### Negative developments

- ▶ In **Slovenia**, according to new legislation, the integration period in which BIPs receive support has been reduced from three to two years. BIPs have access to free Slovenian language courses and a one-off free Slovenian language test

only if they sign an agreement on integration activities with the Government Office for Reception and Integration of Migrants within one month of recognition of their status.

- ▶ In **Latvia**, the quality of language courses was found lacking concerning tailored formats for different target groups. There is a need for flexible curricula, including courses of different intensities and length, as well as for courses for illiterate persons.

### 14.3. Best practices in refugee integration

#### What EU and international law requires

Under EU law, while the recast Reception Conditions Directive does not mention any specific forms of integration support to asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection become entitled to integration support under the recast Qualification Directive (Article 34). The Directive specifies that this support needs to take into account their specific needs. The provision implements the general obligation that can be derived from the Geneva Convention's article on naturalisation which is interpreted to facilitate the integration process until its legal end point. Within the EU framework, the Common Basic Principles underline that integration is a dynamic, two-way process including both migrants and locals. Common Basic Principles 7 and 9 list more concrete forms of building social cohesion. Beneficiaries of international protection and members of the receiving society should be given the chance to regularly interact and be part of shared forums and inter-cultural dialogues. This interaction should also include dialogue with decision-making bodies when beneficiaries of international protection can engage with national, regional and local authorities on the formulation of improved integration policies.

#### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

##### In the Step: Setting the Legal Framework

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



FR: mandatory for beginners

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



PL: provided in context of social work  
RO: limited availability

##### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



... provide for language learning based on individual assessment until proficiency is attained or without a general time limit	ES IT LT SE
... not to impose any administrative barriers to host language learning (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).	CZ ES GR IT LT NL PL SE SL
... provide needs-based translation and interpretation assistance for BIPs when dealing with authorities and public services until proficiency is attained or without a time limit.	ES IT LV SE
... ensure high quality of social orientation courses (country-wide standardised curriculum, interaction with the receiving society, regular evaluation along country-wide quality standards, complementary information material).	SE
... provide social orientation for groups of special concern (unaccompanied minors, parents with children, women, the elderly, victims of violence and other forms of trauma, illiterate or semi-illiterate persons)	ES SE
... not to impose any administrative barriers to social orientation (hard-to-obtain documentation, delays, discretionary decisions).	CZ ES IT LT LV NL PL SE

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – LANGUAGE LEARNING AND SOCIAL ORIENTATION

### INDICATOR AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Impact of language courses (courses helpful to learn as much of the language as wanted/to learn specific vocabulary needed for job/to get involved in local community/to get a better job or education)
- Impact of social orientation programmes (courses helpful to learn as much about the country as wanted/to access public services/to get involved in local community/to get a better job or education)
- Most frequent problems for persons benefitting from or seeking international protection related to host language learning and social orientation

Overall, results on outcomes of language learning and social orientation support for BIPs suggest that there is a lack of structured approaches across countries, with considerable variations in the assessment on whether courses are helpful. Among the eight countries where relevant data could be gathered (in three of which only partially), it appears that in Czechia,

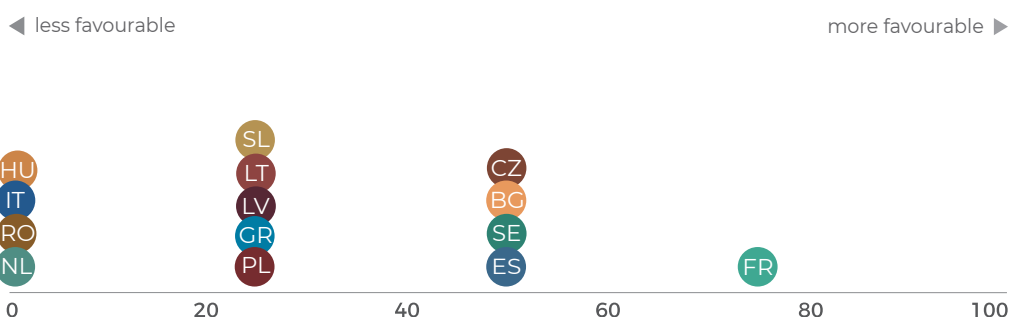
Romania, Slovenia and Sweden the language courses were considered useful for more than 20% of the participants, while social orientation courses were useful – in the sense of this rather low benchmark – in Czechia, France, Italy and Latvia. Language courses were assessed as being more useful than social orientation in Romania, while in France, Latvia and Slovenia the social orientation courses were considered more useful than the language courses. Overall, the content of the courses was found to be too theoretical and not to be designed to meet practical needs of BIPs across countries. Time constraints are one of the most important complicating factors when considering the effectiveness of language courses. Often people lack opportunities to practice the new language if they do not have a social network or a job. Lack of information about the courses is another challenge raised by some respondents. Some BIPs mentioned to be discouraged by the complexity of the local language which is not similar to their mother tongue. Again, results from Slovenia are illustrative. Although recognised refugees have access to a good many hours of language courses, most of them reported that they do not learn as much as they expected. Some of the problems identified are about the lack of tailored-made services and a disregard of special needs in the design of language courses. For example, some people are illiterate and would need a literacy course first while some people would only need a conversational course. For people who never went to school it is difficult to stay focused for three hours in class. The social orientation programme, on the other hand, was reported to receive mainly positive reviews and was considered useful for BIPs. The programme aims to be flexible and individualises the content. Nevertheless, some issues were raised due to differences in the profiles of BIPs who attend the course. In Poland, Bulgaria, Greece and Hungary, no publicly funded language and social orientation courses existed in the reporting period. Such courses are only provided by NGOs in some of these countries. In Lithuania, respondents indicated that they did not participate in any state funded social orientation course, in spite of their existence. In addition, asylum seekers are not eligible for publicly funded social orientation programmes in Sweden and are neither eligible for publicly funded social orientation programmes nor for language courses in Slovenia.

## 15. Building bridges

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

### 15.1. 2021 Results by country

#### Step: Building the Policy Framework



Assessed indicators:

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

#### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



Assessed indicators:

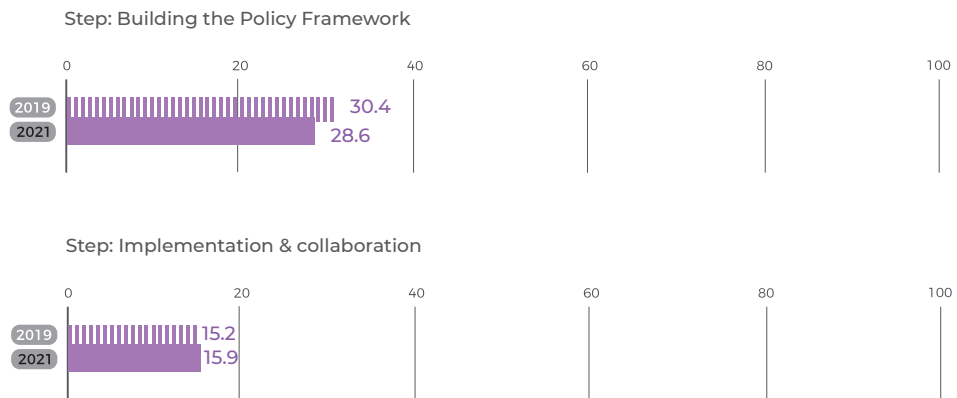
- Coordination with regional and local authorities on social cohesion
- Encouragement of voluntary initiatives to complement public policies
- Support for involvement of beneficiaries of international protection in civic activities
- Involvement in national consultation processes
- Involvement in local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

## 15.2. Key trends 2019 to 2021

Building bridges remains the weakest area of integration for BIPs across the 14 countries and saw some of the strongest fluctuations in the 2019 to 2021 period. Indicators related to policies which demand a proactive role on the part of the receiving society and raising awareness about the situation of BIPs recorded negative changes in Hungary and Romania, which failed to adopt a national strategy on refugee integration during this period. Positive trends, however, relate to Poland and Bulgaria. Progress could also be booked concerning collaboration-related indicators in France (on consultation with BIPs on issues concerning their integration) and Latvia (on support for volunteerism).

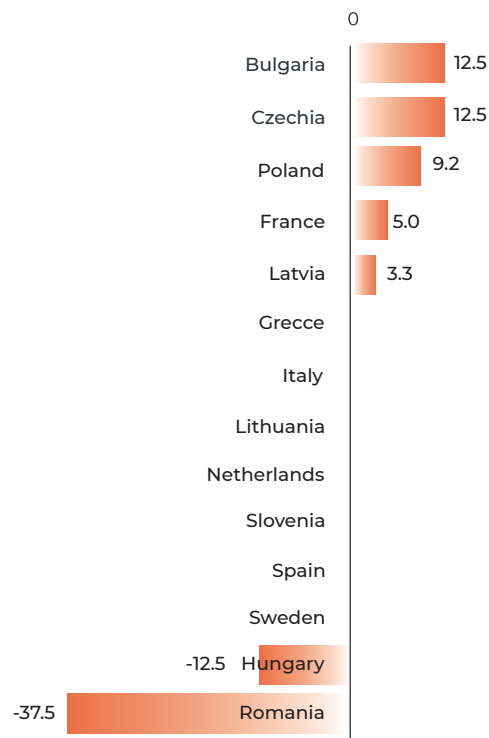
France obtains the highest score overall, as building bridges represents a focal area of its national refugee integration strategy. The strategy expects the receiving society to be actively involved and supports this through government means for micro-projects, volunteer training and civic service. Commitments and responsibilities at regional and local levels include departmental contact points and steering committees to design roadmaps for the integration of BIPs. “Territorial contracts” with metropolitan cities concern initiatives that foster integration pathways and interaction between refugees and the host society.

### Overall change 2019 to 2021



Average of the scores assigned to the indicators assessed within each step.  
Average from 14 compared countries in NIEM Evaluation 1 (2019) and Evaluation 2 (2021)

## Overall change 2019 to 2021 by country



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

## Positive developments

- ▶ In **Bulgaria**, while lacking specific commitments for the integration of BIPs, the new National Strategy on Migration does expect the receiving society to be actively involved in the integration process. It notes that integration “is achieved only with active participation of both sides of the process – legal migrants and the host society.”
- ▶ In **Czechia**, a 2019 AMIF call (co-financed from the state budget) led to the implementation of three important campaigns and awareness-raising projects on the situation of migrants, including BIPs.
- ▶ In **Poland**, the national government started to allocate AMIF funds to NGOs again. In 2020, some civil society organisations carried out activities in selected local communities aimed at increasing their sensitivity towards migrants and BIPs. These initiatives also included some ad hoc outreach activities.
- ▶ In **France**, the national government has made efforts to include and consult refugees on issues concerning their integration (see below Good Practice).
- ▶ In **Latvia**, state funding for voluntary initiatives is available to NGOs providing various support to BIPs, including voluntary initiatives, through the governmental “NGO Fund” programme.



## Negative developments

- ▶ In **Romania**, in the reporting period, there was no national integration strategy that would have defined the role of the receiving society in the integration of BIPs. The permanent structured dialogue between all relevant stakeholders – established at government level in the previous years – is no longer functioning. There were no publicly funded campaigns to sensitise the host society about the situation of BIPs and target prejudices as there had been in the past.
- ▶ In **Hungary**, as the Migration Strategy for 2014-2020 expired without a successor strategy in place, there is no longer any government policy calling for the creation of an open host society and fostering/establishing intercultural dialogues.

## 15.3. Best practices in refugee integration

### What EU and international law requires

According to the first Common Basic Principle for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. In addition, the seventh Common Basic Principle underlines that frequent interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens is fundamental for integration. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens. The ninth Common Basic Principle also sets out that the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration. Likewise, the UNHCR Executive Committee in 2005 stipulated that the integration of refugees is a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process which requires the efforts of all concerned parties, including a preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity and a corresponding readiness on the part of the receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse community.

### In practice, these benchmarks require countries to...

#### In the Step: Building the Policy Framework

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



BG: strategy not explicit for BIPs

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



### In the Step: Implementation & Collaboration

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

FR NL SE

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

—

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

FR NL SE

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

FR

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

—

status as of 31 March 2021; countries shown fulfill the highest standard in the indicator

### IN DETAIL: GOOD PRACTICES

FR

#### ACADEMY FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF REFUGEES

In **France**, the inter-ministerial delegation for the reception and integration of refugees (DiAir) and the think tank IFRI, in partnership with UNHCR, launched the “Academy for the participation of refugees” in 2020. A call for applications opened in October 2020, to which 235 BIPs applied. As a result of this process, 12 BIPs (six men and six women, from 21 to 53 years old, from nine different countries, living in ten different departments in France) have been selected to receive a monthly training on public speaking, advocacy, and the development of a better understanding of the French institutional and associative sectors. The objective is to prepare them to take part in decision-making bodies (management boards, selection juries for projects, etc.) in NGOs or governmental institutions.

IT

#### PROMOTION OF VOLUNTEER INITIATIVES

In **Italy**, the **INTEGR-ACTION** (Universal Civil Service for holders of international and humanitarian protection) is a practice started in 2018 which aims to select volunteers for the Universal Civil Service. Young people can apply for carrying out different social activities in Italy and abroad. Asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection can participate as well. The practice is still ongoing, and new calls for participation are launched on an annual basis.

## SUPPORTING THE INVOLVEMENT OF BIPs IN CIVIC ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE



In **Latvia**, BIPs were defined as a specific target group in the new Plan for the Development of a Cohesive and Civically Active Society for 2021-2023. The support measures include consultative mechanisms for BIPs regarding available services, promotion of BIPs' involvement in social life, as well as early language and sociocultural orientation courses. In effect only since 2022, this reform is not reflected in Latvia's score as of 2021.

## INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS



In **Lithuania**, the legislation on state support for BIPs has recently been amended to include some important principles on the integration of BIPs. In particular, the concept of integration has been defined as a mutual adaptation process among BIPs, the host country and society. In addition, the law specifies that the provision of services for BIPs and family members has to be tailored to their needs in the form of individual plans, and that social support is provided by taking into account the integration progress of BIPs.

## PROVISION OF TAILORED SERVICES AND INTERCULTURAL ACTIVITIES



In **Greece**, Migrant Integration Centres (MICs) have been established in various municipalities in order to provide specialised services to third-country nationals, including beneficiaries of international protection. MICs provide, *inter alia*, lessons in Greek language, history and culture to adults and promote intercultural activities for migrant and native children and youth. The staff of the MICs consist of intercultural mediators who are familiar with migrant and refugee communities, social workers with expertise on migrants, minorities or socially excluded people, legal advisors with expertise on migration or labour law, as well as psychologists who are trained in post-traumatic stress disorders and in catering to the needs of vulnerable people.

## ACHIEVING INTEGRATION OUTCOMES – BUILDING BRIDGES

### INDICATOR AND QUESTION ASSESSED

- Number of beneficiaries of international protection in civic (political, socio-cultural, volunteering) activities
- Most frequent problems for beneficiaries of international protection to become involved in civic activities and to engage with the receiving society

In general, BIPs are not very likely to be regularly involved in civic activities across the assessed countries. Based on the indicative data from nine countries in which data from BIPs could be collected, only few are involved in political activities. As reported from Czechia, political activities, and political issues more generally, are unappealing for many BIPs since they often fled their home countries exactly for political reasons, they are either afraid to engage in political activities or tired by politics generally.

In Hungary, participation of BIPs in civic activities is very low and according to earlier research results and the opinion of experts of NGOs, active political participation is also discouraged by the fear from authorities and the vulnerability resulting from the automatic status review conducted every three years. The Romanian example shows that low political involvement also corresponds to a lack of government commitment to involve BIPs and their representatives in decision-making (as measured in a policy-related indicator, cf. chapter 15). Although there are several associations of immigrants, in particular where there are some historical ties between countries (a good example is Syria), there is no permanent structured dialogue with all relevant stakeholders. Between 2015 to 2018, a government-initiated a multi-stakeholder forum existed, which included BIPs and NGOs. In 2019 it was discontinued, despite of positive results, leading to valuable improvements in legislation and practice.

Although the share of BIPs involved in socio-cultural activities appears somewhat higher than for political activities in five countries, generally time constraints and limited language skills were also mentioned as barriers to more active social involvement across countries. Social participation in general is not seen as a priority by many BIPs until they are integrated into other areas of existential importance. The lack of stability and precariousness of their livelihoods prevent them from focusing on civic activities, as reported from several countries.

According to experts and BIPs across countries, active social participation is also likely to be hindered by the lack of financial security since the rate of people living under the risk-of-poverty threshold is considerably high. Socio-cultural activities for BIPs are mostly organised by NGOs and local community groups and a few other opportunities are mentioned in some countries. Results, in general, suggest that a coherent approach to

involve BIPs in civic and social activities is missing across countries. This often means that the information about activities and opportunities is not centrally administered and does not always reach potentially interested participants.

Although not very common, some BIPs in a few countries mentioned that they are involved in voluntary activities. In Slovenia, BIPs seem to be more motivated to engage in voluntary work since the social welfare office provides a monthly benefit on condition that BIPs have a contract on voluntary work. Similarly, in the Netherlands the government promotes voluntary activities as introduction into Dutch society and a possible first step towards paid employment. Lack of information, time and language skills however are major discouraging factors.

Prejudices towards migrants and experiences of discrimination are other factors hindering the process of building bridges with the host society. BIPs interviewed in Sweden agreed to the idea that integration is about collaboration between newcomers and the host community, creating safer, more welcoming places where everyone feels welcome and able to live together. But they talked about the difficulty in connecting with people from the local community and mentioned that they perceive Swedish society as 'closed'. BIPs in Italy also referred to the weakness of mutual trust between the receiving society and newcomers as an obstacle to create bridges and increase the engagement of migrants with the new country. The Bulgarian example shows how extremely negative political rhetoric and hate speech at the highest political level can influence public perceptions.

# **PART III**

## Country profiles



## 16. Overview of country results

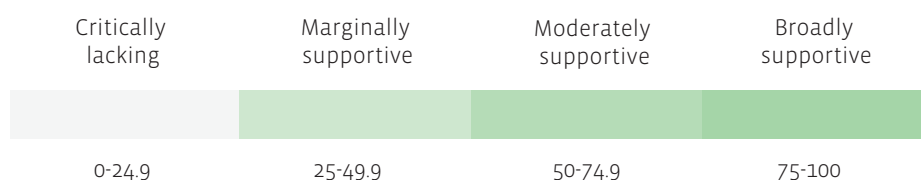
### 16.1. Introduction and indicators

Part III of this report includes the detailed profiles of the 14 assessed countries, depicting scored results in the various dimensions of integration and according to the stepstones towards a comprehensive integration framework, related to legal, policy and implementation/collaboration indicators.

With these profiles, developments since the previous round of NIEM monitoring can be identified, as well as gaps in the existing framework and needs for improvement. The comparison with the profiles of other countries may suggest priorities for target-setting and catching up with the better performing countries included in NIEM.

**Four graphs are shown for each country**, all comparing the 2021 situation with the 2019 scores along a 100 scale. They refer to the 12 dimensions of integration analysed in detail in Part II of this report and additionally to the impact of the reception phase on integration. A small number of indicators related to the reception phase are factored into the overall scores, as they strongly influence the prospects of successful integration after status recognition.

In every chart, the bars showing the scoring are depicted against a background which relates them to four broad, colour-coded ranges. In these, the framework in place can be considered as being critically lacking (score below 25), marginally supportive (score below 50), moderately supportive (score below 75) and broadly supportive (score up to 100) for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection.



#### Graph “Overall results”

This graph includes all assessed dimensions and presents the overall results of the country. For each dimension, the depicted scores are the averages of the scores assigned to the (legal, policy, implementation and coordination) “steps” as included in the dimension. The overall country scores shown at the bottom are the average of the scores in the dimensions.

#### Graph “Step: Setting the Legal Framework”

This graph refers to all dimensions which include legal indicators. In this “step”, a distinction is made between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Results for these two protection groups are often noticeable different,



which significantly impacts on integration perspectives. The overall scores for the “step” are the average of the scores in the dimensions. Indicators included are:

### Impact of reception on integration

- ▶ Procedure to identify applicants with special reception needs

### Residency

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

### Family reunification

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

### Citizenship

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

### Housing

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

### Employment

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

### Vocational training and employment-related education

- ▶ Access to mainstream vocational training and employment-related education

### Health

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

### Social security

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

### Education

- ▶ Access to education from pre-school to tertiary level

### Language learning and social orientation

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

## Graph “Step: Building the Policy Framework”

This graph refers to all dimensions which include indicators related to policies. A distinction is made between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in the dimensions of residency, family reunification and citizenship; due to the often significantly different scores for these two protection groups. All other dimensions depict the average scores for recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, since results for the two groups are generally very similar across countries. The overall scores for the “step” are the average of the scores in the dimensions. Indicators included are:

### Impact of reception on integration

- ▶ Average length of reception phase

### Residency

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

### Family reunification

- ▶ Family tracing services
- ▶ Fees for family reunification

### Citizenship

- ▶ Fees for naturalisation

### Housing

- ▶ Access to housing for vulnerable persons
- ▶ Awareness raising about the specific challenges of beneficiaries of international protection on the housing market
- ▶ Targeted housing advice, counselling, representation
- ▶ Provision of targeted housing support
- ▶ Provision of mainstream housing support
- ▶ Period of targeted housing support
- ▶ Administrative barriers to accessing public housing
- ▶ Housing quality assessment

### Employment

- ▶ Access to employment for groups of special concern
- ▶ Administrative barriers to accessing employment
- ▶ Awareness raising about the specific labour market situation of beneficiaries of international protection
- ▶ Assessment of skills
- ▶ Job-seeking counselling and positive action
- ▶ Targeted support for entrepreneurs

### Vocational training and employment-related education

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

### Health

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

### Social security

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

### Education

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

### Language learning and social orientation

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

### Building bridges

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

## Graph “Step: Implementation & Collaboration”

This graph refers to all dimensions which include indicators related to implementation and collaboration, which generally refer to recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection simultaneously. The overall scores for the “step” are the average of the scores in the dimensions. Indicators included are:

### Mainstreaming

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

### Housing

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

### Employment

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

### Vocational training and employment-related education

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

### Health

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

### Social security

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

### Education

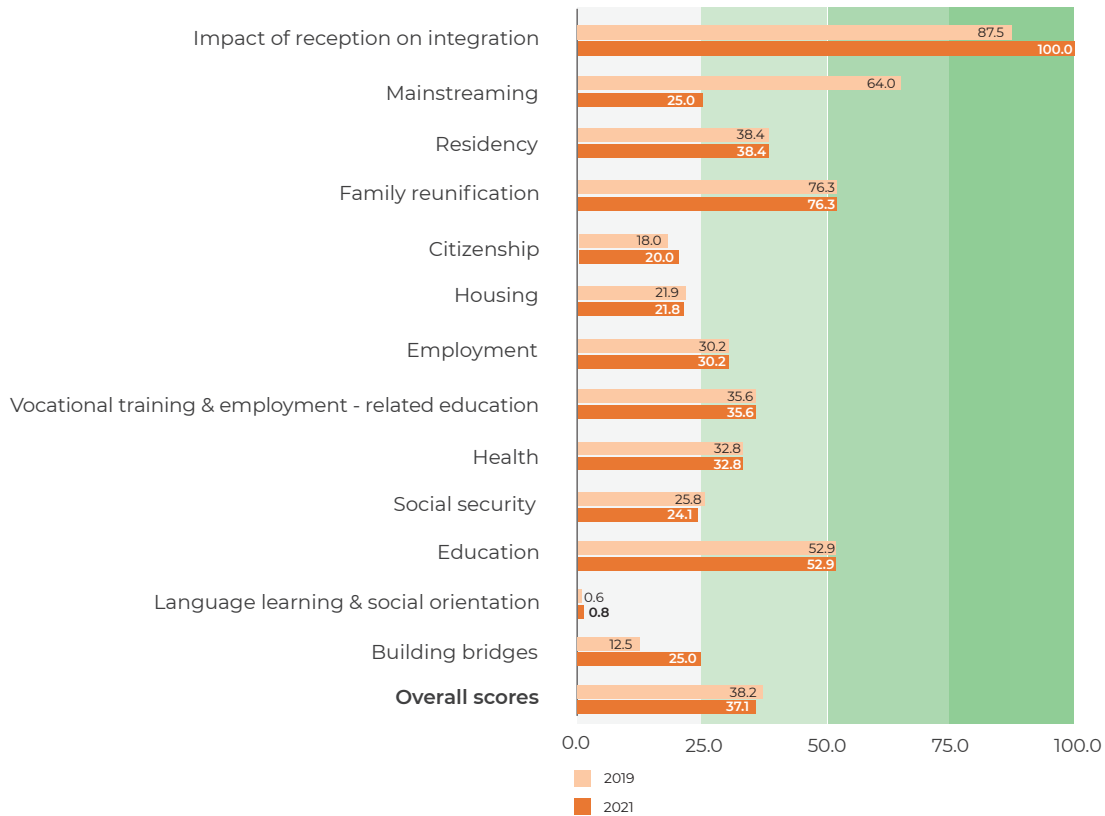
- ▶ Mechanisms to mainstream the integration of children and youth under international protection into education policies
- ▶ Coordination with regional and/or local education authorities and school boards on education for children and youth under international protection
- ▶ Partnership on education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

### Building bridges

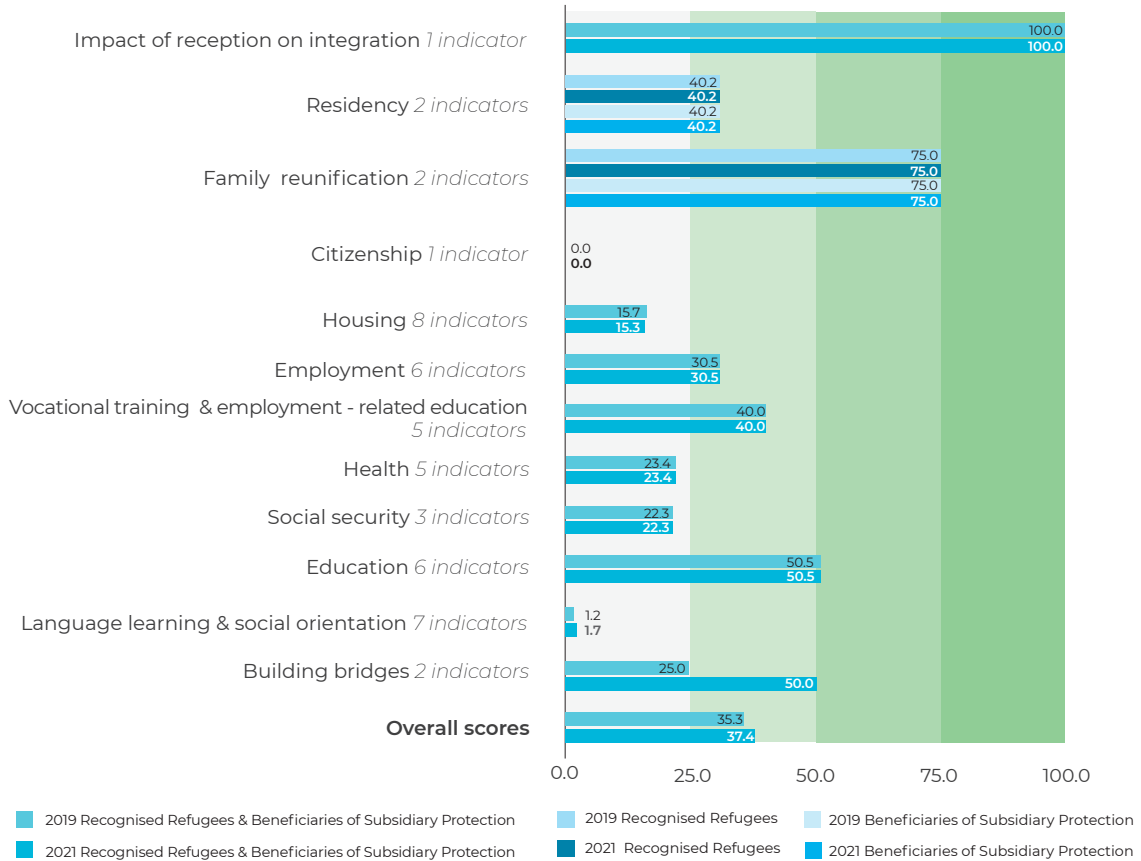
- ▶ Coordination with regional and local authorities on social cohesion
- ▶ Encouragement of voluntary initiatives to complement public policies
- ▶ Support for involvement of beneficiaries of international protection in civic activities
- ▶ Involvement in national consultation processes
- ▶ Involvement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

## 16.2. Bulgaria

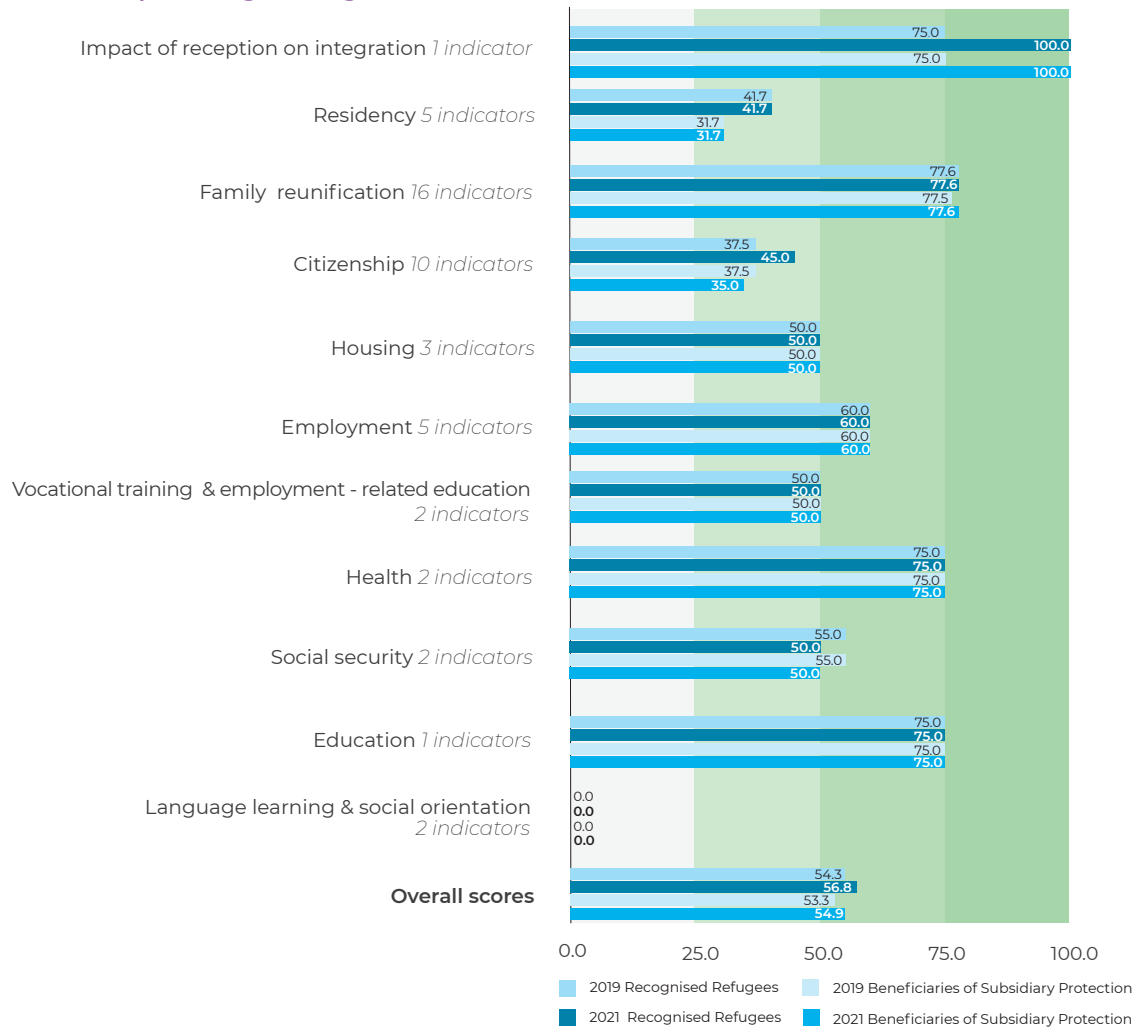
### Overall results



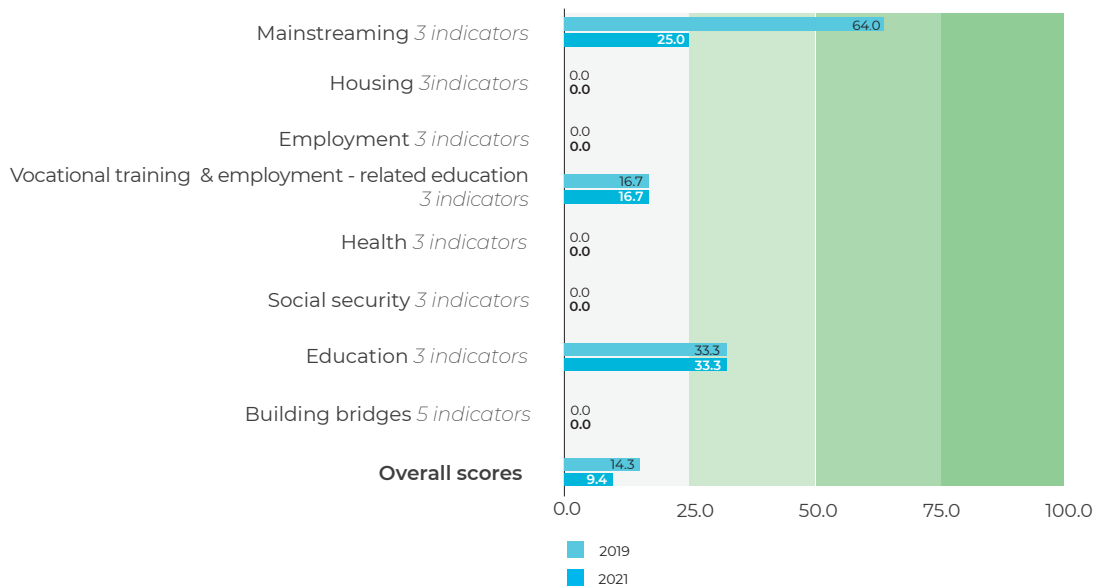
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

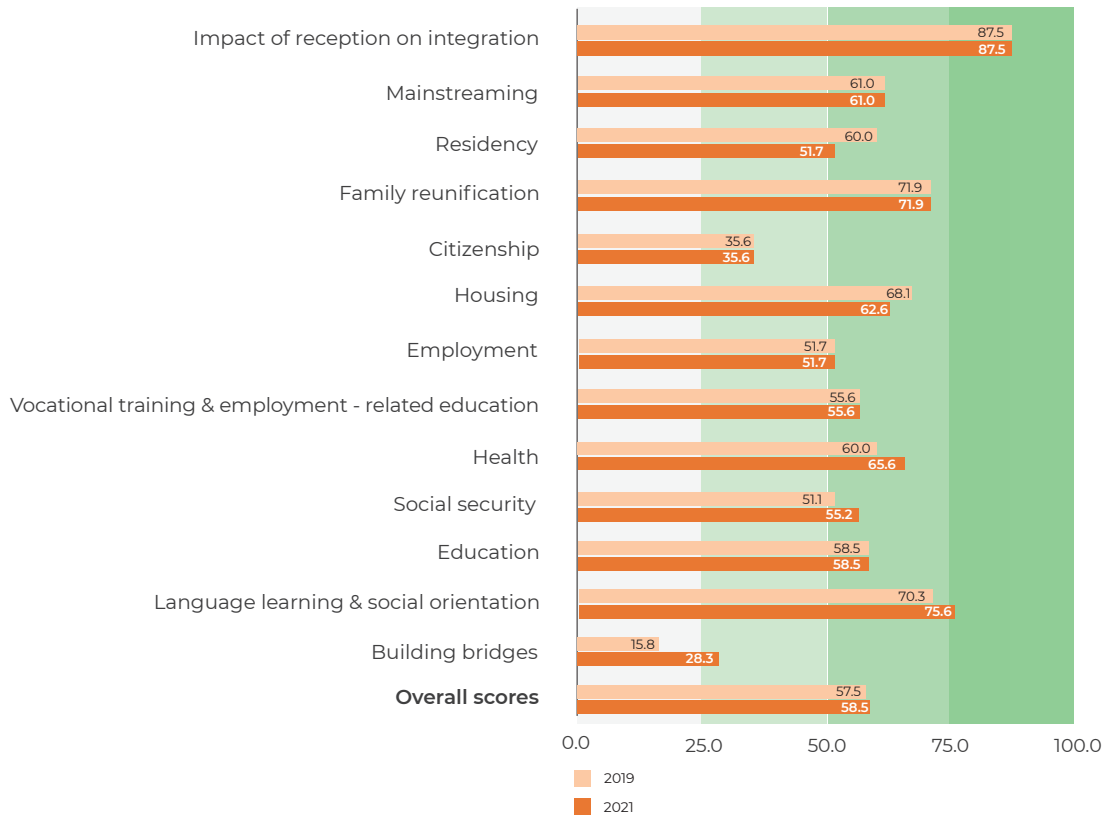




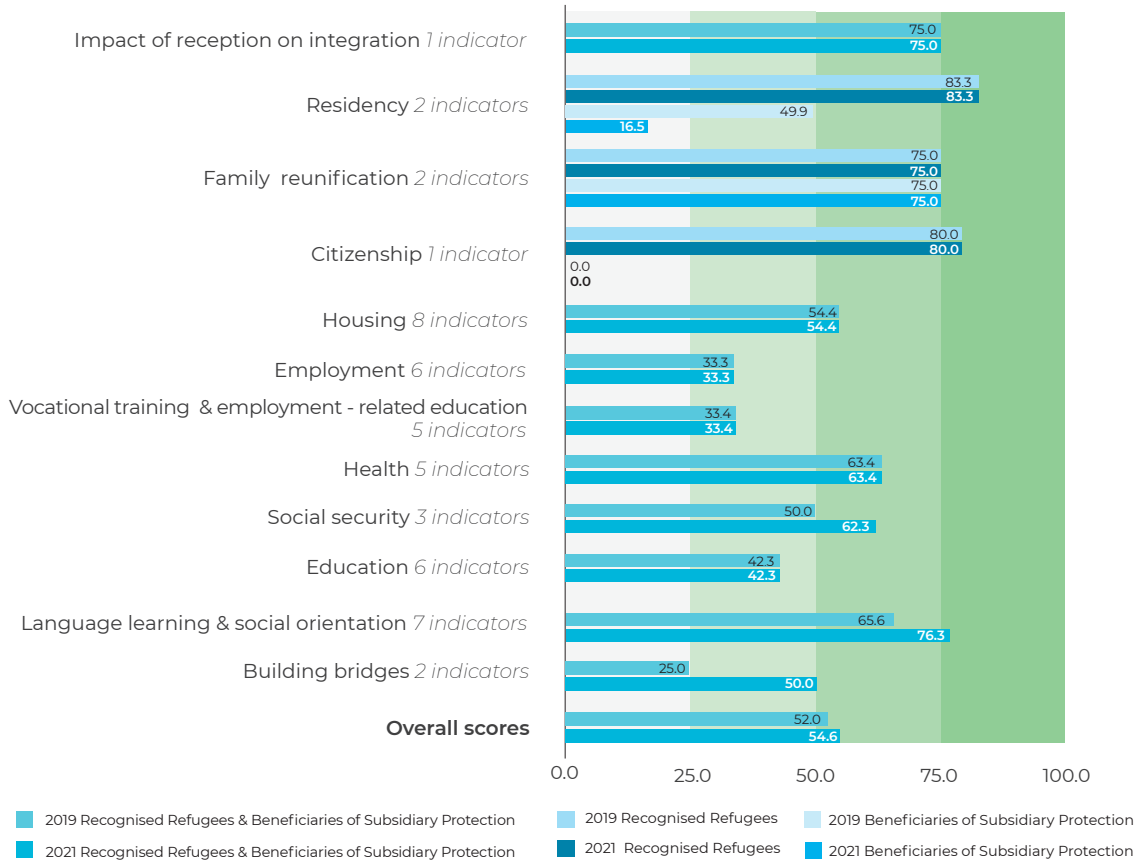


## 16.3. Czechia

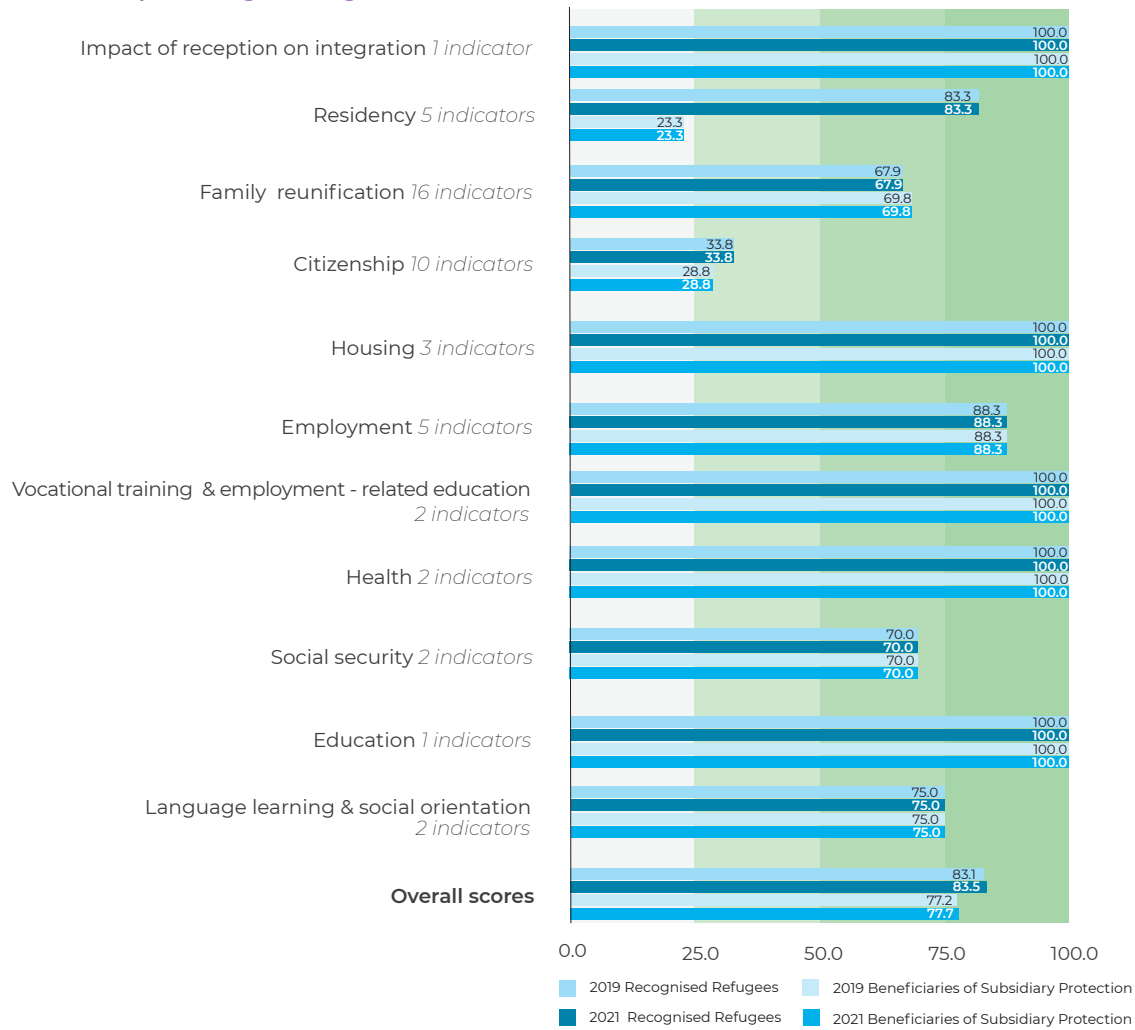
### Overall results



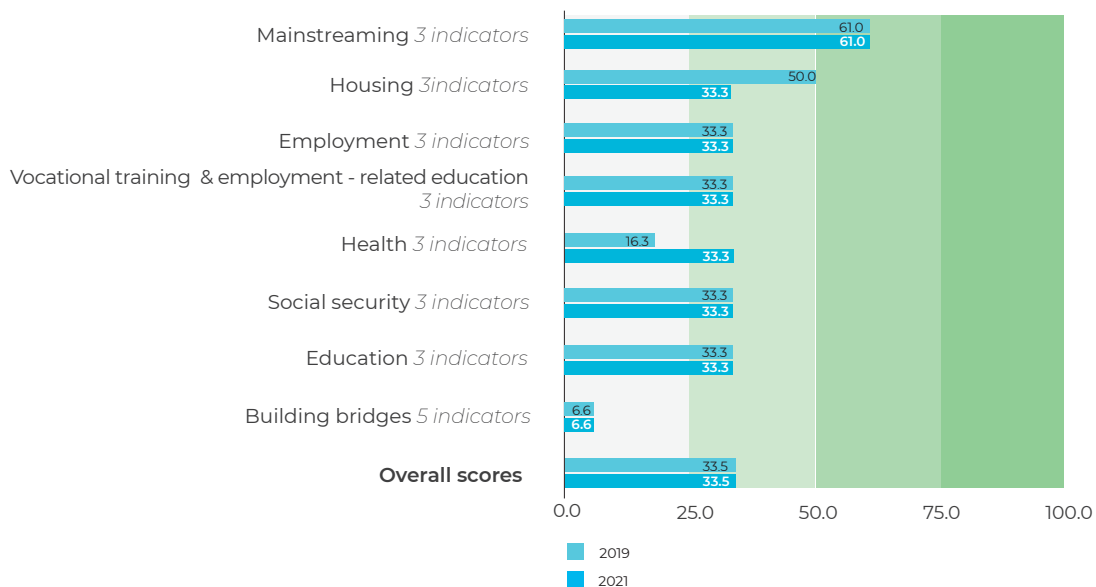
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

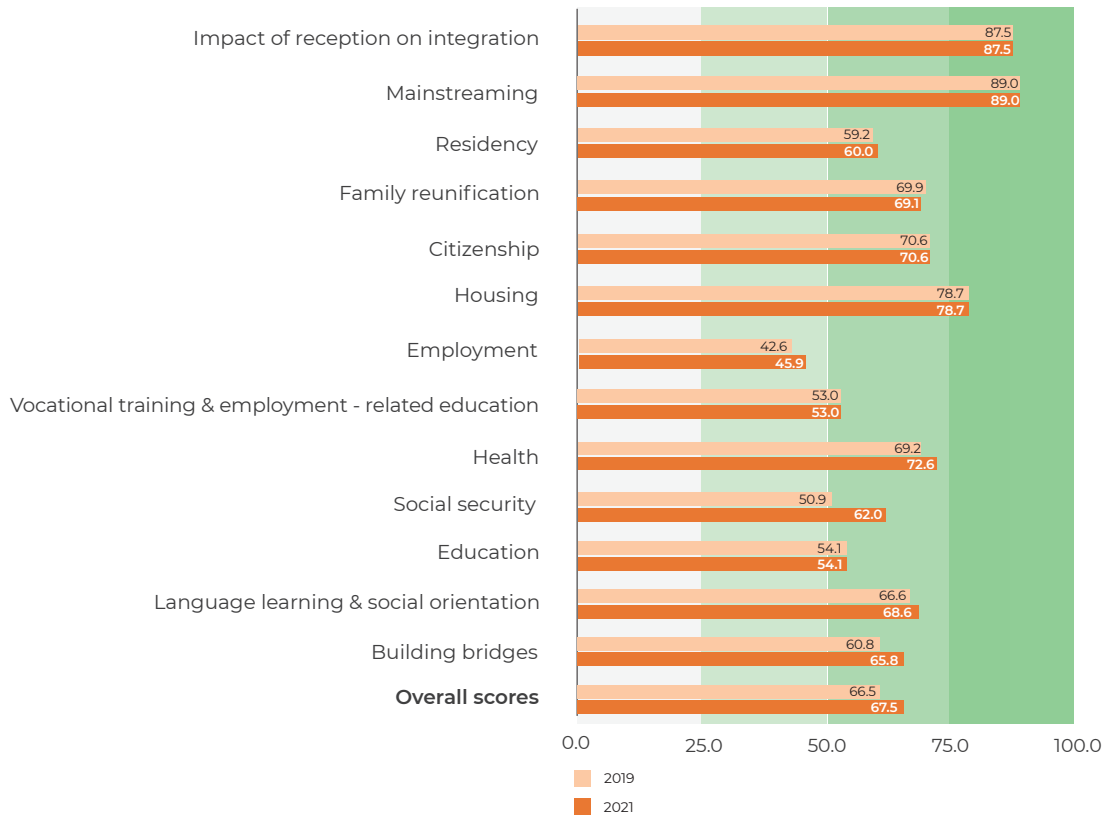


### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

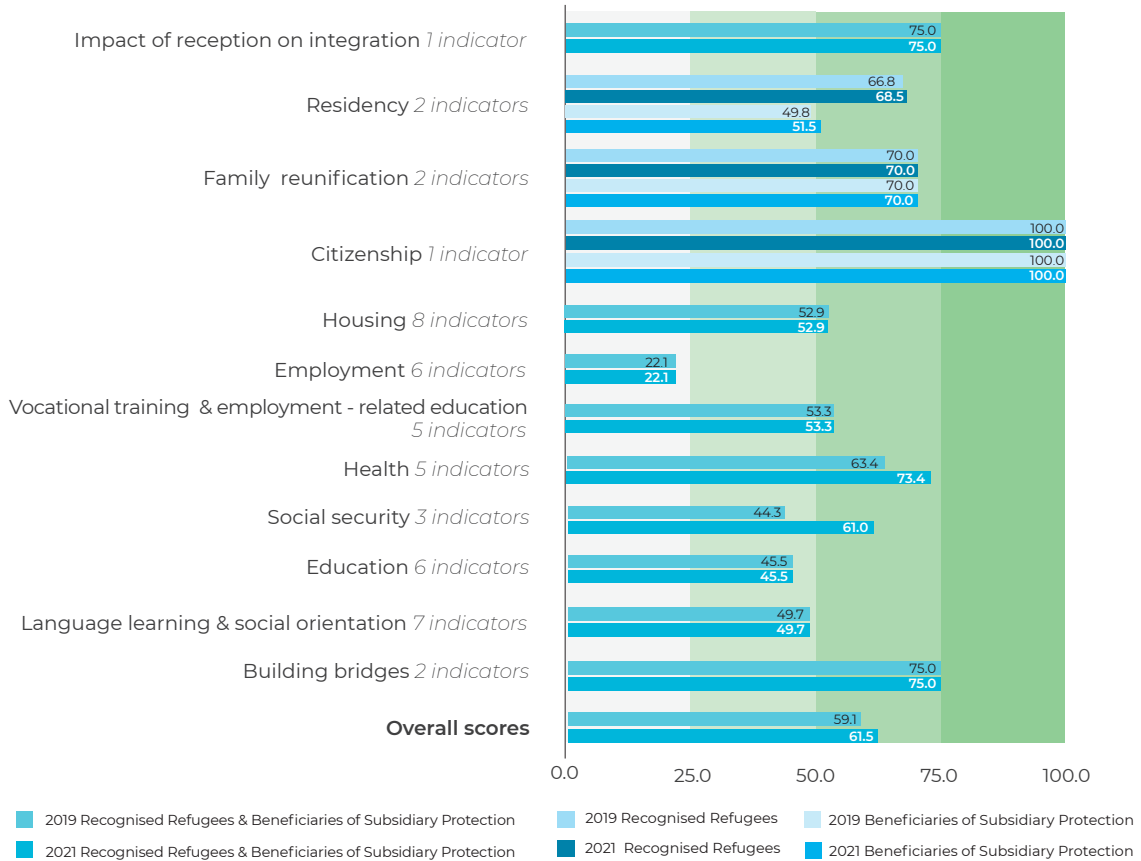


## 16.4. France

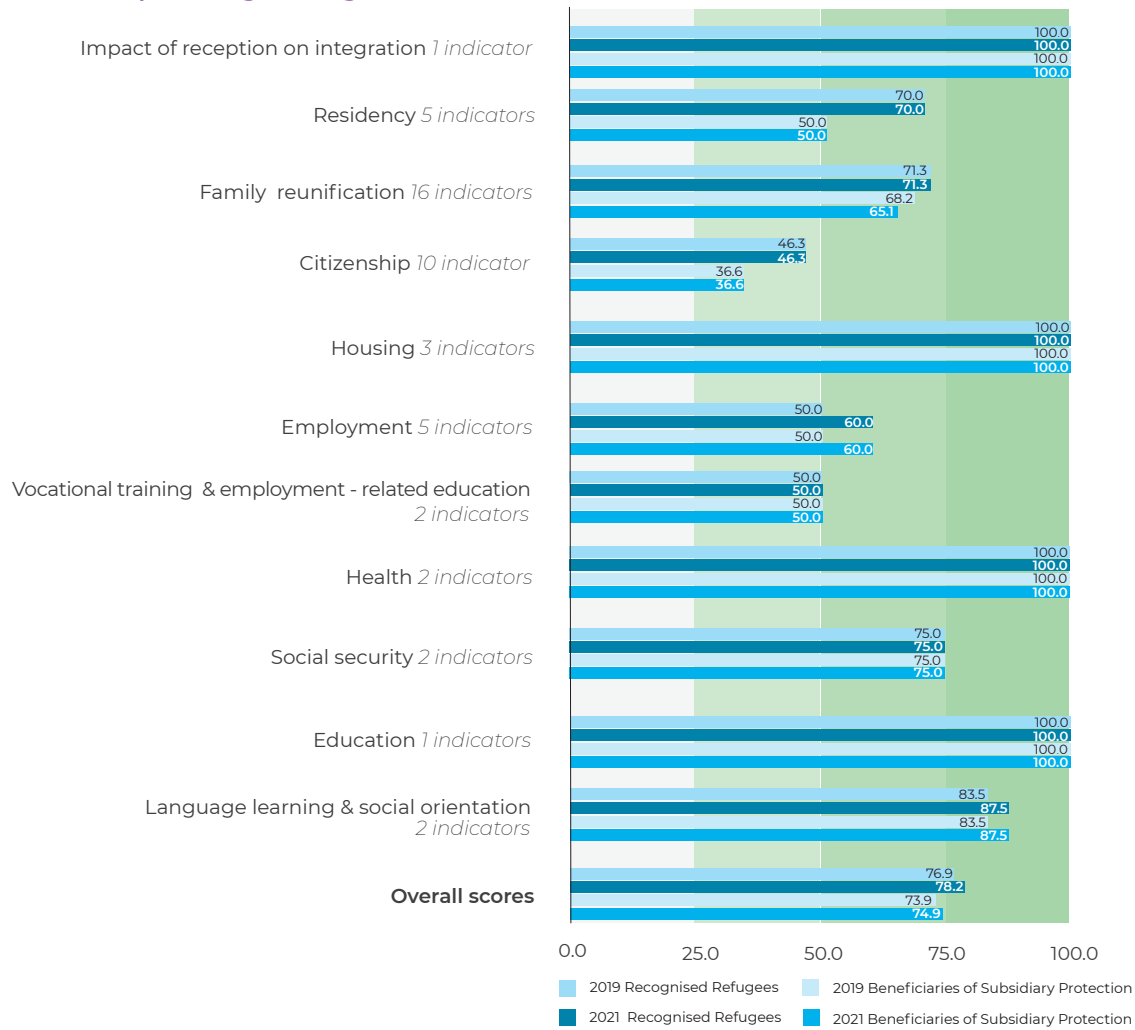
### Overall results



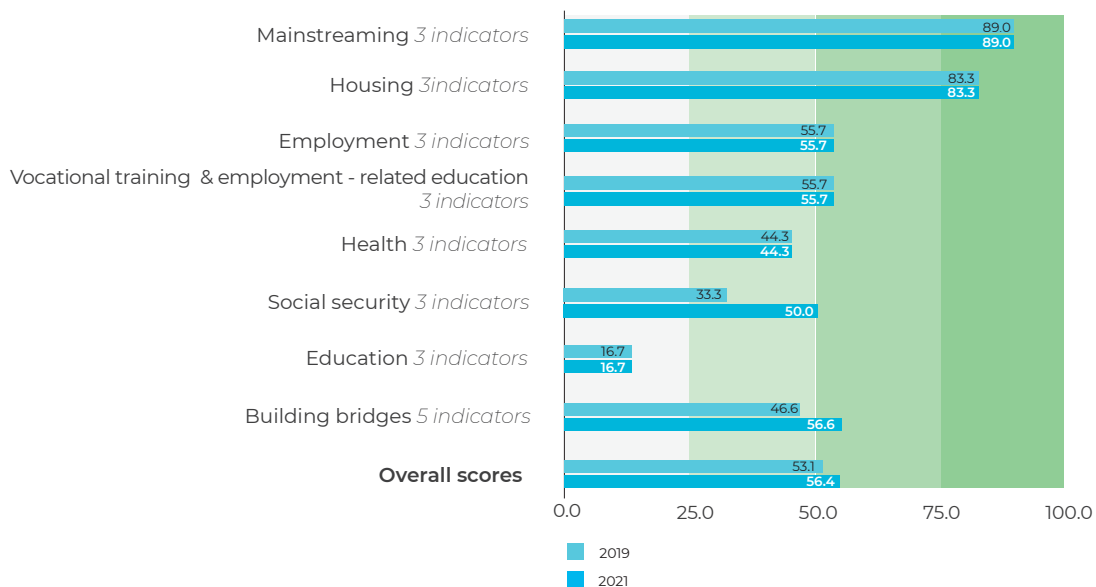
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

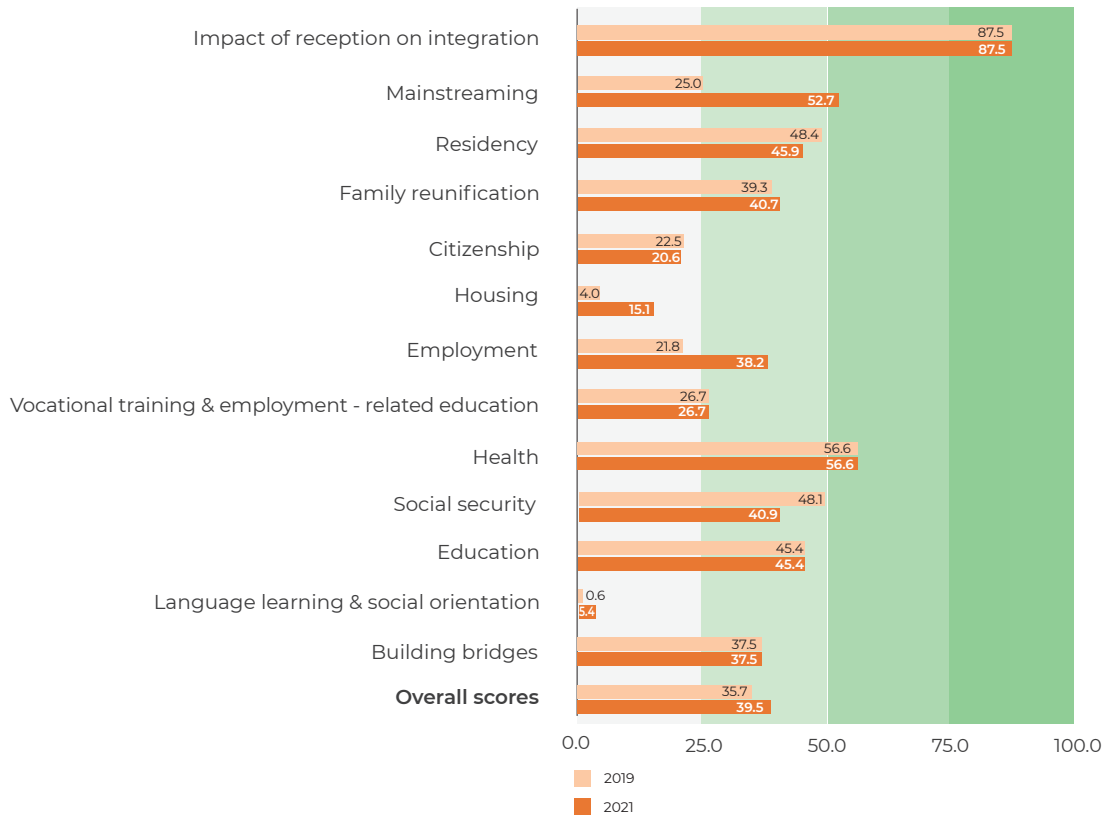


### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

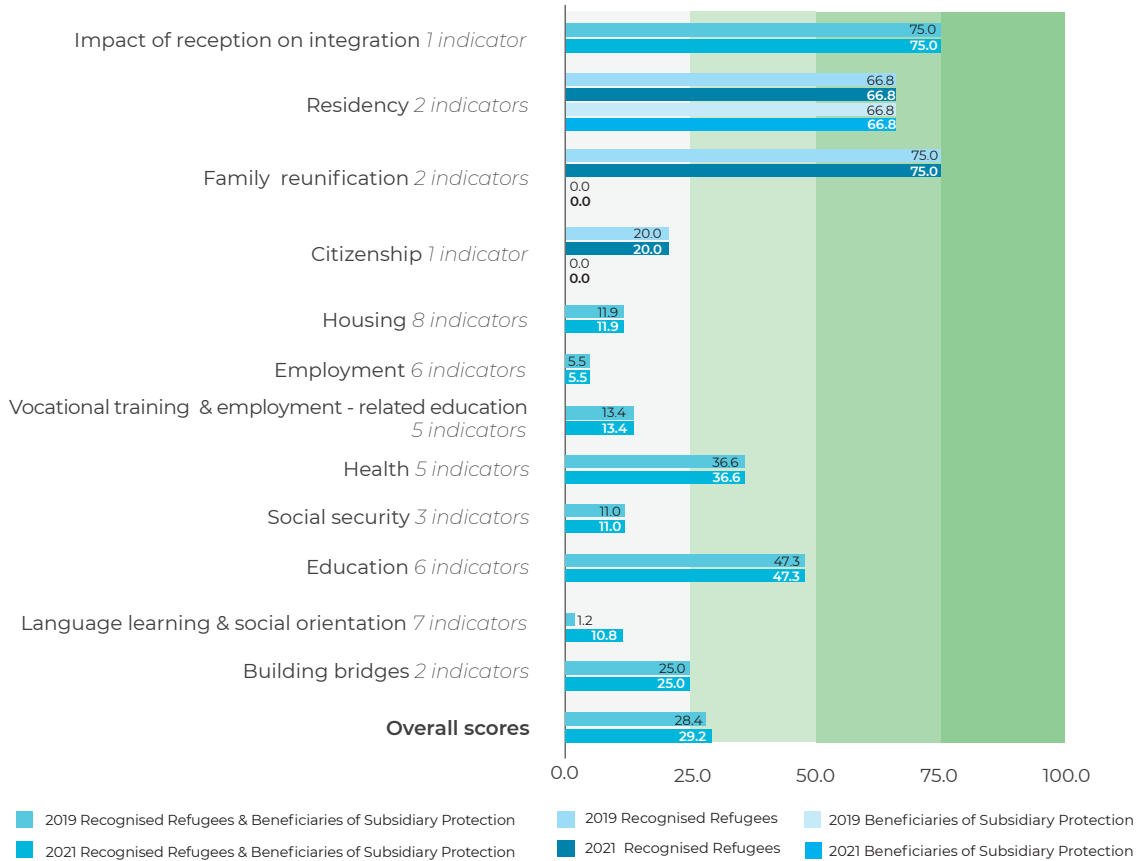


## 16.5. Greece

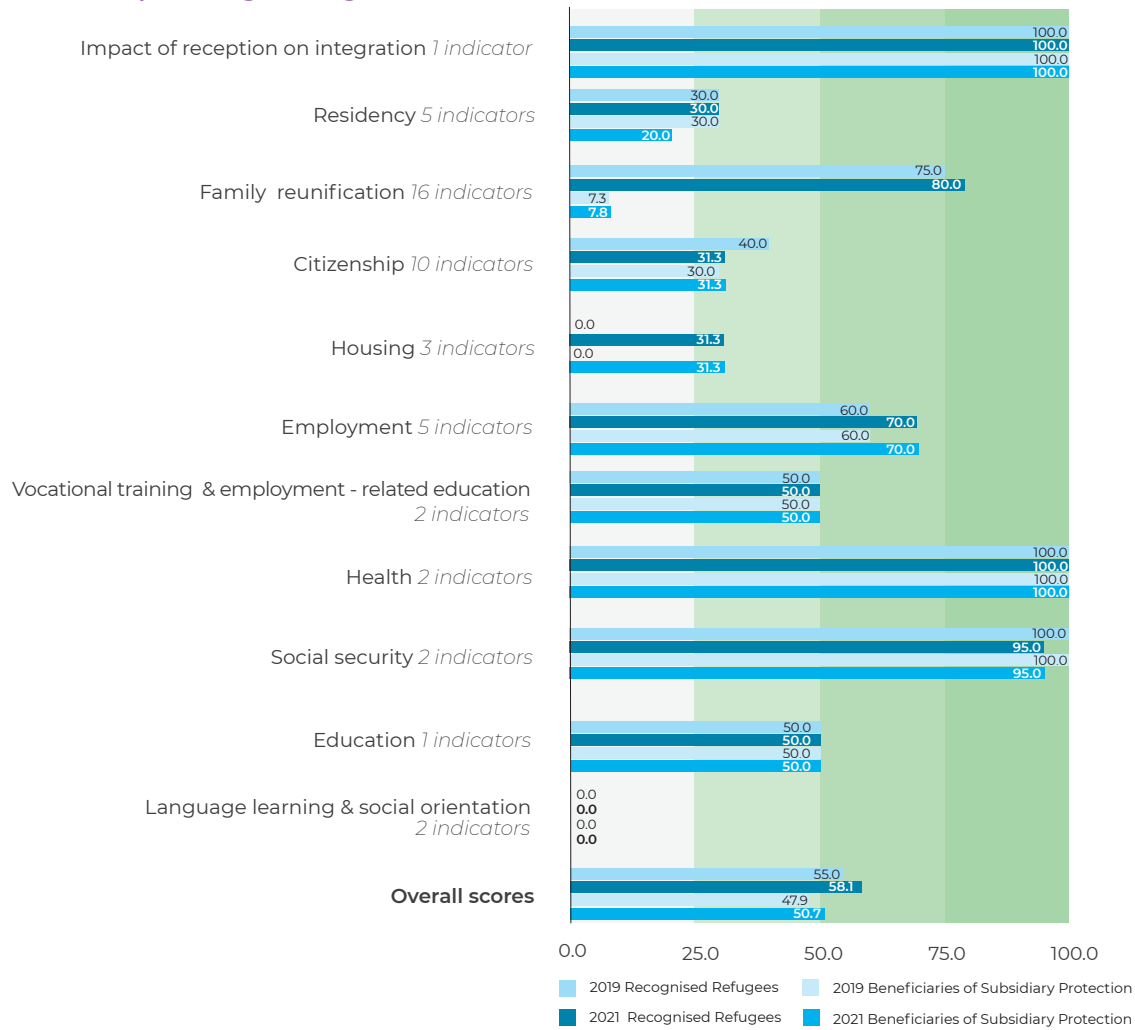
### Overall results



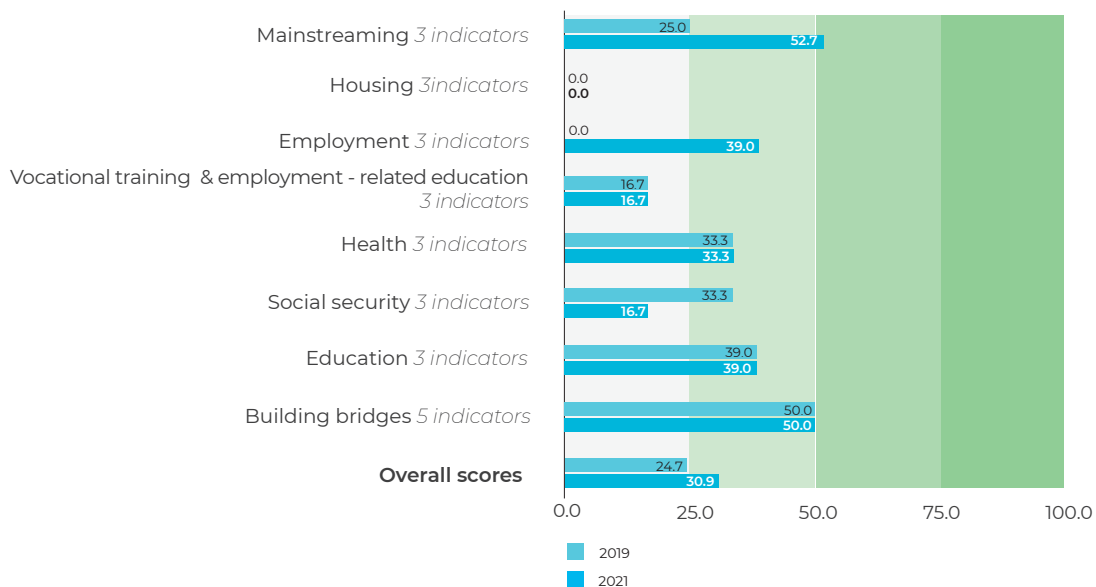
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



## Step: Setting the Legal Framework

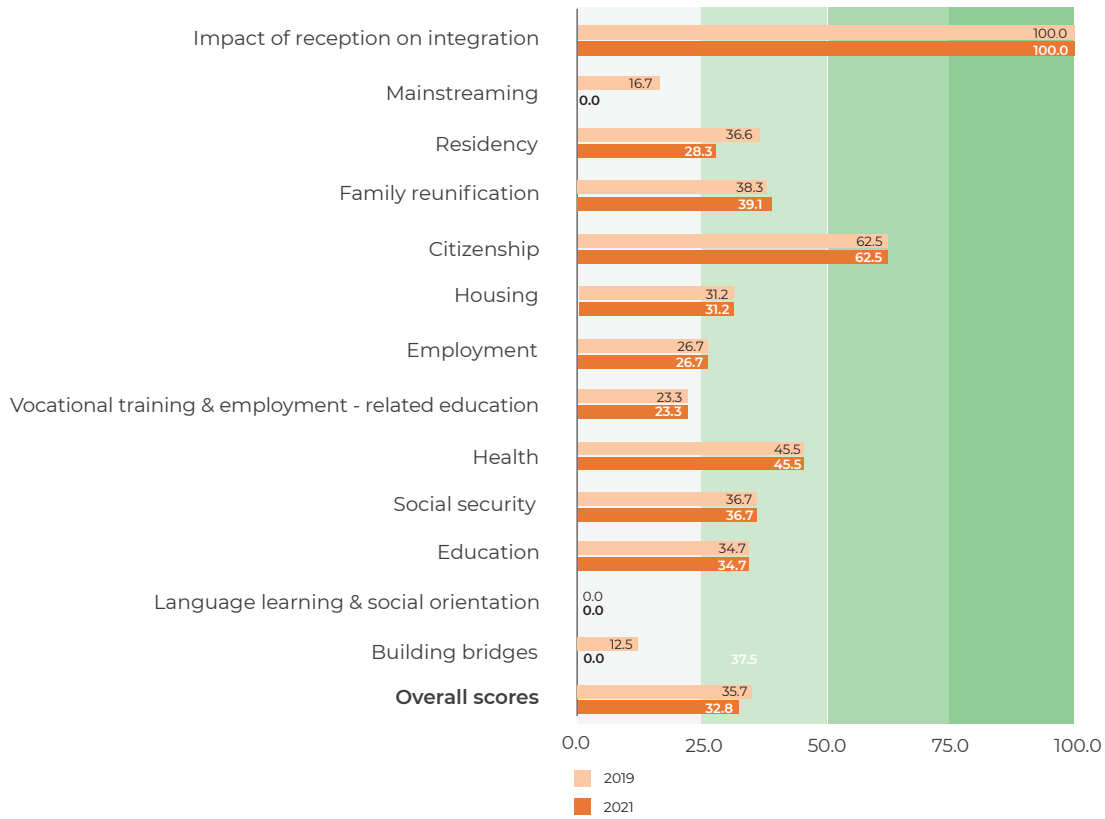


## Step: Implementation & Collaboration

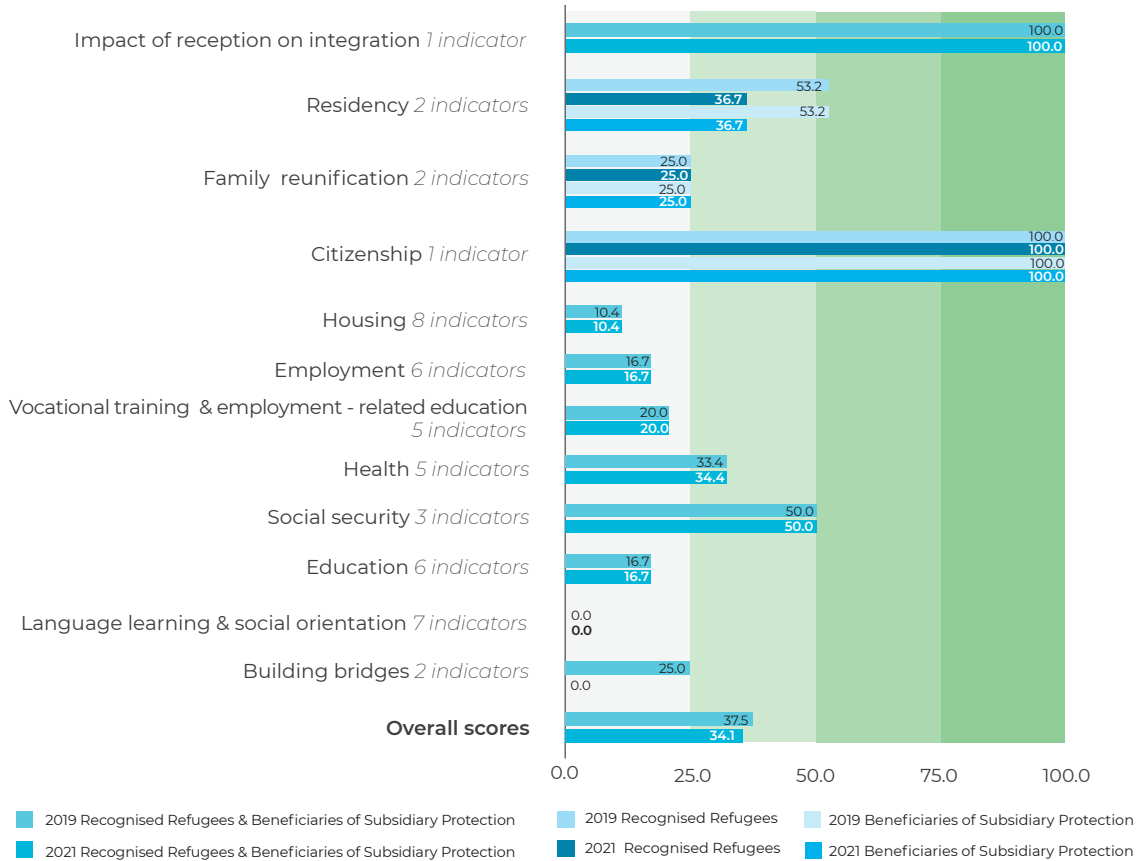


## 16.6. Hungary

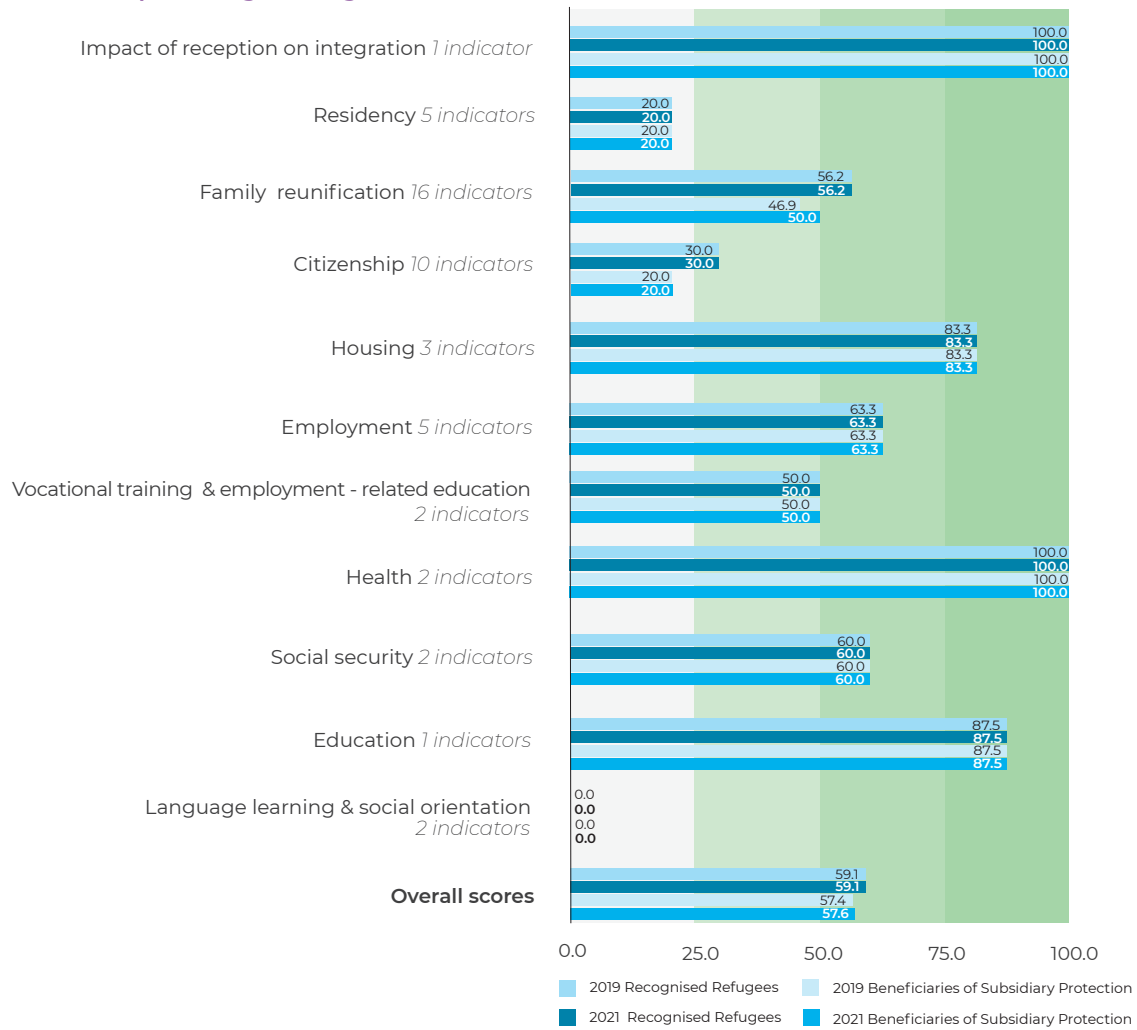
### Overall results



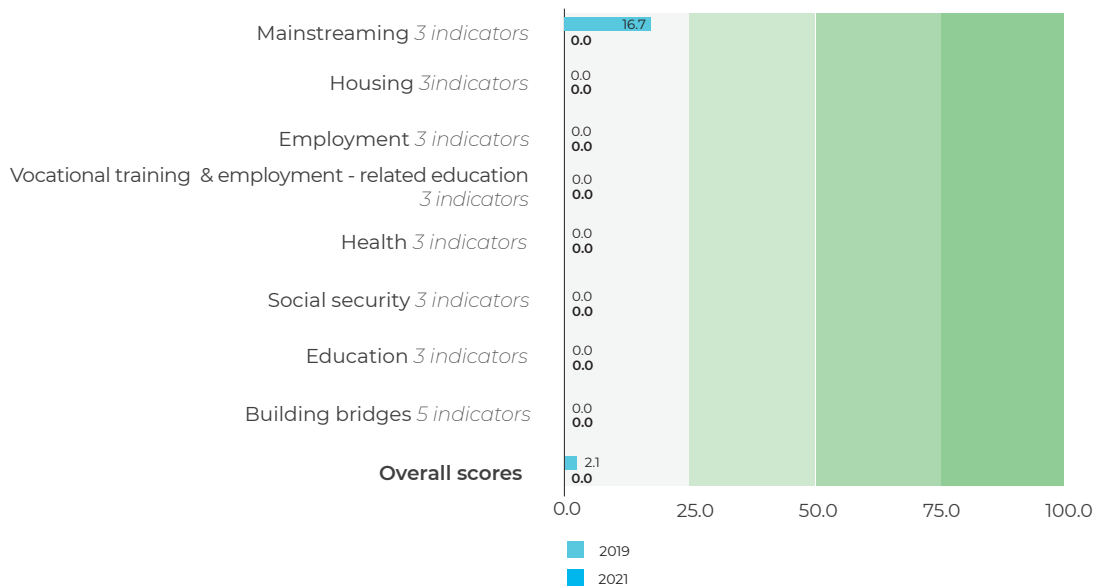
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



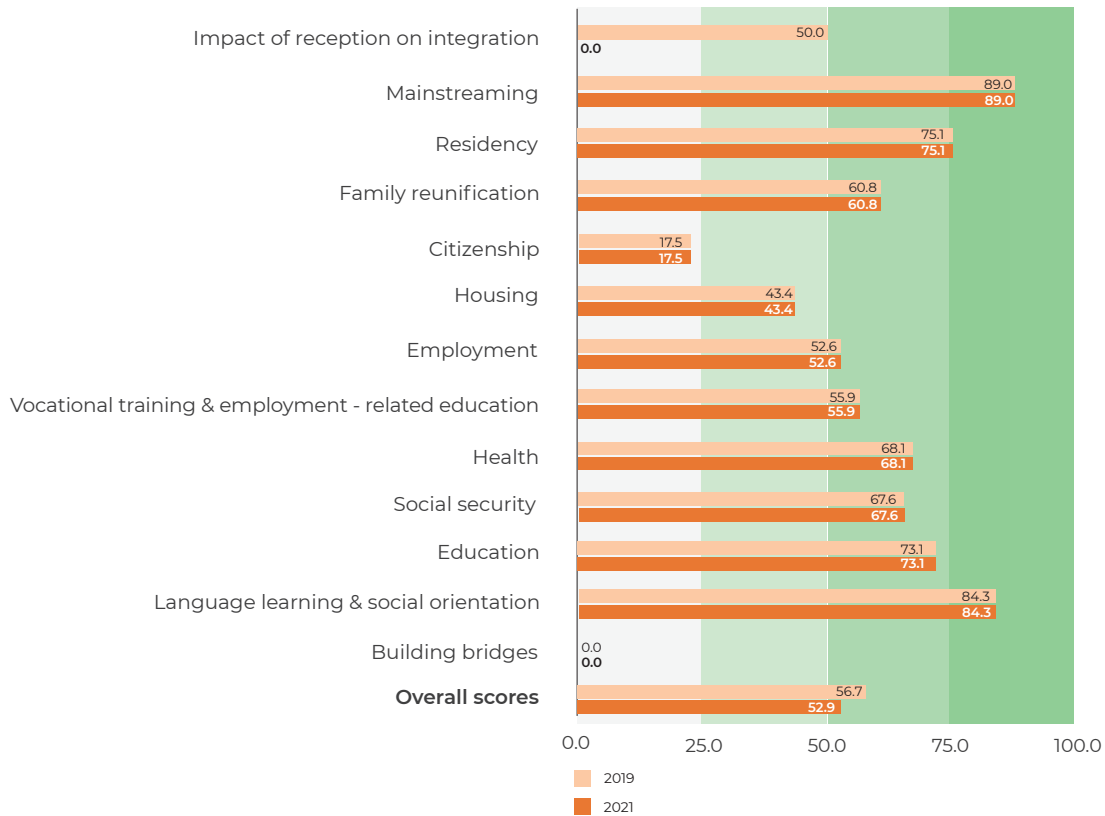
### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



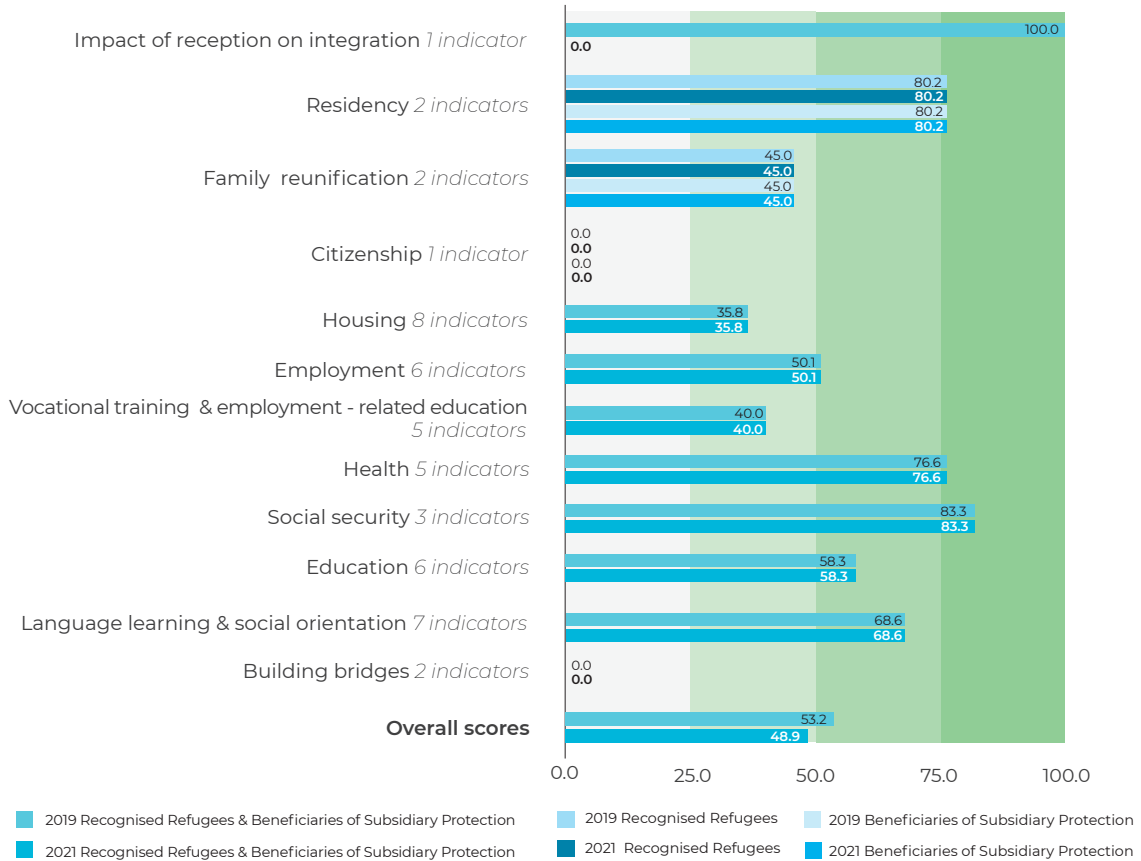


## 16.7. Italy

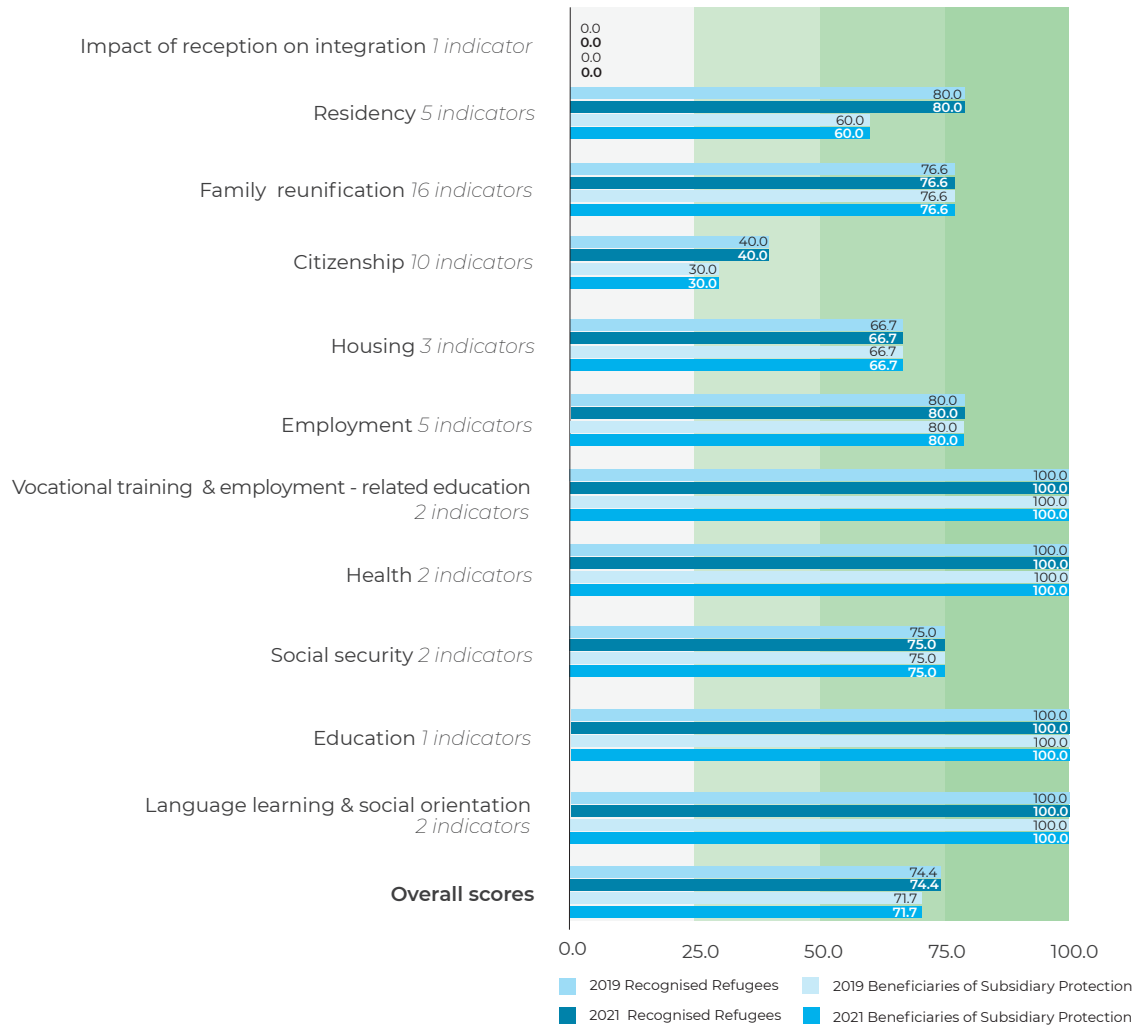
### Overall results



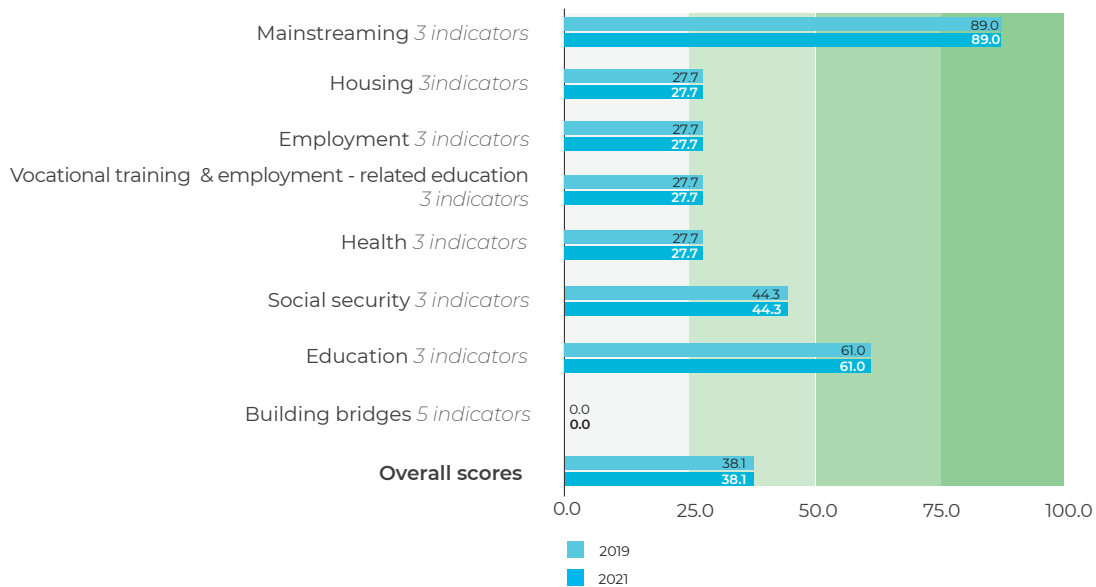
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



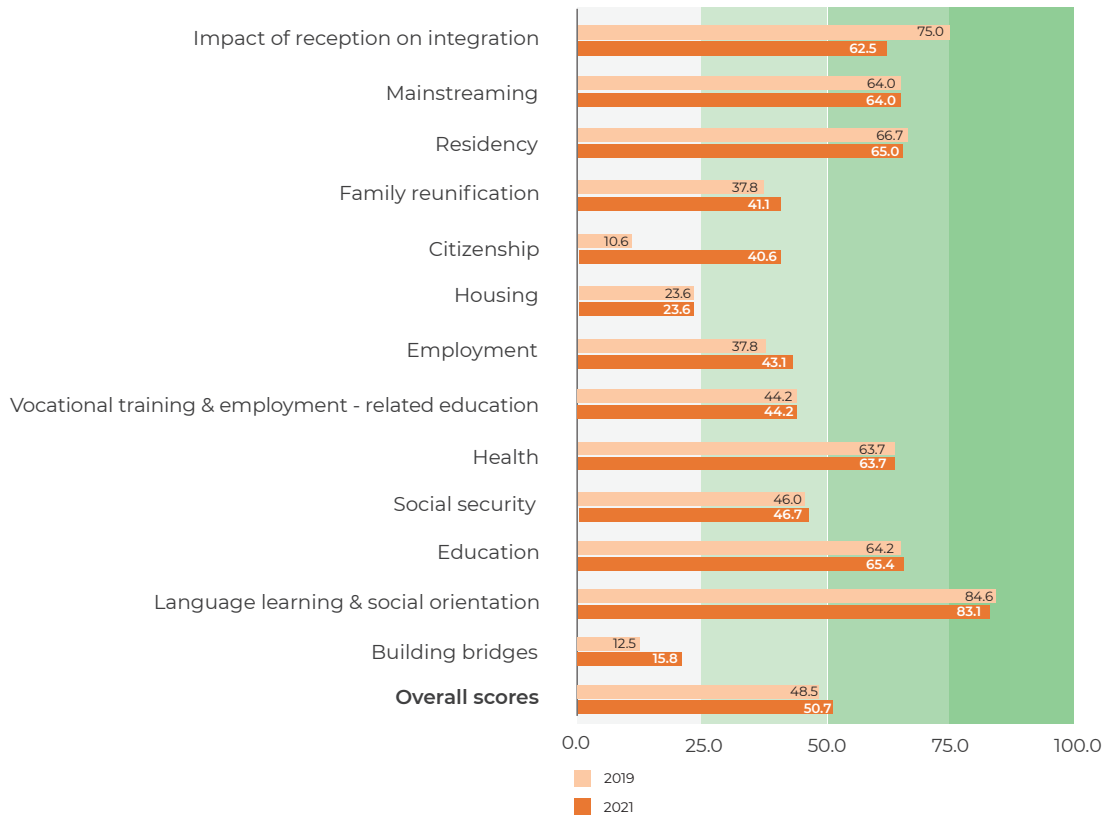
### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



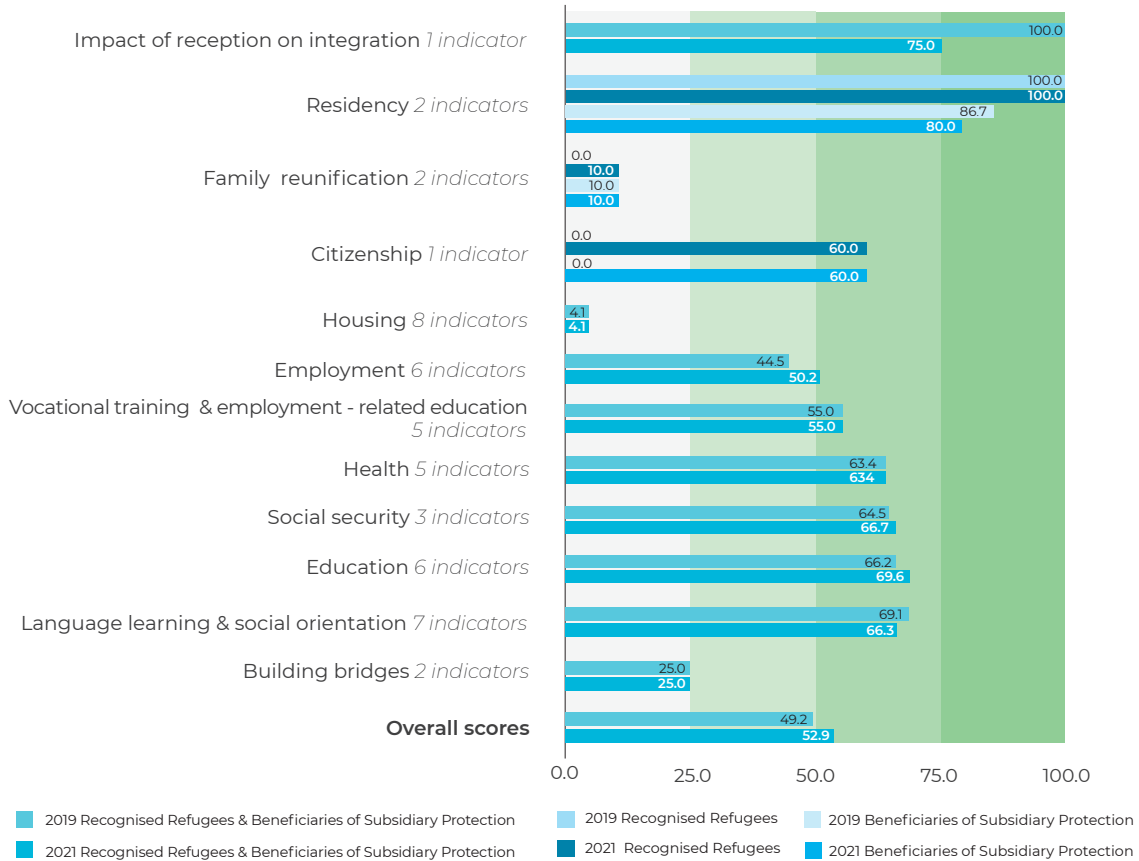


## 16.8. Latvia

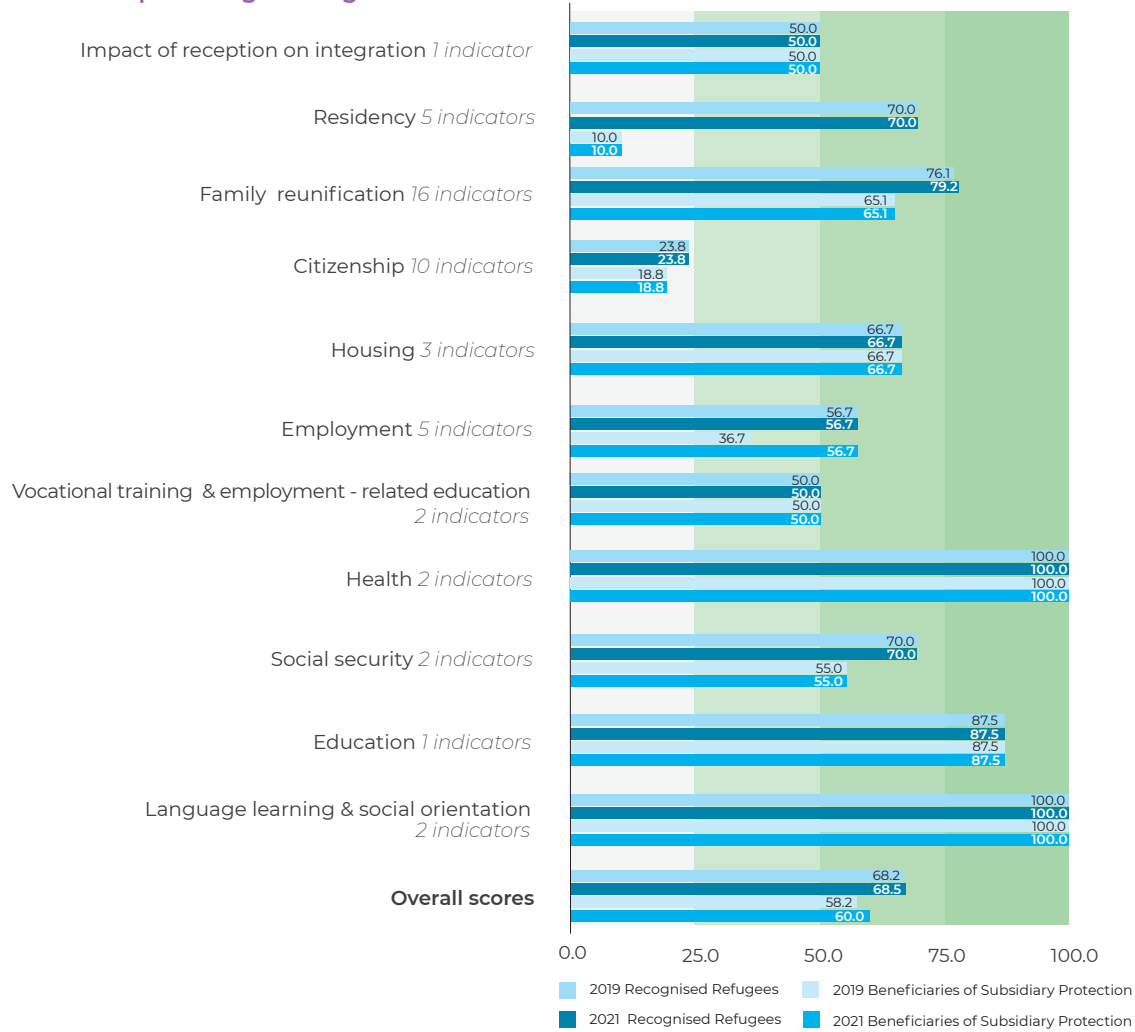
### Overall results



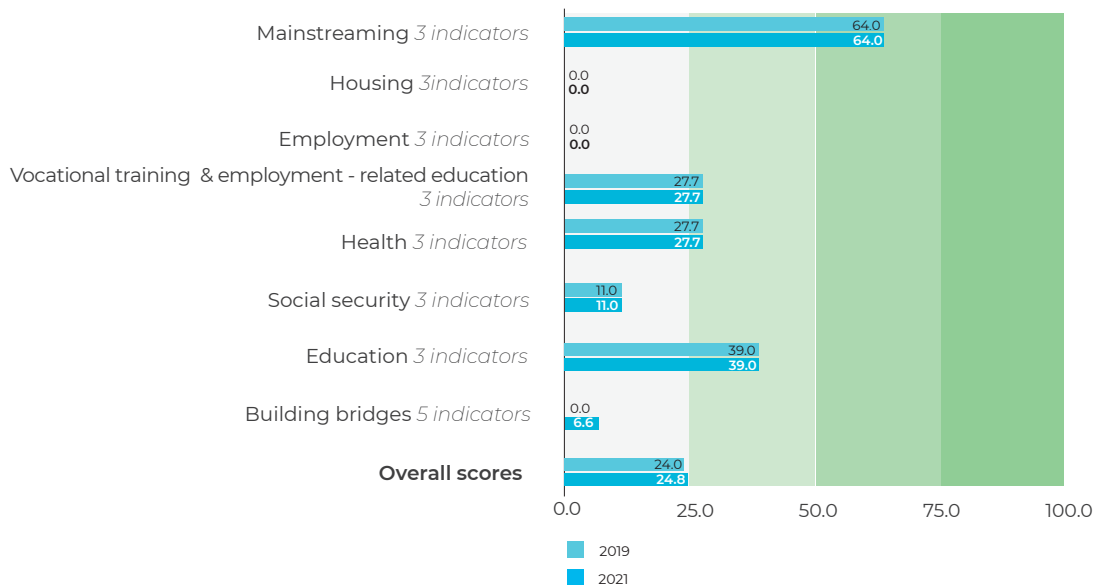
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



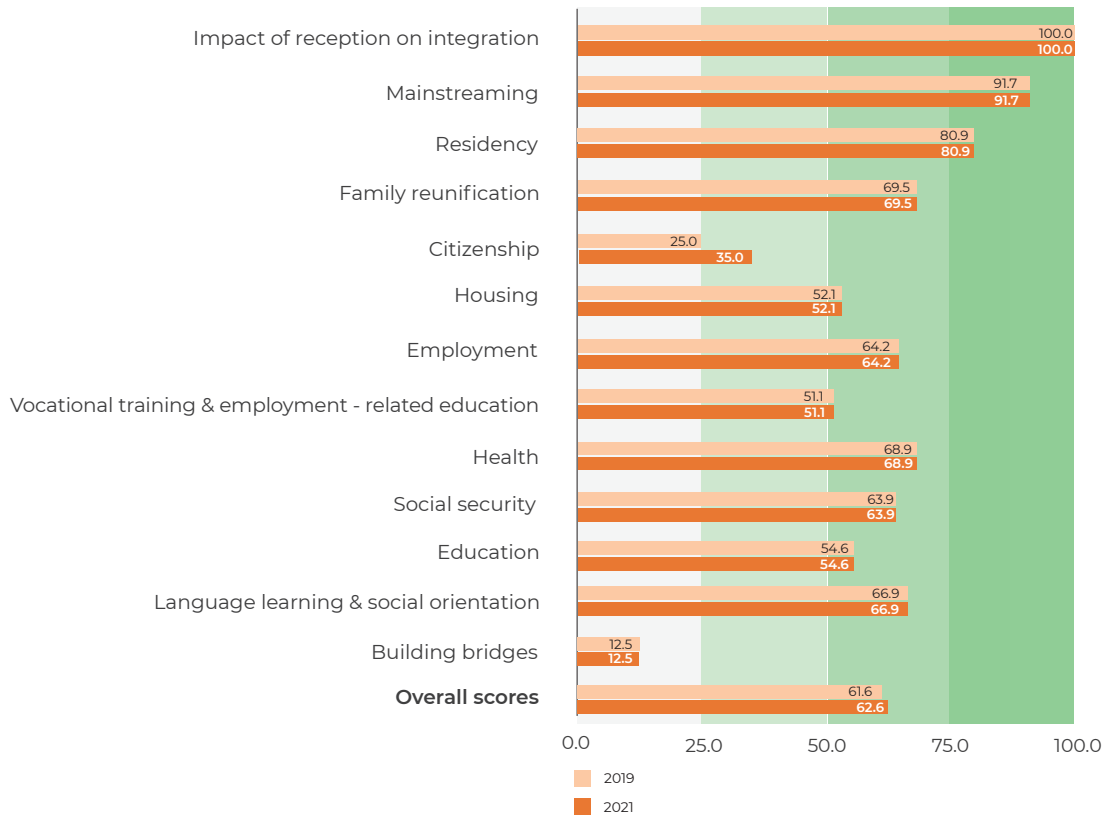
### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



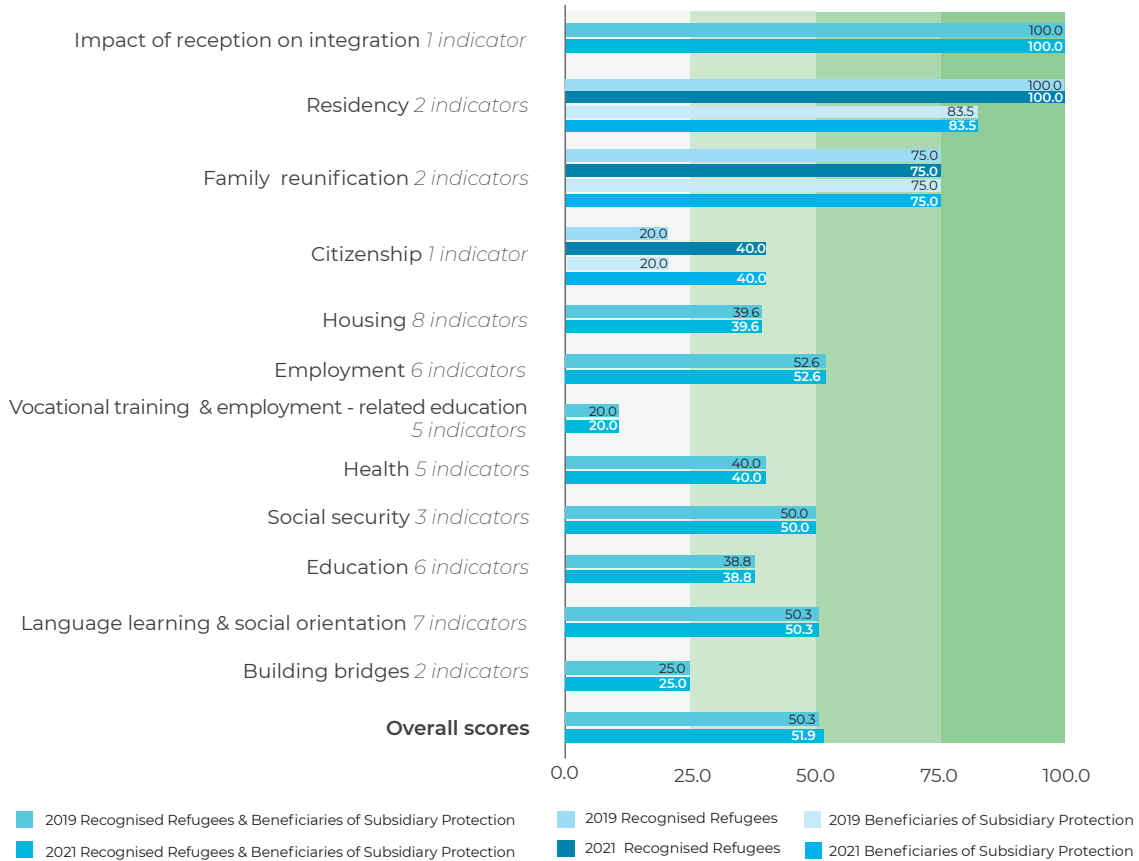


## 16.9. Lithuania

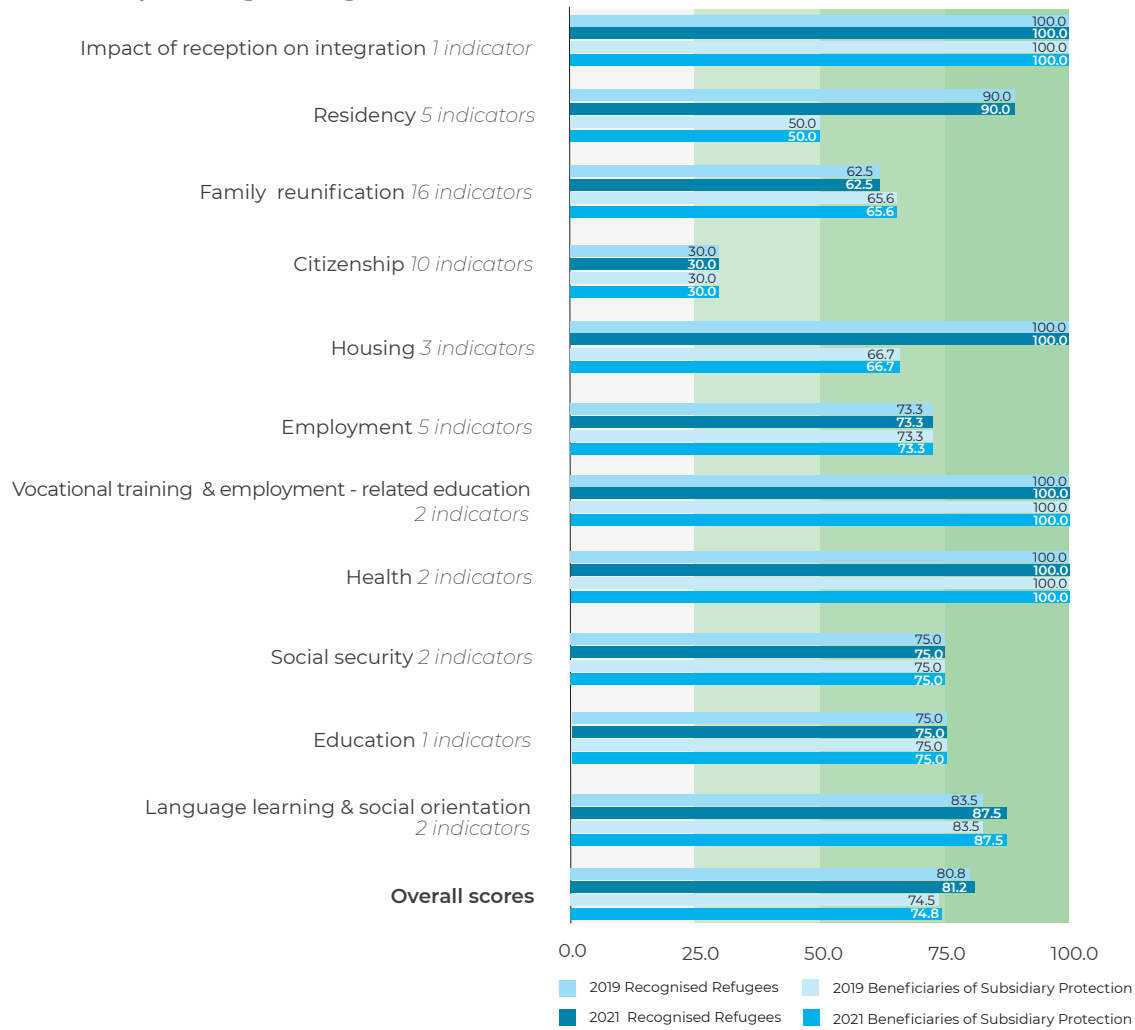
### Overall results



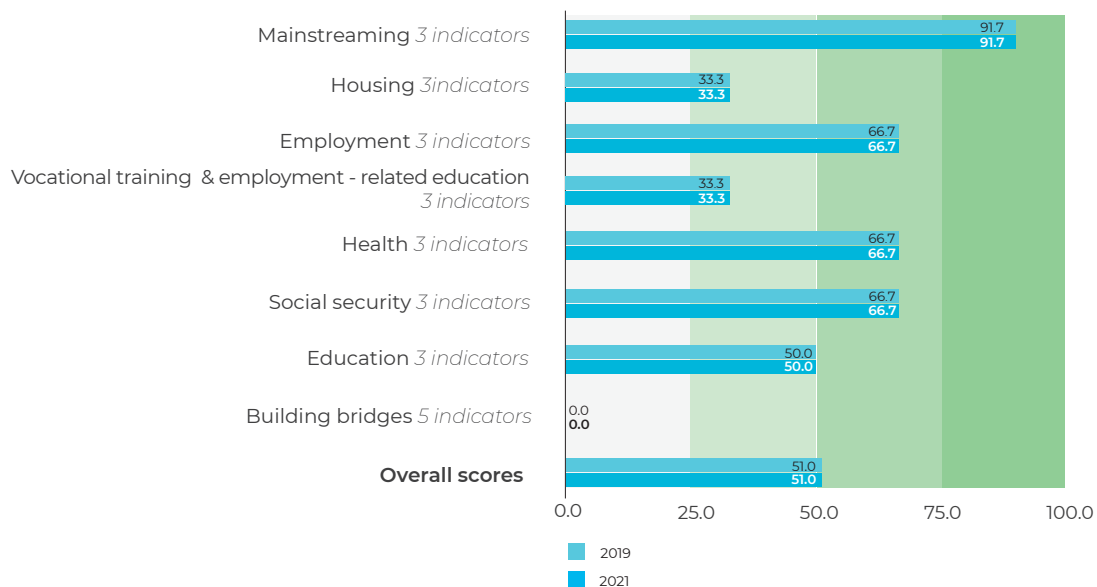
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



## Step: Setting the Legal Framework

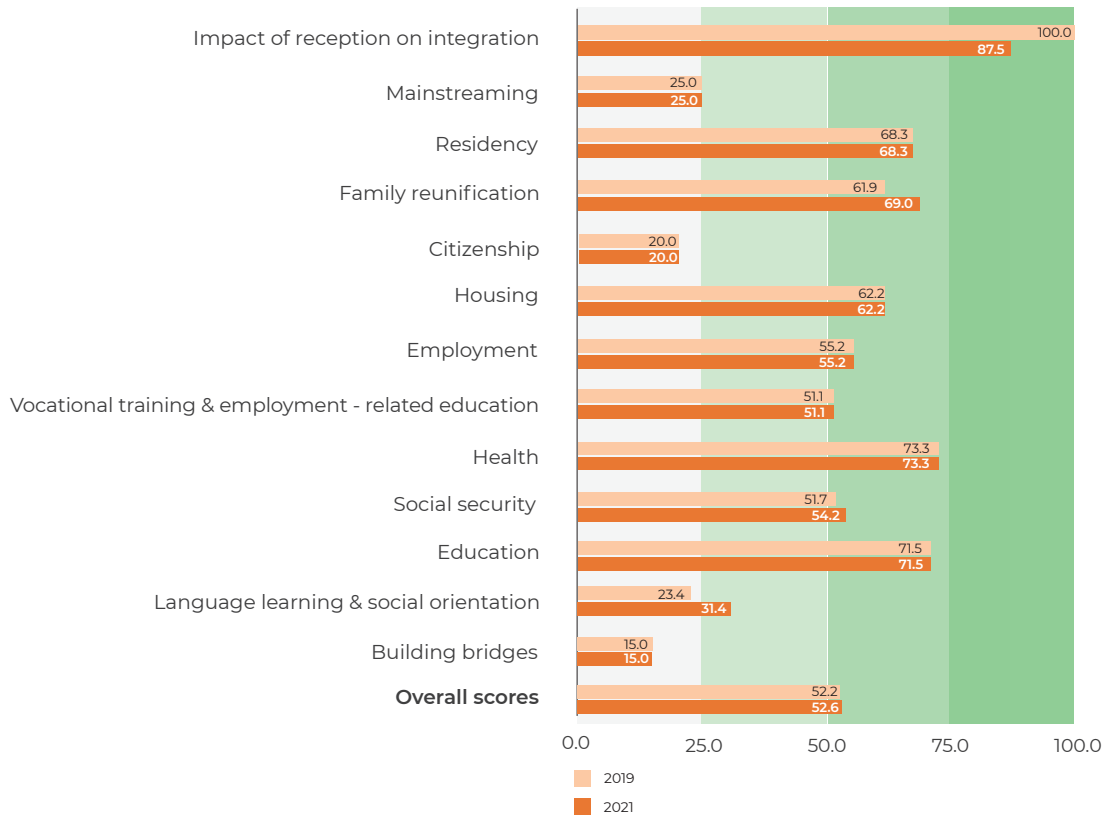


## Step: Implementation & Collaboration

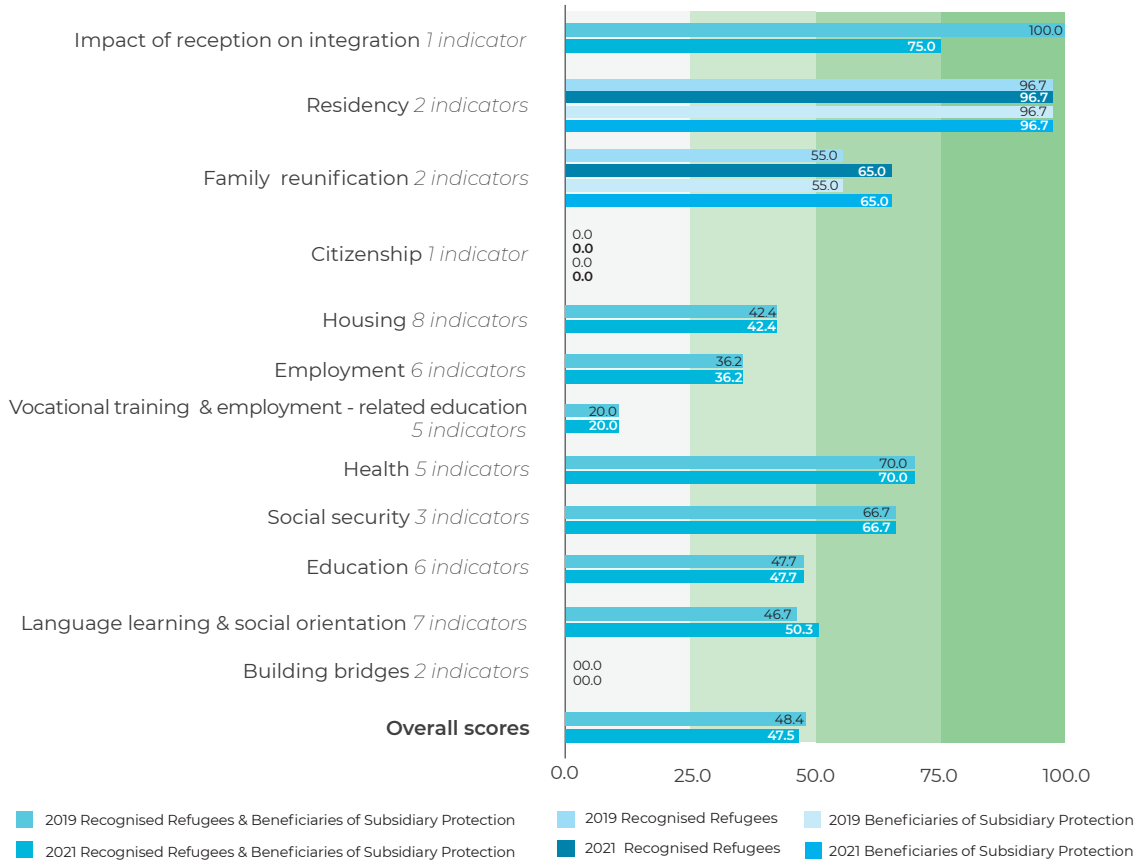


## 16.10. Netherlands

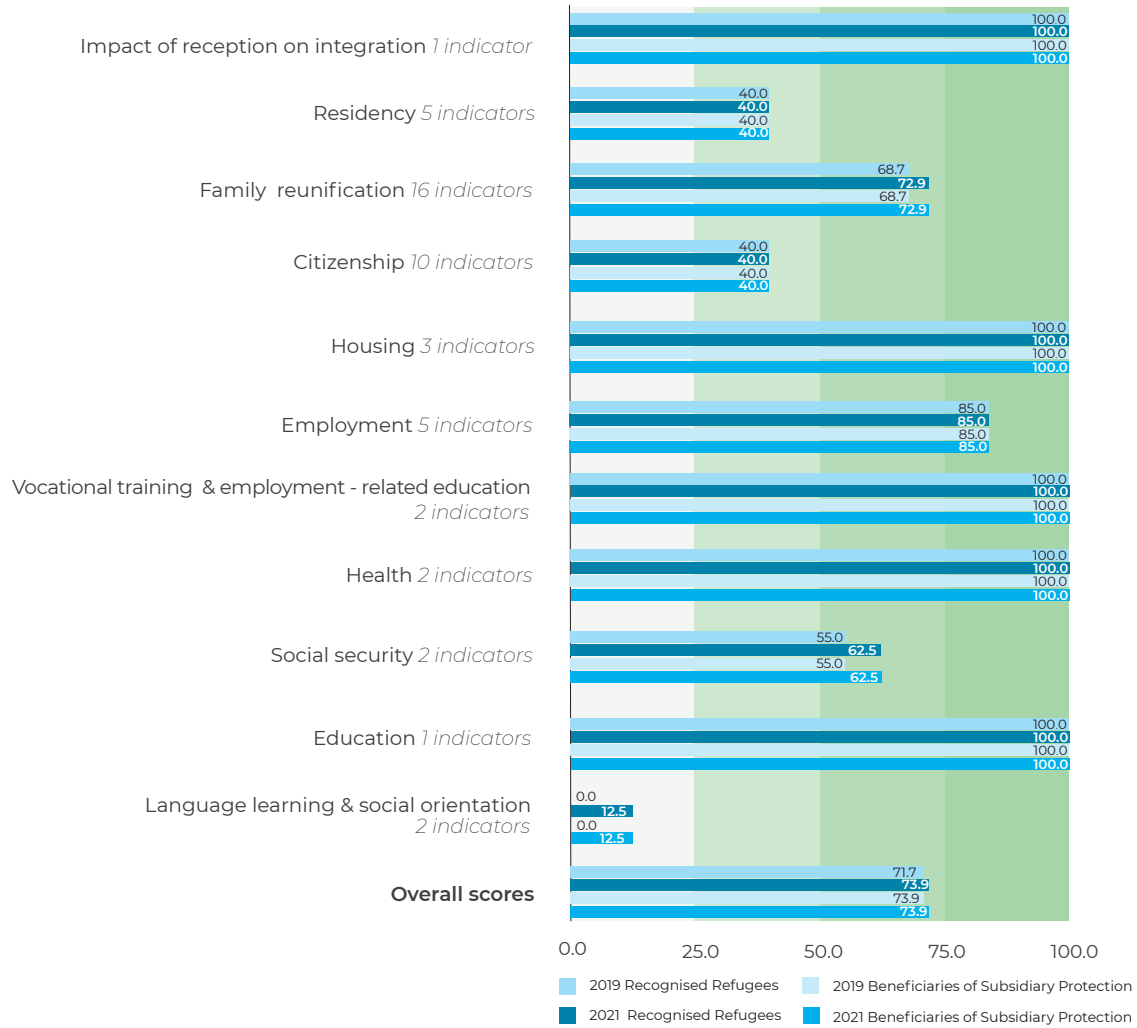
### Overall results



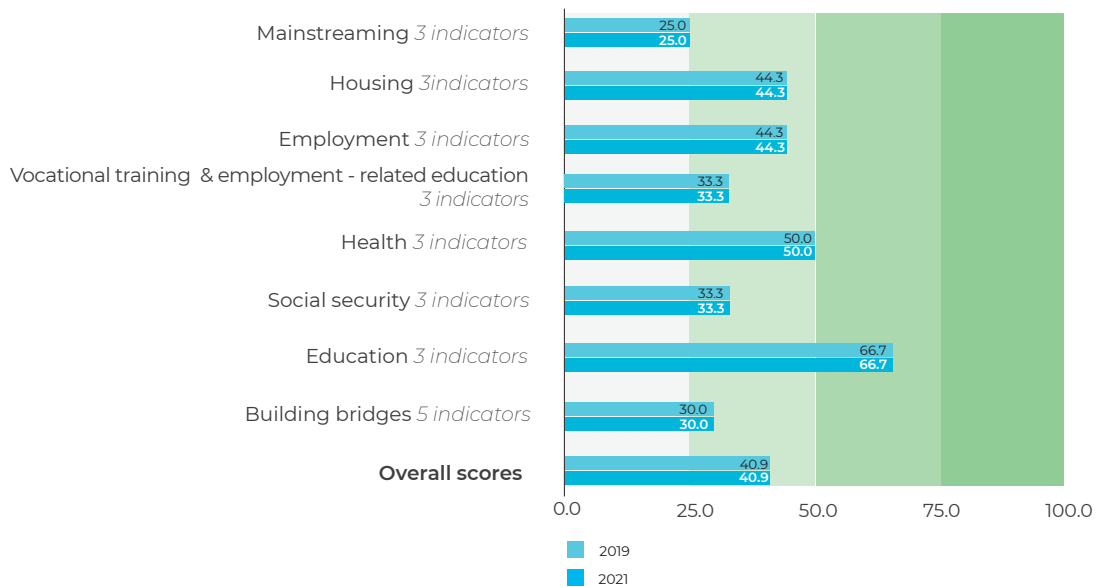
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



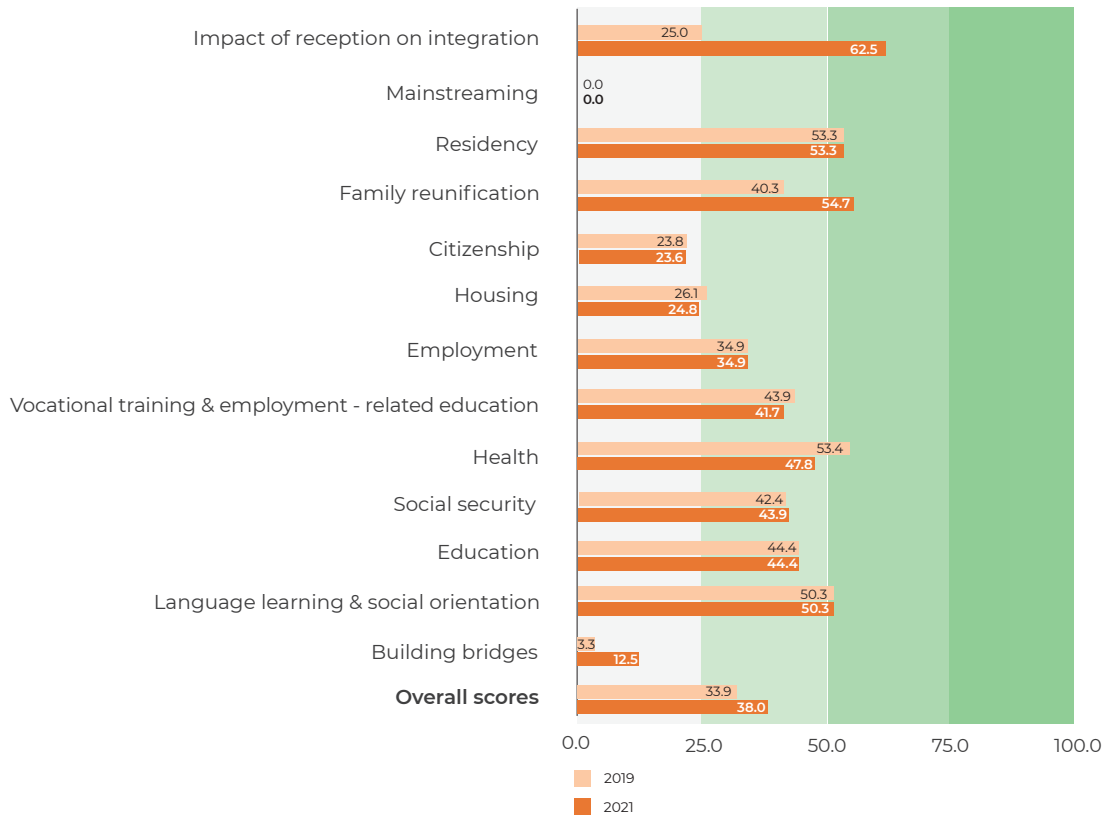
### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



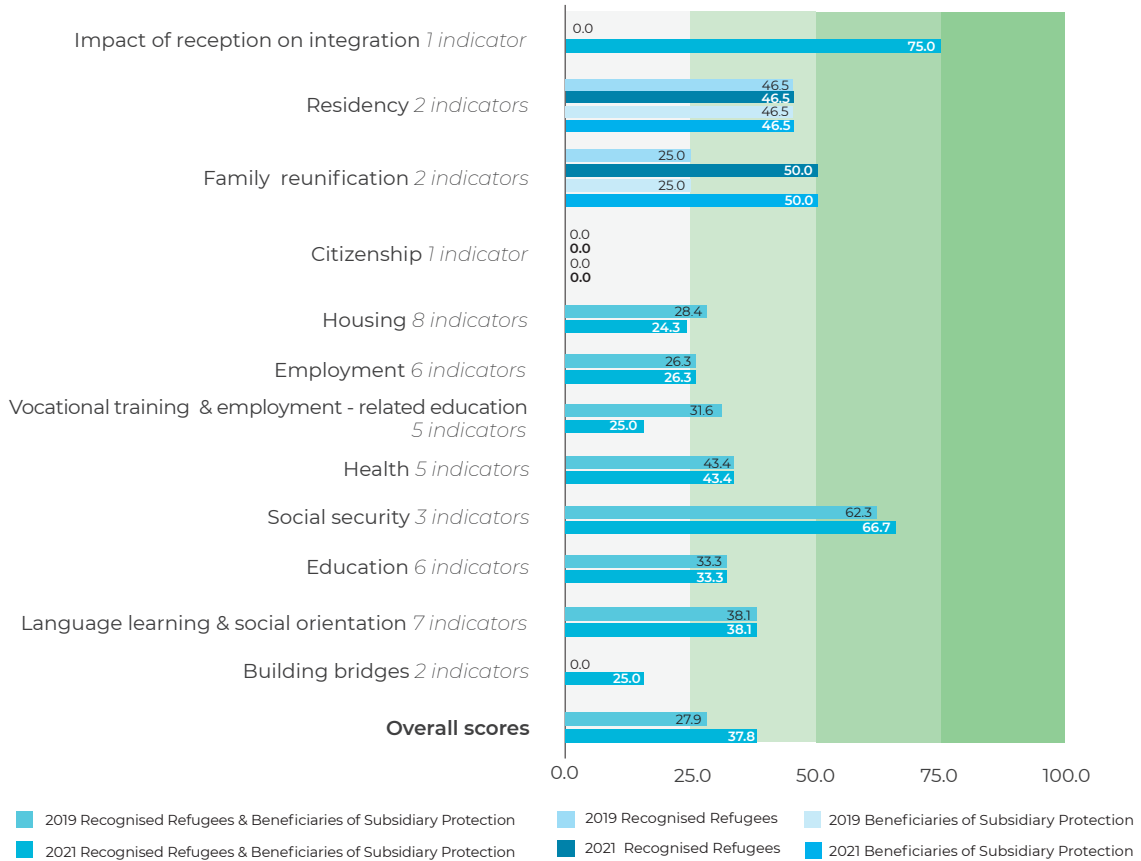


## 16.11. Poland

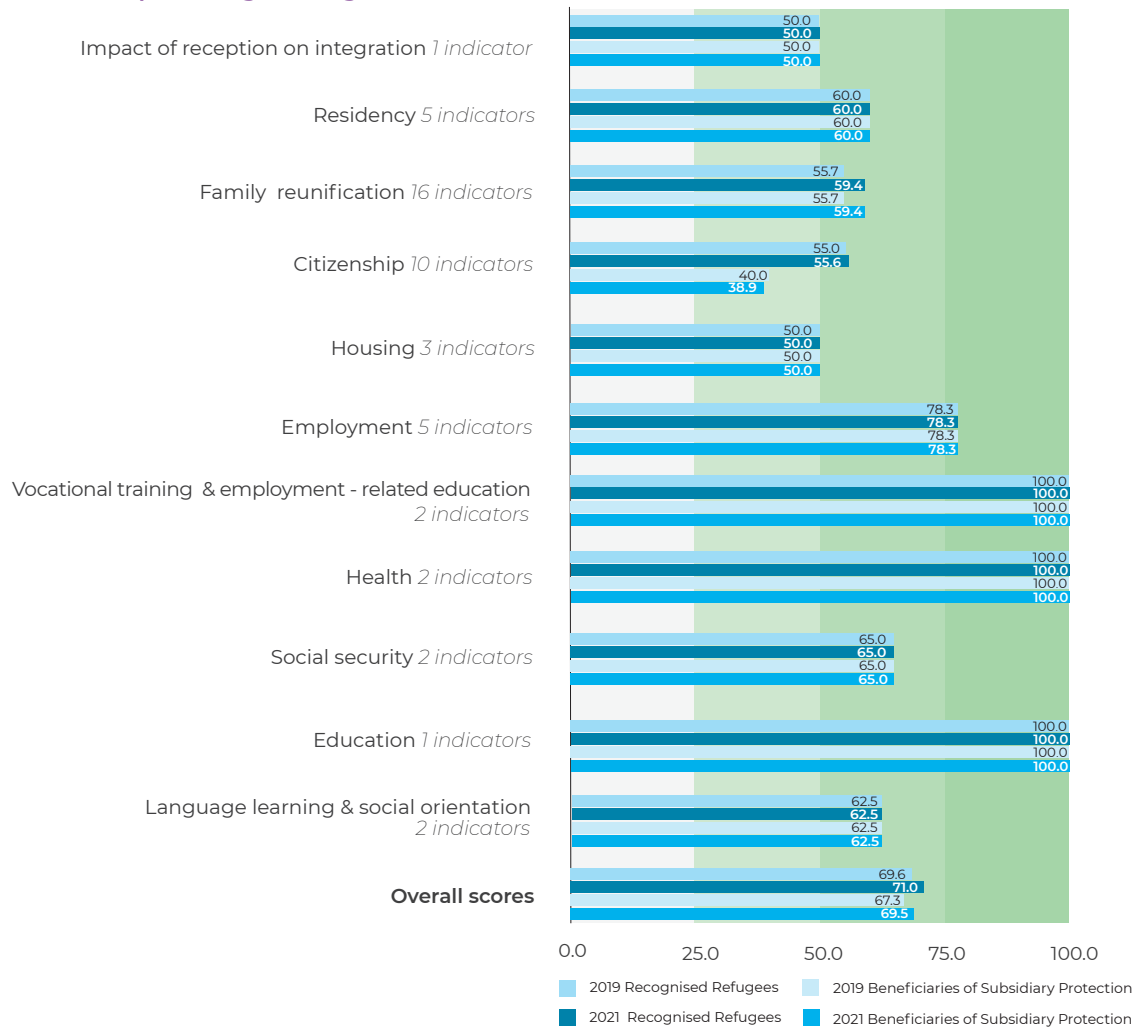
### Overall results



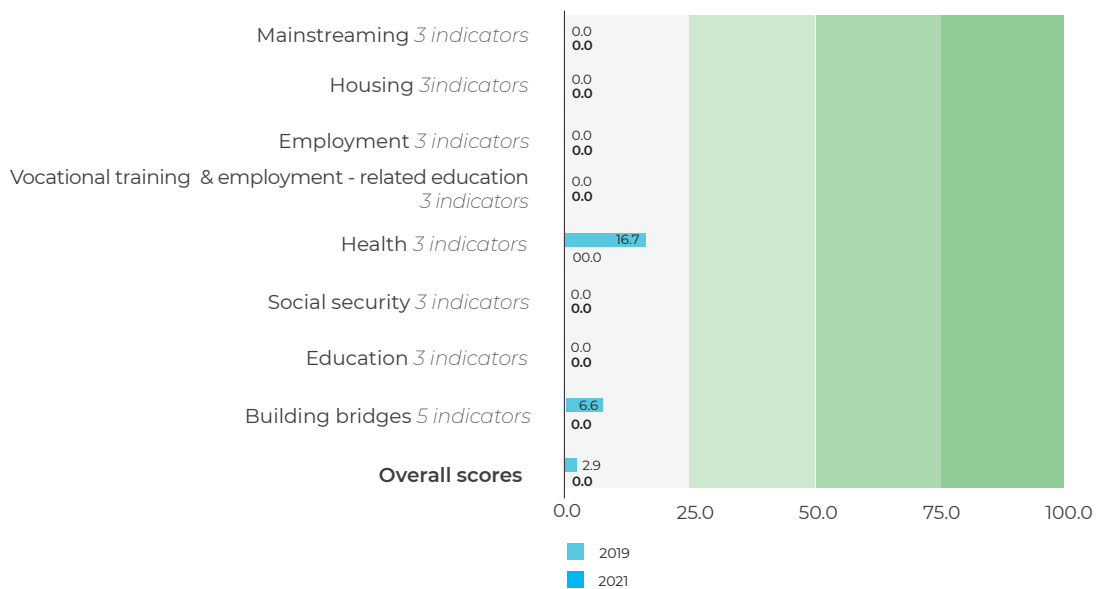
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

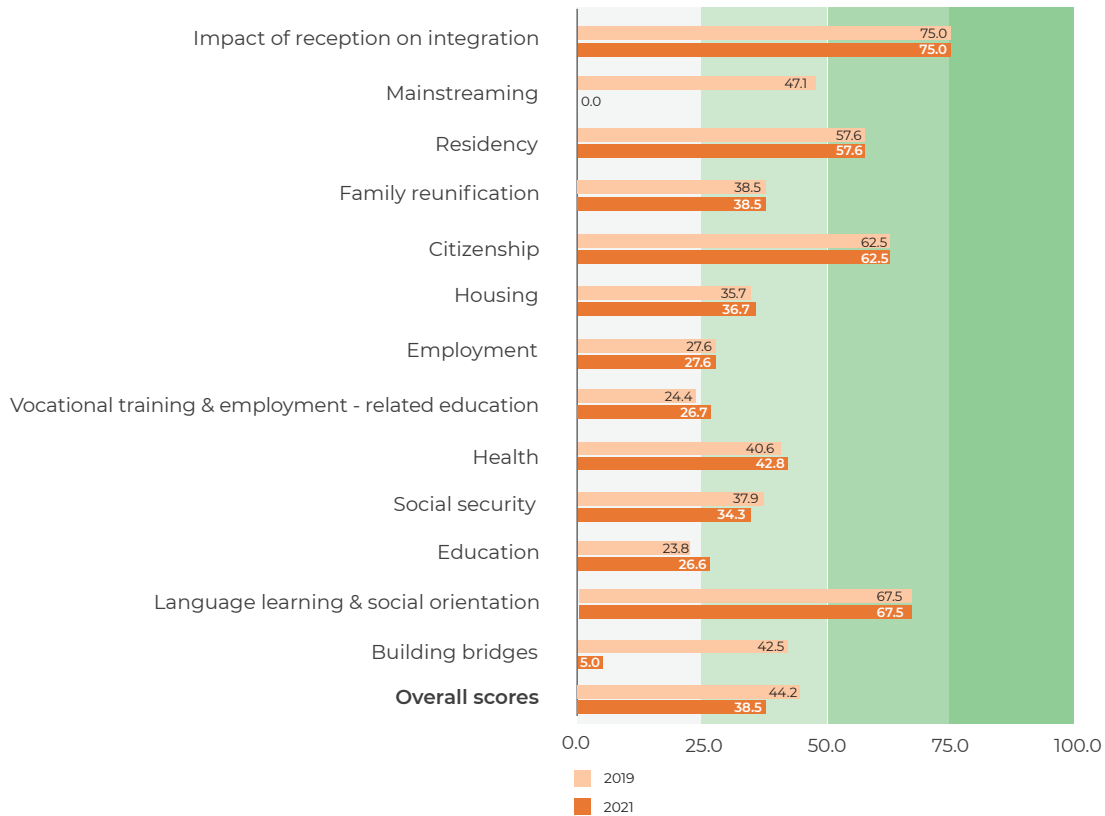


### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

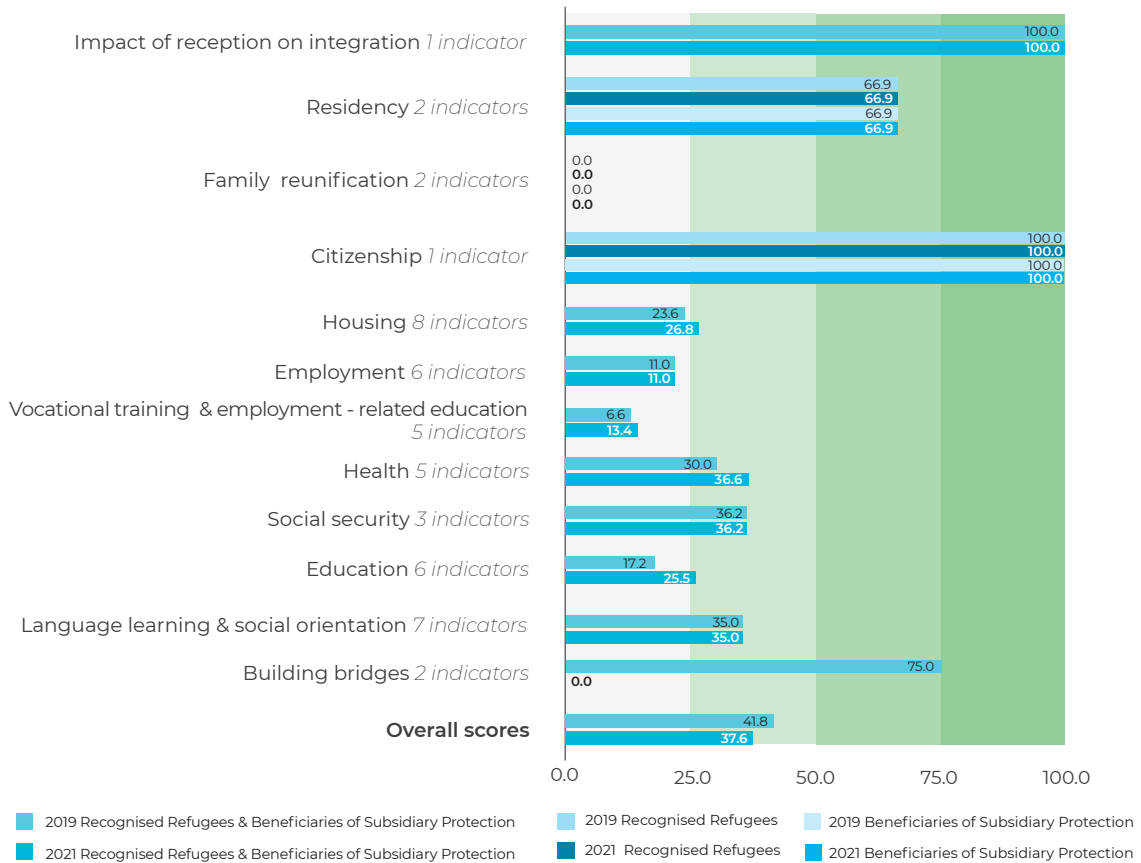


## 16.12 Romania

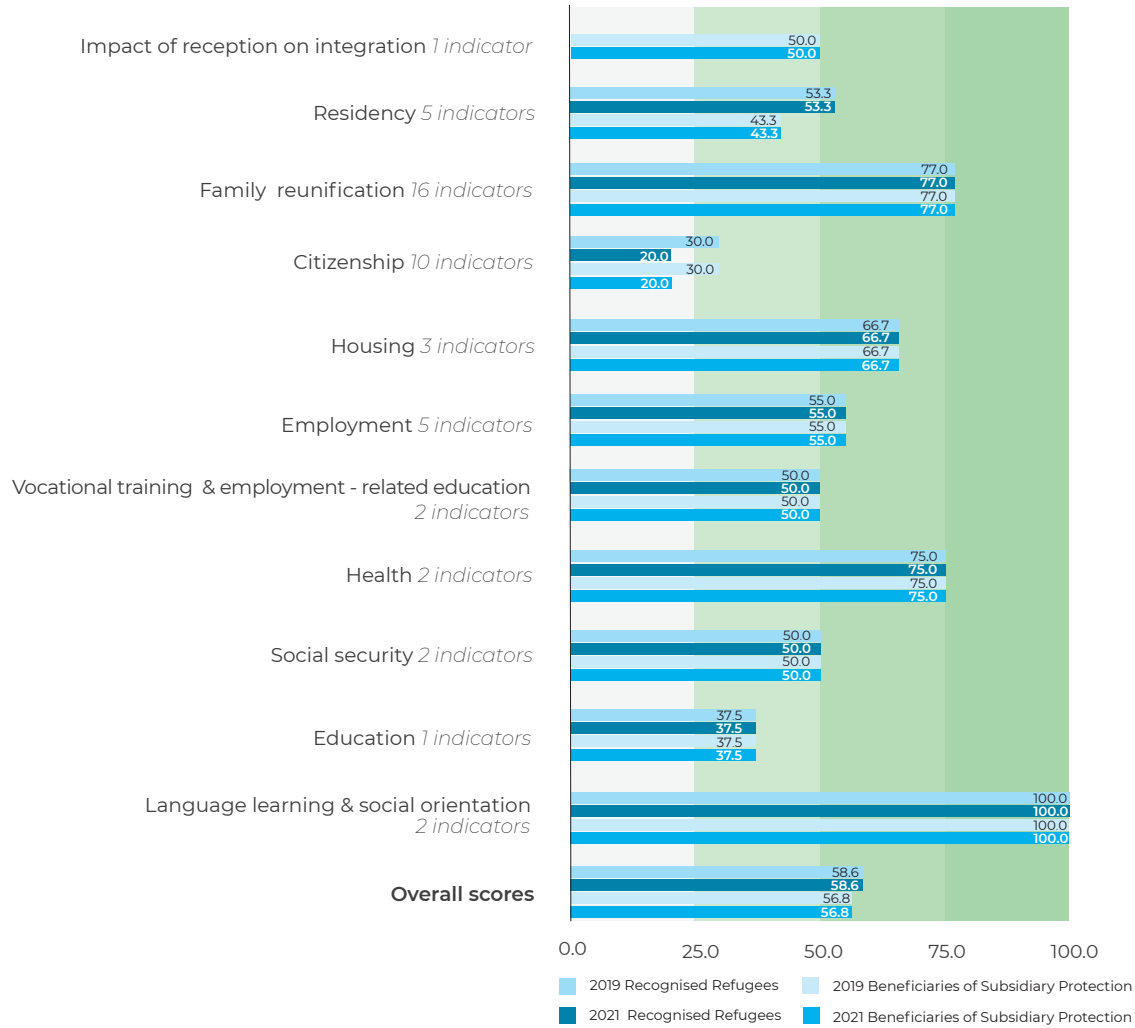
### Overall results



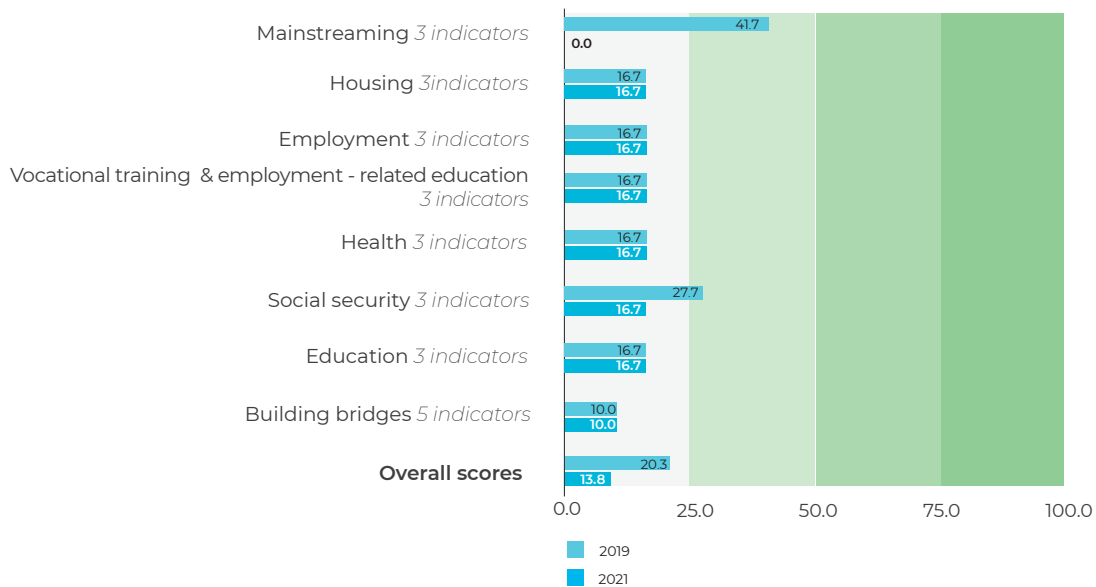
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

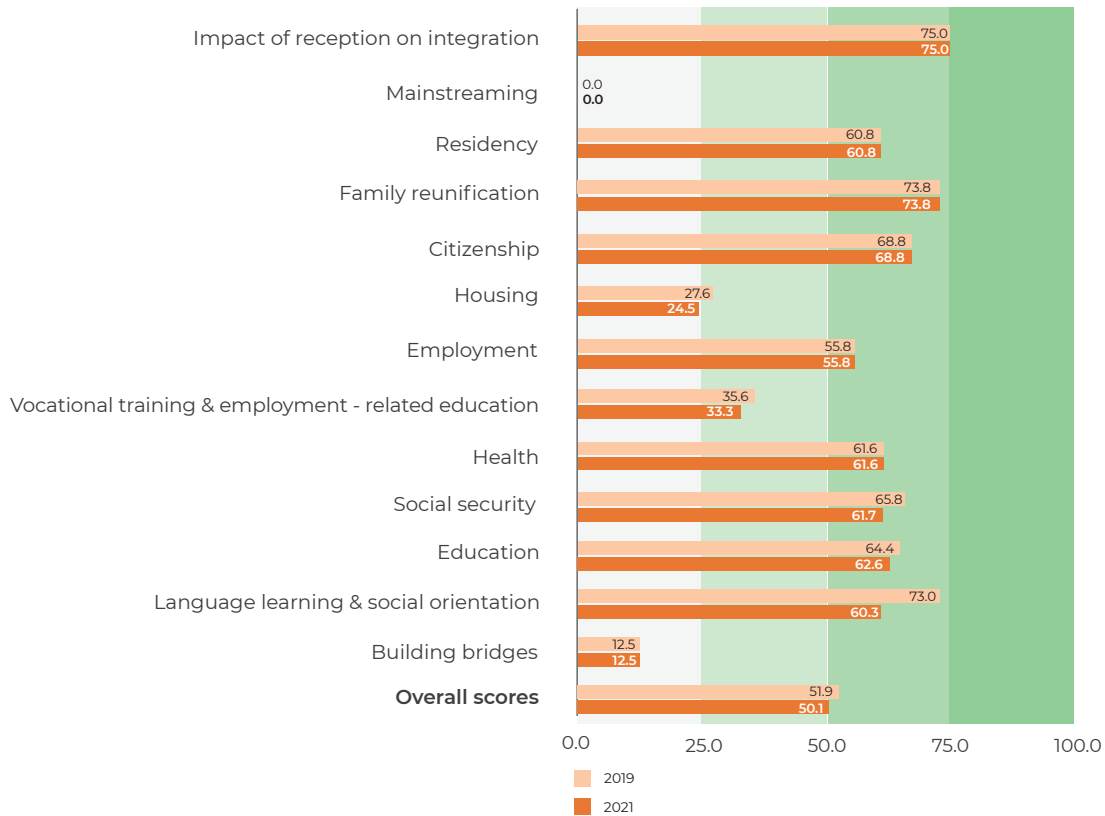


### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

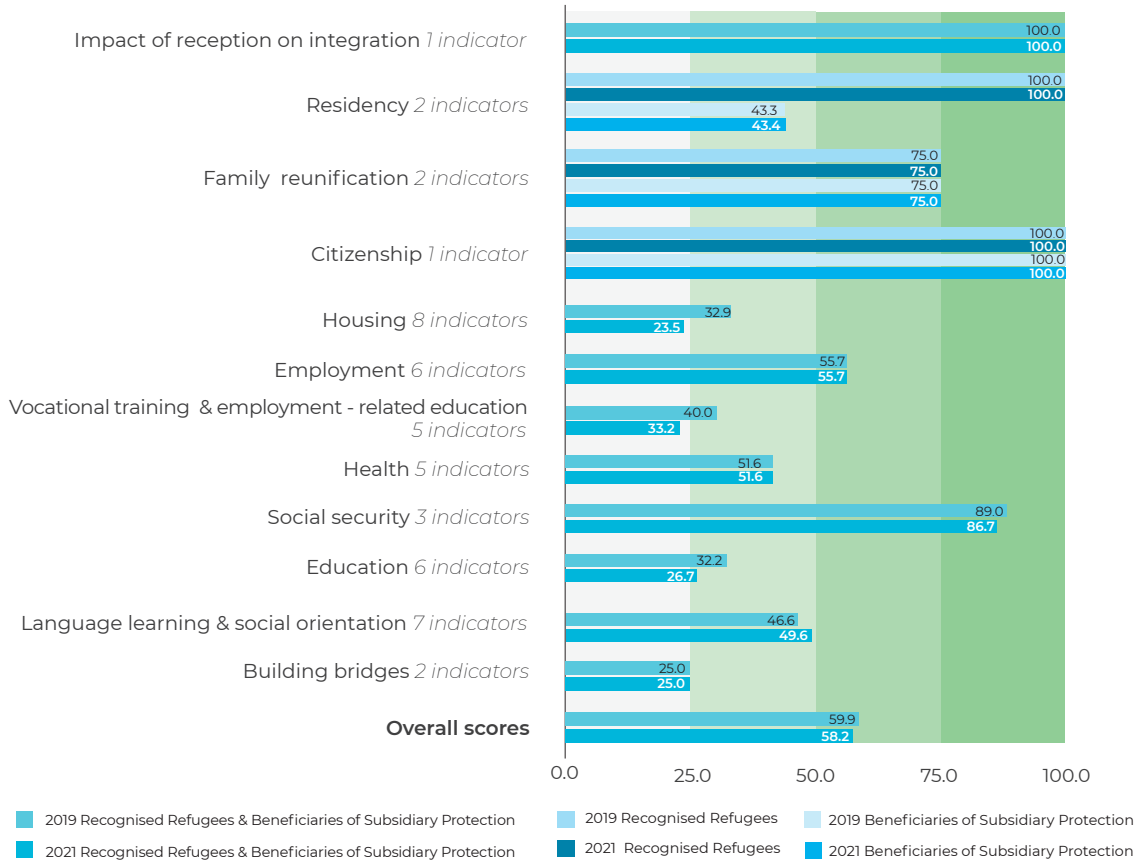


## 16.13. Slovenia

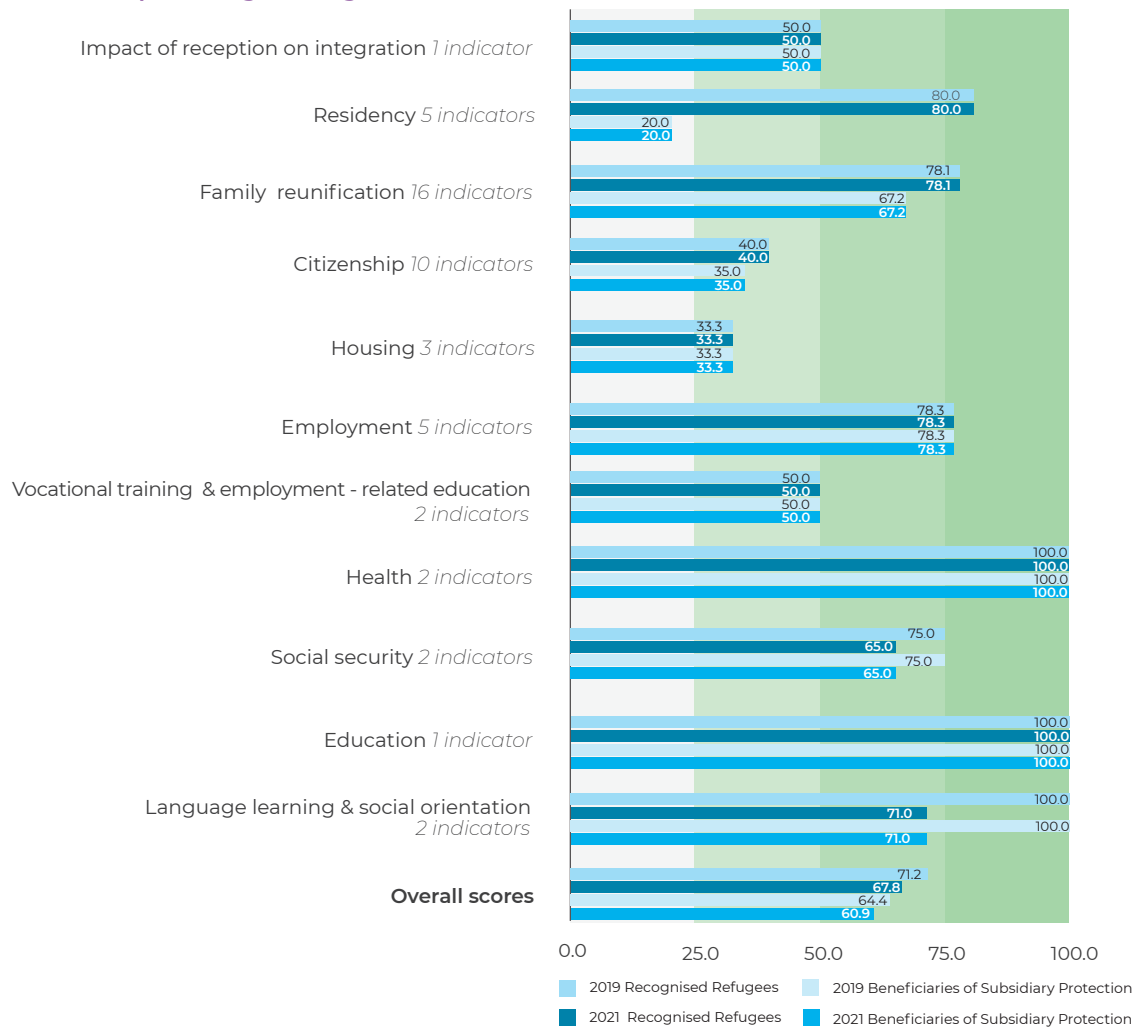
### Overall results



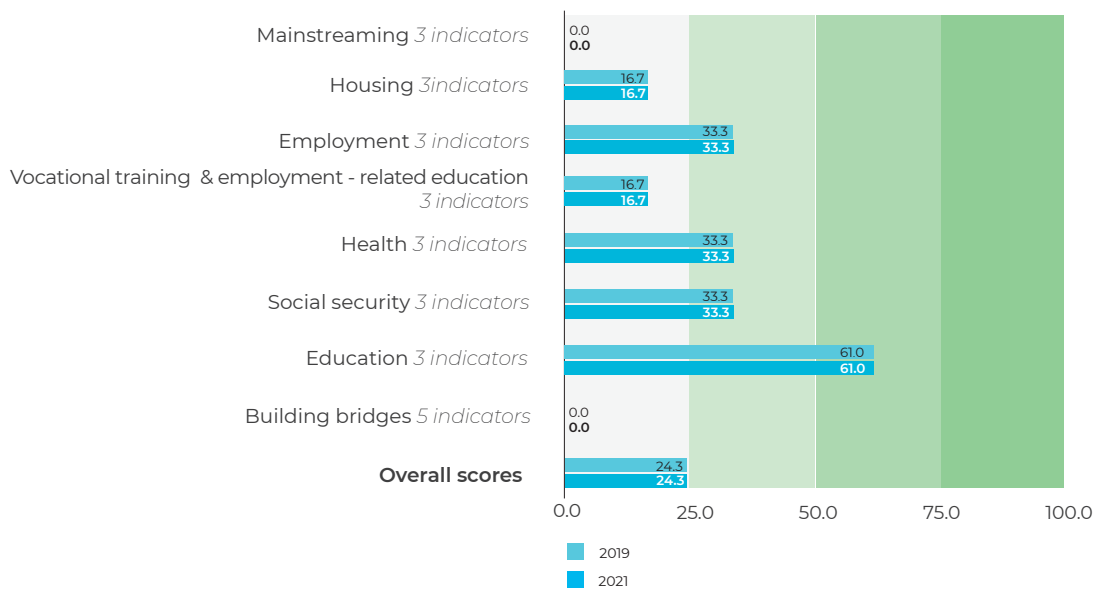
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework

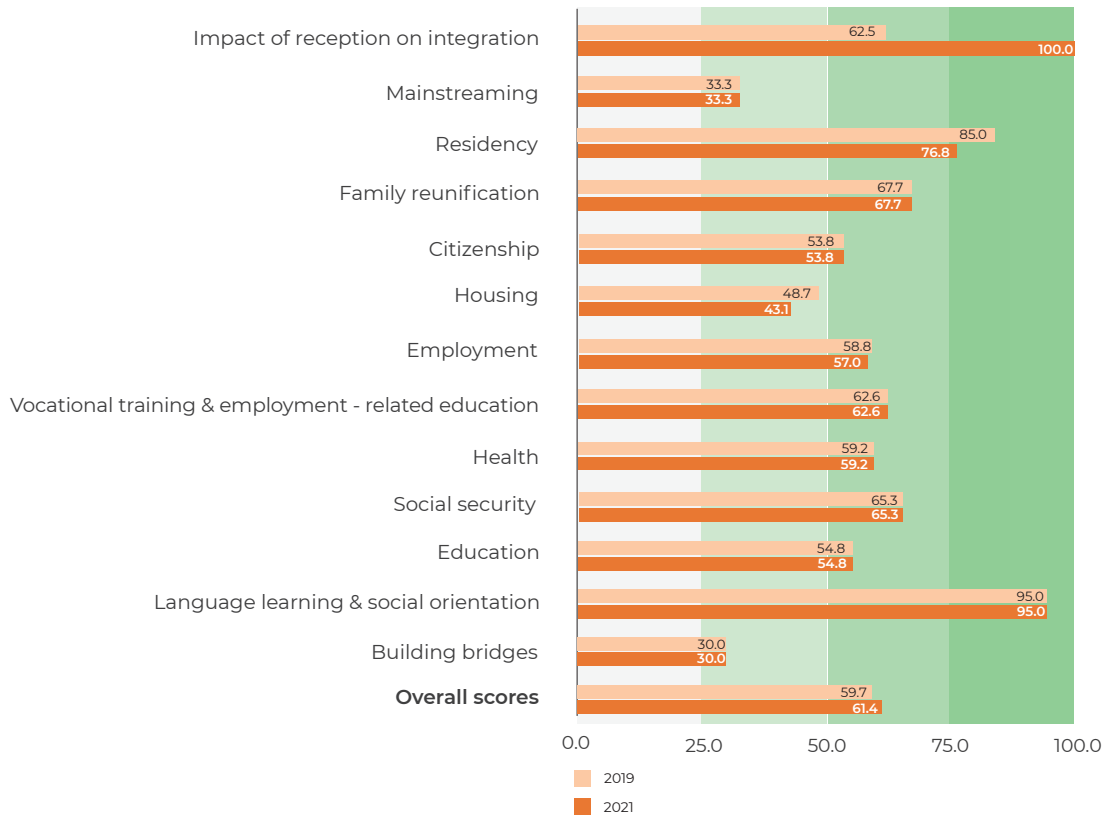


### Step: Implementation & Collaboration

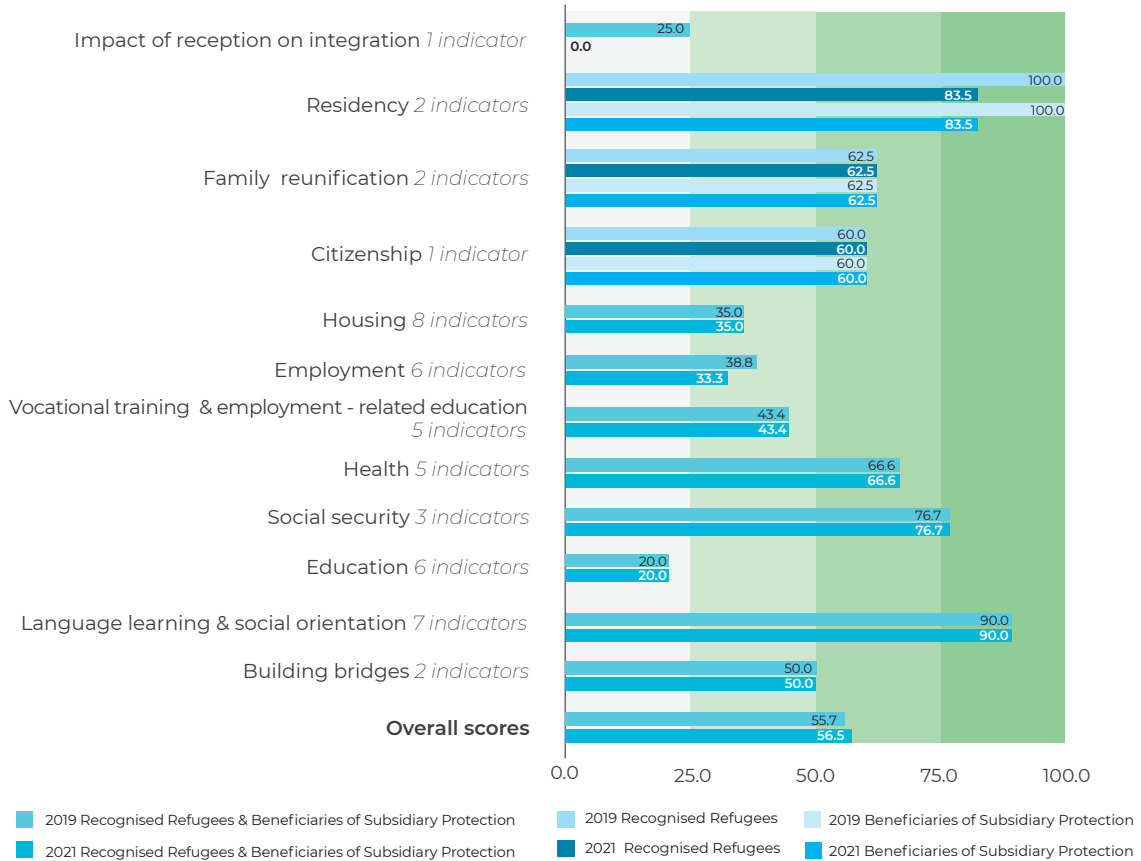


## 16.14. Spain

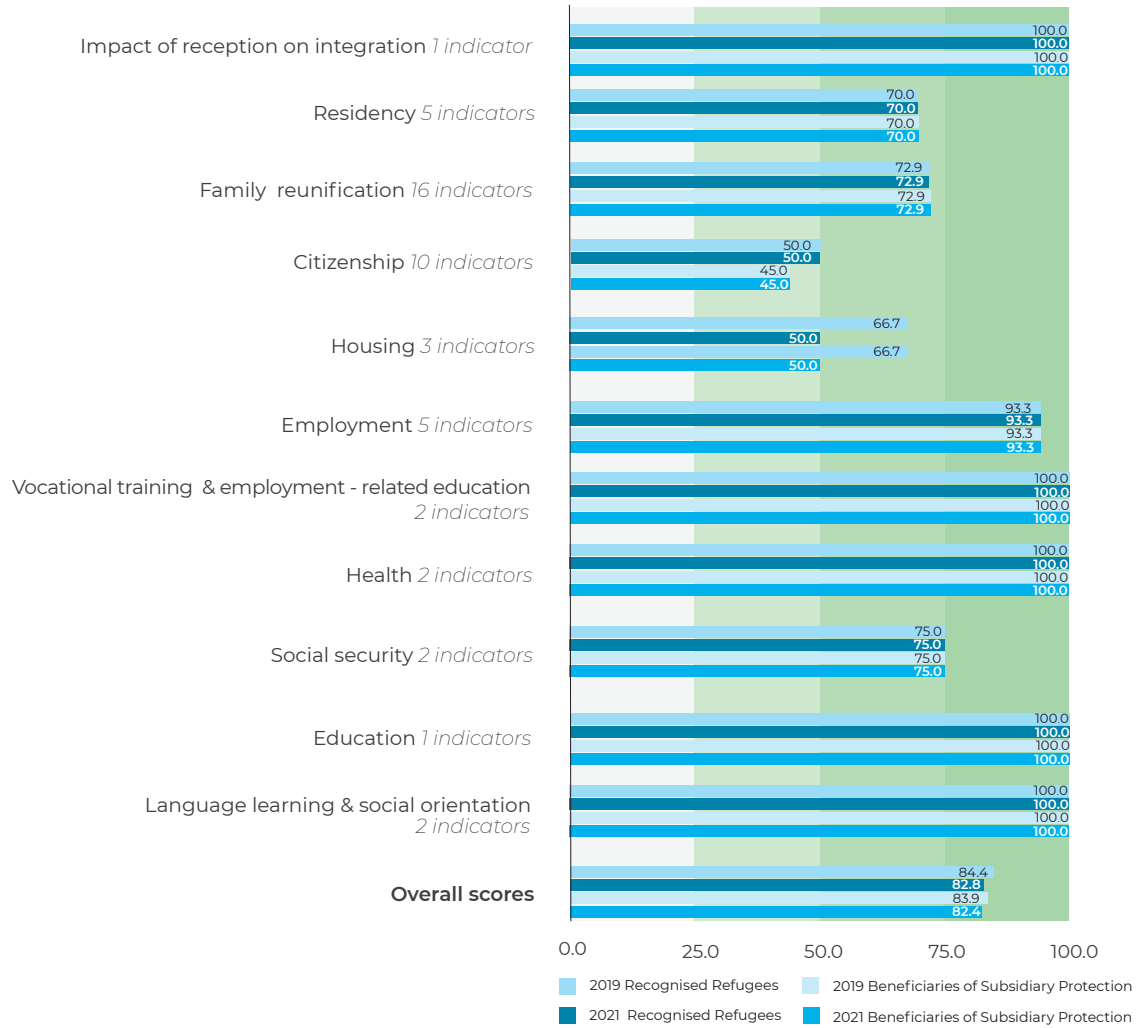
### Overall results



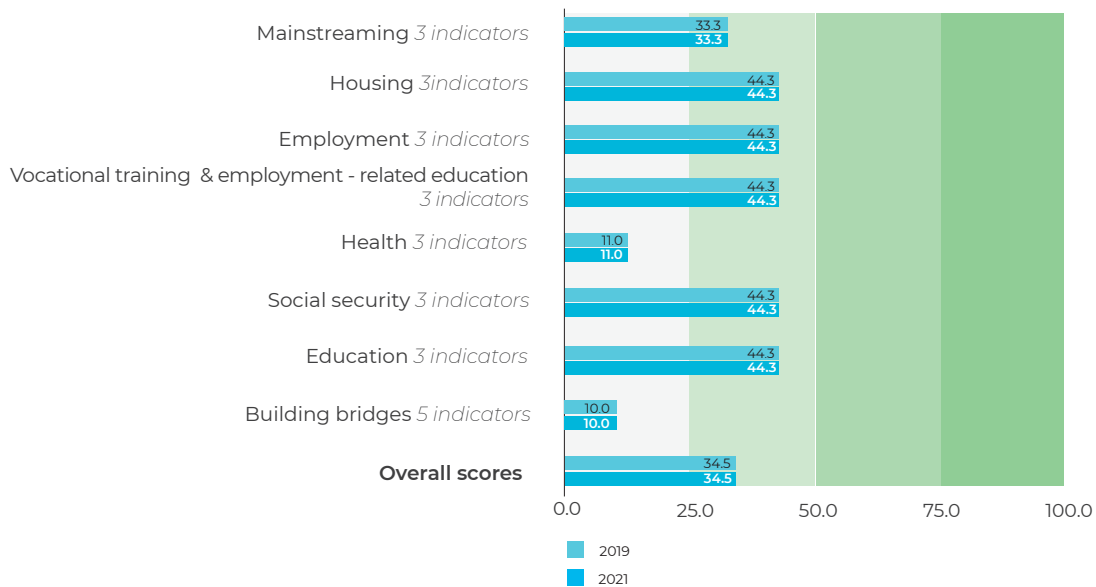
### Step: Building the Policy Framework



### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



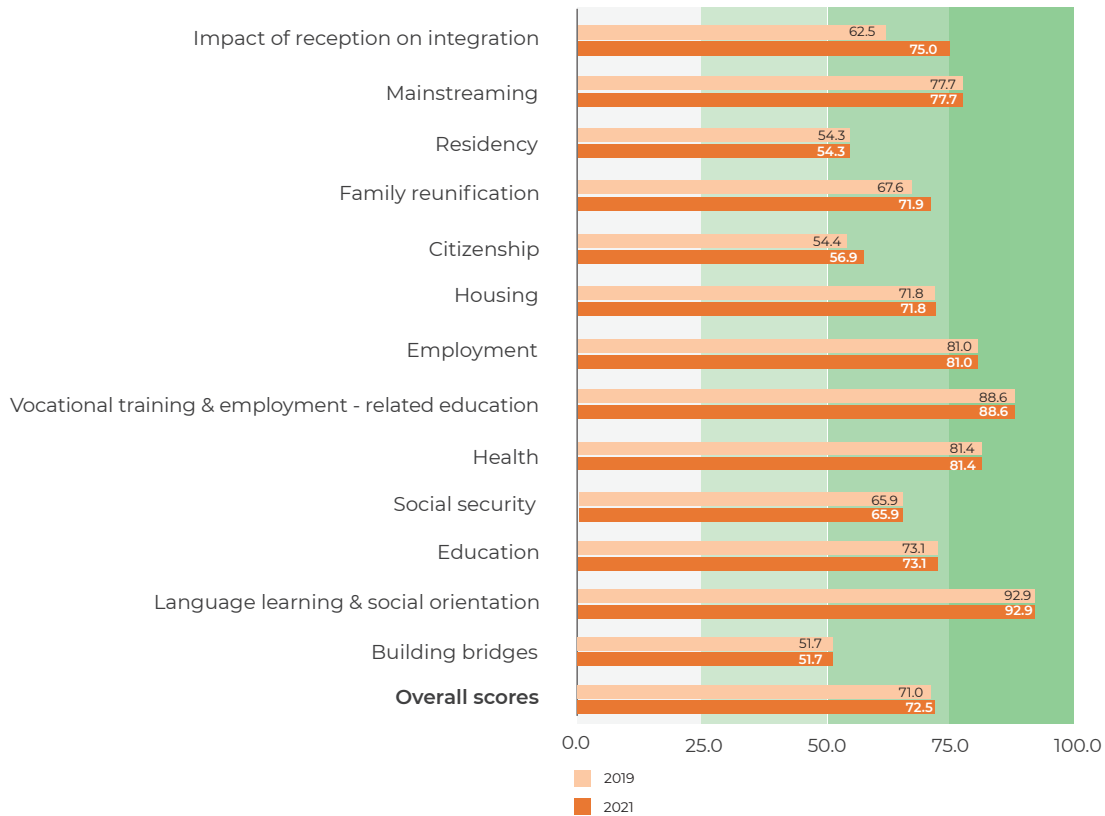
### Step: Implementation & Collaboration



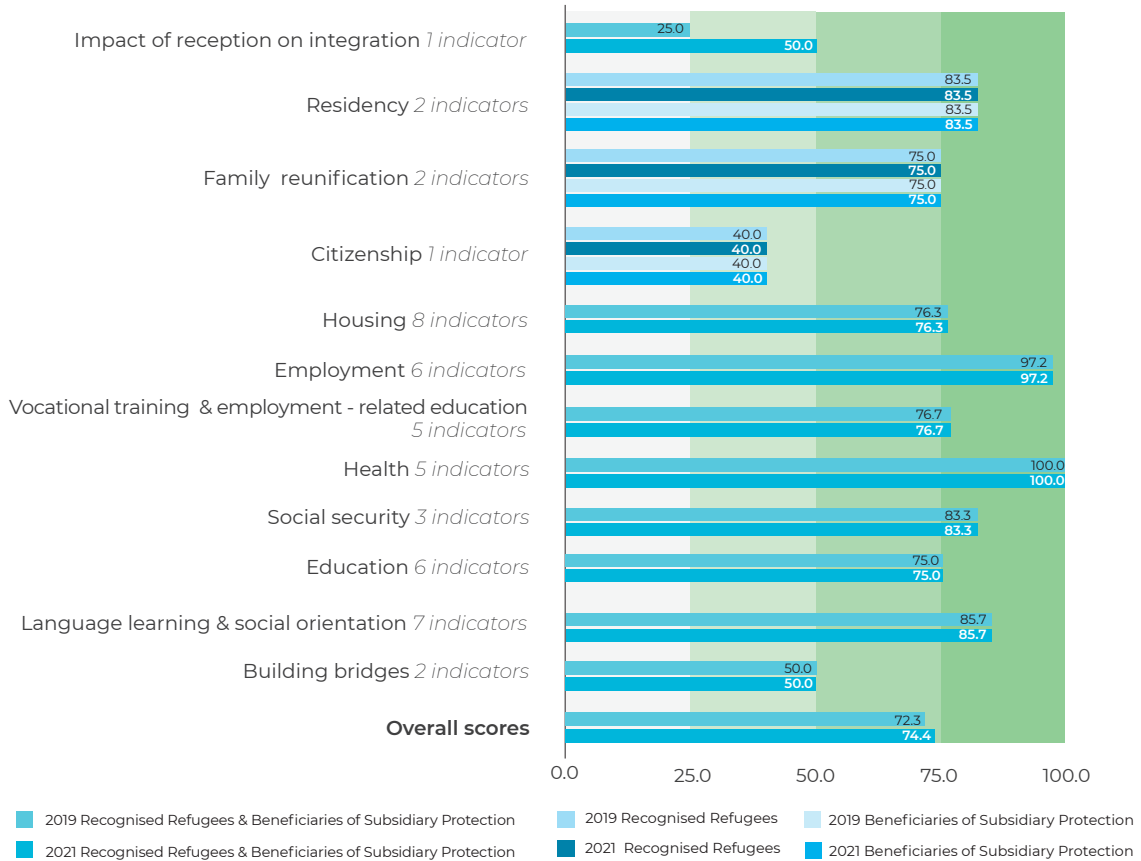


## 16.15. Sweden

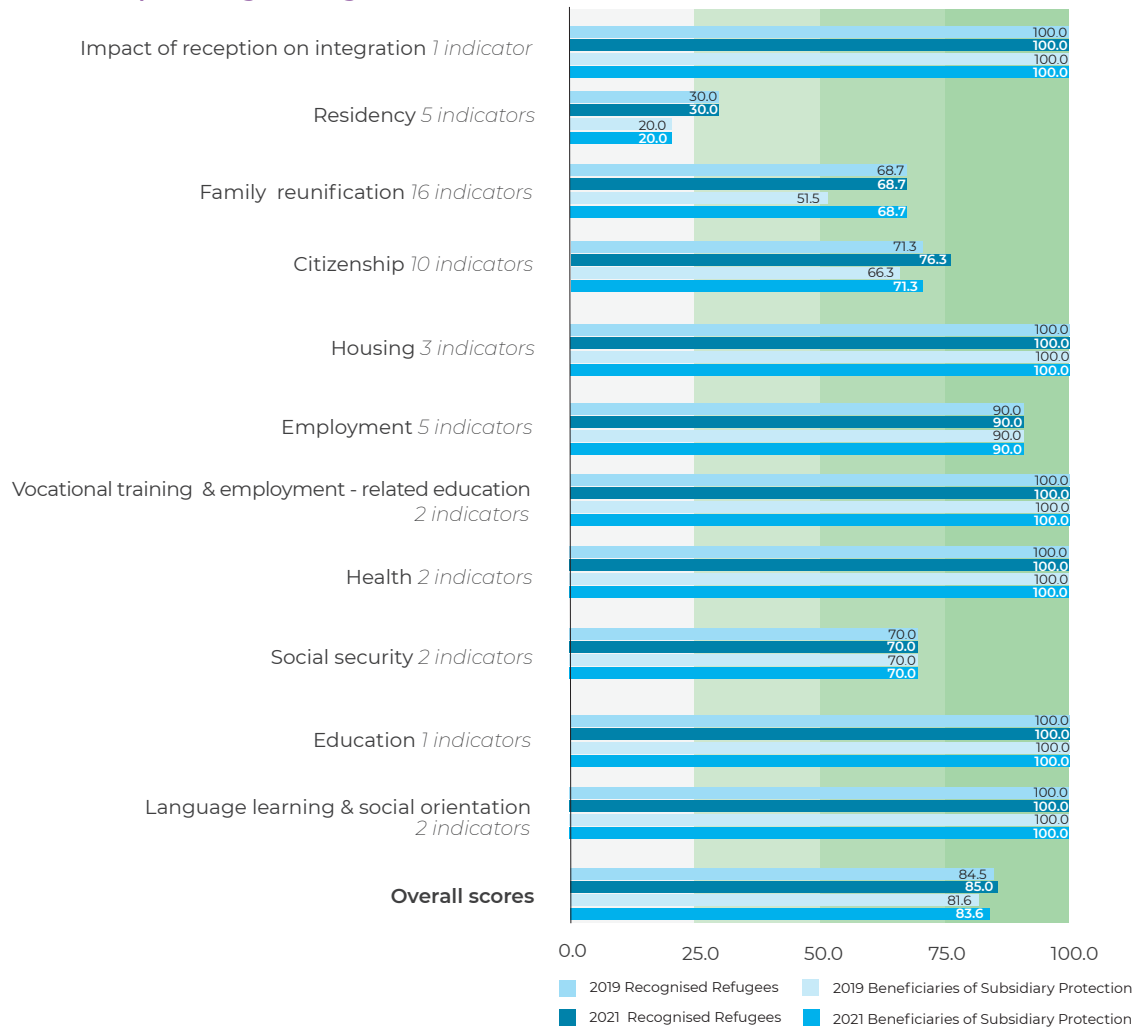
### Overall results



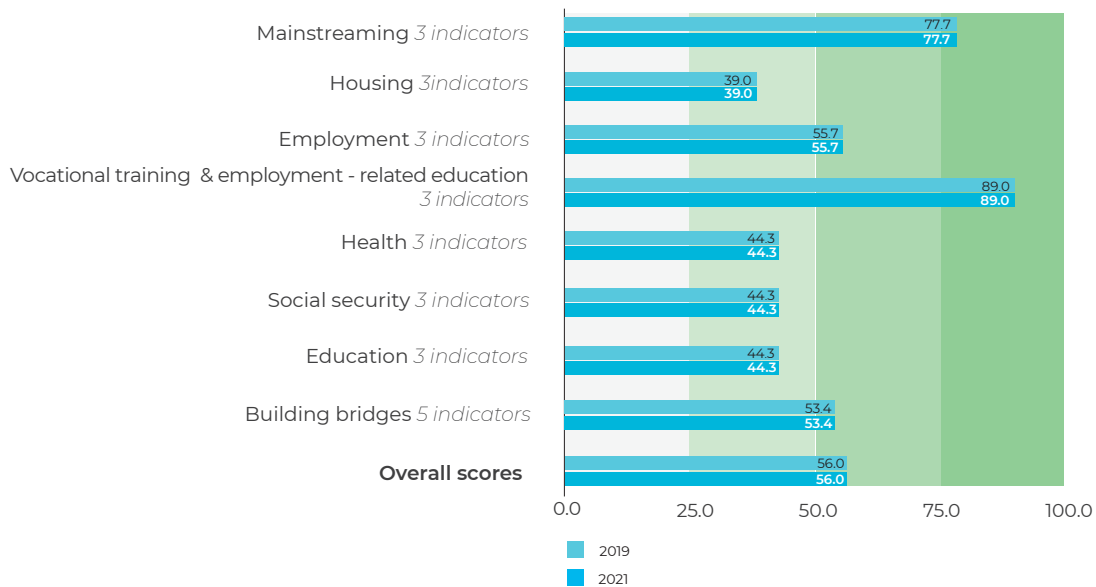
### Step: Building the Policy Framework

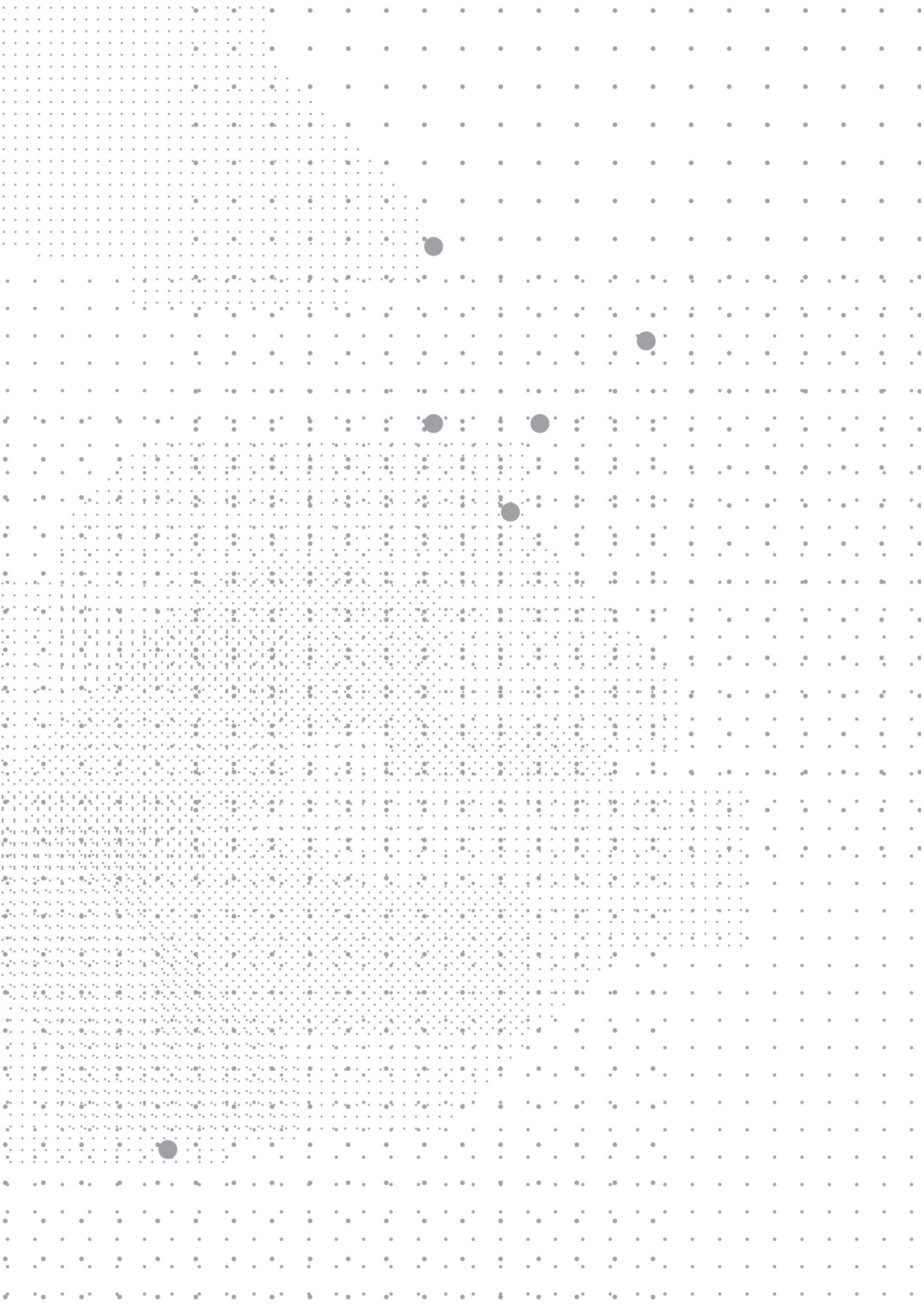


### Step: Setting the Legal Framework



### Step: Implementation & Collaboration





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