



Cyprus



Mapping the current living conditions of Asylum Seekers, Beneficiaries of International Protection and Refugees in Cyprus

3rd Annual Refugee Integration Conference
Online Conference, 10 December 2021

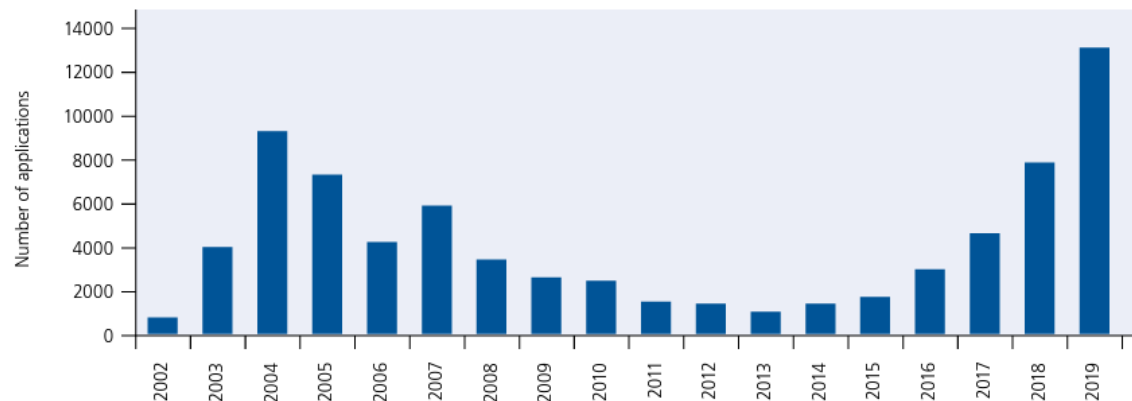
Dr. Stefanos Spaneas
Spaneas.s@unic.ac.cy

The case of Cyprus

- Cyprus is in the crossroad of 3 continents (Europe, Asia and Africa).
- First country/stop (transit) towards other northern countries; the last years is considered as destination country.
- However, results from the last three years illustrate that Cyprus should be considered as final destination country for the majority of people who are applying for asylum.
- It has experienced, in recent years, the influx of vast numbers of displaced populations due to political changes and conflicts in the near geographical area
- new significant fact is the application of asylum from new countries in large numbers.



Number of asylum applications (2002 - 2019)



- Delays in decision-making on individual applications have been observed;
- Particular problems regarding the first reception of asylum-seekers and the later integration into the local societies;
- Lack of national integration strategy of those accepted as international protection beneficiaries and refugees into local society;
- Need for setting up and adopting a comprehensive asylum policy, which will accommodate and meet the asylum reception conditions.

The research study

- These conditions triggered the initiation of a research study sponsored by UNHCR Cyprus (2020-21)
- The focus was on determining their living conditions:
 - social benefits and housing as a form of monthly support;
 - health and access to services;
 - education and vocational training, including for unaccompanied children and adults;
 - employment and access to the labour market;
 - provision of psycho-social support;
 - legal information regarding their rights
 - Social inclusion and participation into the local society; special focus on the local municipalities
 - Utilisation of existed available public services at local level
- The main principles that governed the analysis of the findings were:
 - **Equality** and **non-discrimination** behaviour; on behalf of public services and local authorities
 - **Diversity** and **acceptance** within the local communities
 - **Social Interaction**
- The overall aim was to develop a **roadmap** for both the government and policy makers to introduce effective and realistic policy measures for better integration outcomes.

Living conditions

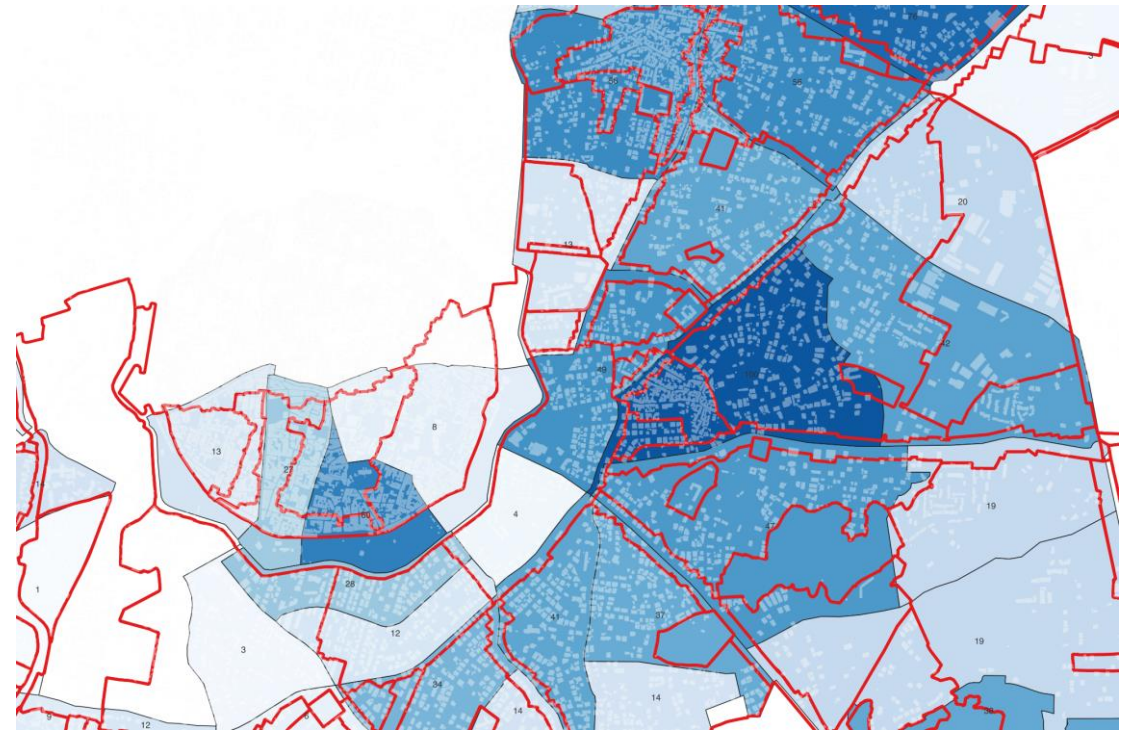
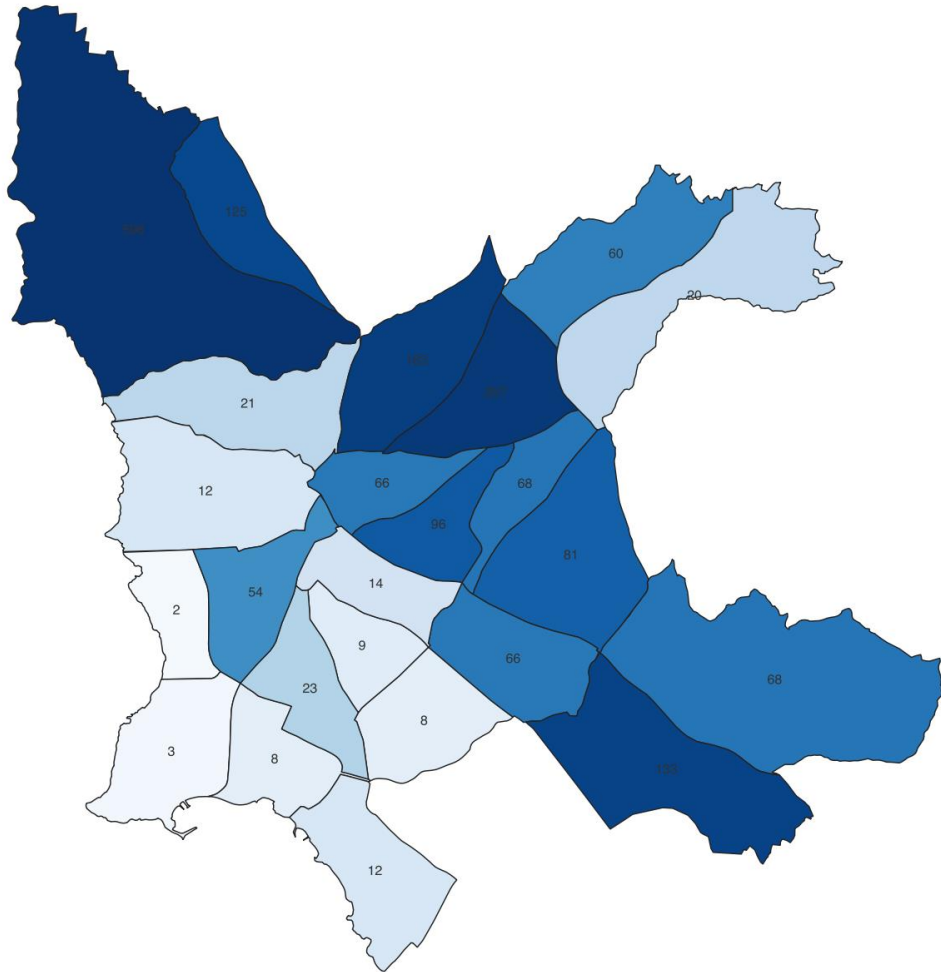
- **Material Assistance:** it is acknowledged that material assistance enumerated in the Reception Regulations is far from sufficient to cover the standard cost of housing in Cyprus
- **Psycho-social support:** it is only providing by NGOs and some municipalities as part of EU co-funded schemes; the state accommodates only the mental health cases in the close infrastructure for a short term period.
- **Health:** access to primary care; problematic conditions following the introduction GESY.
- **Employment:** Limited access to the labour market; conditions deteriorated in COVID-19 era
- **Education:** children have access to education until the age of 15; limited of no access to tertiary education
- **Social inclusion and participation into the local society:** lack of local integration strategy; festivals or actions funded by programmes

Nicosia District
Municipalities
Density of AS, BoIP
and Ref

Nicosia Region / Cities Density

Cities	Migrants	% Cyprus	% Region
Nicosia	6111	20.39%	56.33%
Strovolos	1893	6.32%	17.45%
Aglatzia	501	1.67%	4.62%
Lakatamia	313	1.04%	2.89%
Agios Dometios	509	1.70%	4.69%
Engomi	405	1.35%	3.73%
Latsia	112	0.37%	1.03%
Geri	74	0.25%	0.68%
Tseri	137	0.46%	1.26%
Dali	143	0.48%	1.32%
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ	10198	34.0%	94.0%

Nicosia Region: GIS utilisation on available Post Code details



Segregation should be also looked in comparison of building and local population density

Larnaca Region / Cities Density

Cities	Service Users	% Cyprus	% Region
Larnaca	2011	6.71%	63.58%
Aradippou	112	0.37%	3.54%
Drosia	13	0.04%	0.41%
Leivadia	40	0.13%	1.26%
Oroklini	144	0.48%	4.55%
Kofinou	540	1.80%	17.07%
Xylotympou	9	0.03%	0.28%
Pyla	158	0.53%	5.00%
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ	3027	10.1%	95.7%

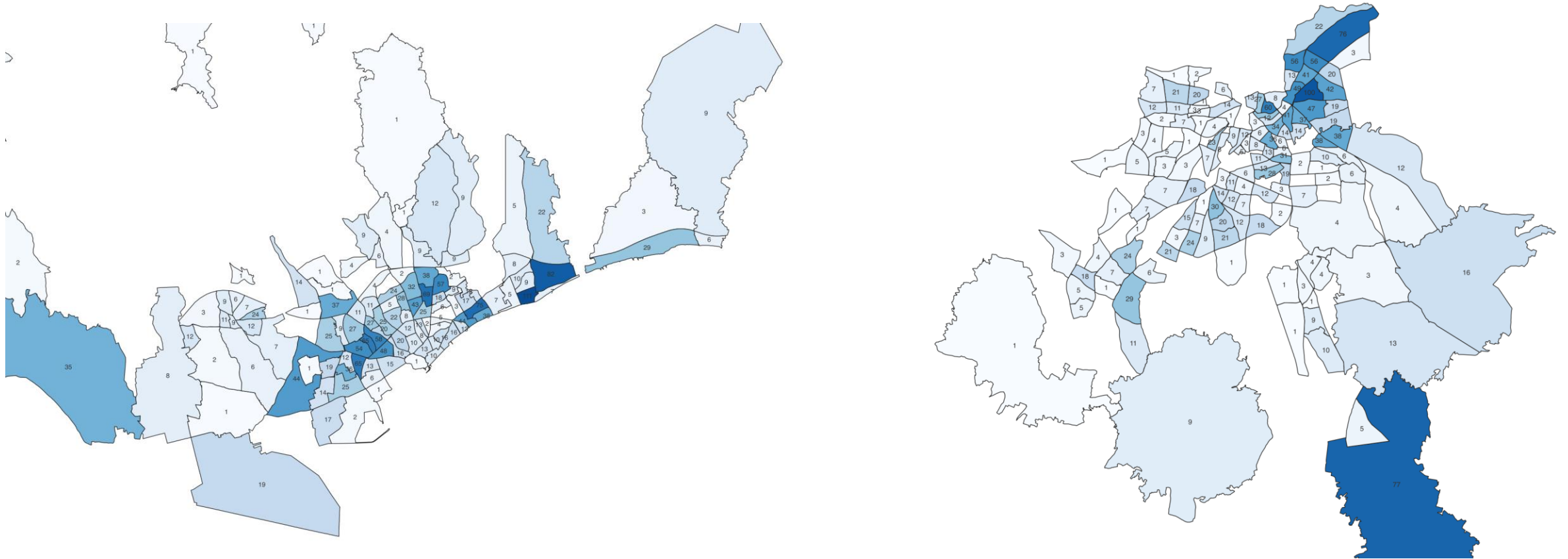
Larnaca District
Municipalities Density
of AS, BoIP and Ref

Limassol Region / Cities Density

Limassol
District
Municipalities
Density of AS,
BoIP and Ref

Cities	Service Users	% Cyprus	% Region
Limassol	4112	13.72%	61.64%
Mesa Geitonia	381	1.27%	5.71%
Germasogeia	873	2.91%	13.09%
Agios Athanasios	113	0.38%	1.69%
Kato Polemidia	341	1.14%	5.11%
Ipsonas	163	0.54%	2.44%
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ	5983	20.0%	89.7%

Limassol and Paphos Regions: GIS utilisation on available Post Code details



Paphos District
Municipalities Density
of AS, BoIP and Ref

Paphos Region / Cities Density

Cities	Service Users	% Cyprus	% Region
Paphos	5949	19.85%	69.70%
Pollis Chrysochous	159	0.53%	1.86%
Pegeia	68	0.23%	0.80%
Chloraka	1207	4.03%	14.14%
Geroskipou	435	1.45%	5.10%
Drousia	69	0.23%	0.81%
ΣΥΝΟΛΟ	7887	26%	92%

Review about living conditions in local municipalities

Challenges for local municipalities

- **Access to housing:** Finding good quality housing is one of the most frequently cited challenges across municipalities. Migrants may face barriers to renting associated with
 - their legal status,
 - Unstable employment,
 - lack of credit history and financial guarantees.
 - Some also face discrimination from landlords.
- **Access to local labour market:** A second major integration challenge is finding work.
 - they have not setup any mechanism to support as
- Employment helps refugees and other migrants gain financial autonomy, improve their host-country language skills, build social ties to other local residents, support mental health by cultivating a sense of purpose, and even access more suitable accommodation on the private housing market thanks to having proof of stable income
 - Gender-specific barriers to employment

Challenges for local municipalities

- **Access to education and child care:** a challenge exacerbated in all cities by the arrival of large numbers of unaccompanied children.
 - A lack of early information and orientation to help migrant families navigate school systems may mean that children are not always enrolled in school
 - The concentration of immigrants in specific neighbourhoods has lead to similarly high concentrations of migrant-background pupils in certain schools
 - difficulty for schools and teachers to adapt to increasingly diverse classrooms
- Early childhood education and care is an important means of promoting young children's physical, cognitive and socioemotional development.
 - An observed lack of information for such services is observed
 - Concerns from parents for high concentration of large number of migrant children in specific locations

Challenges for local municipalities

- **Access to health care services:** Large-scale humanitarian arrivals in recent years have added to health care challenges
 - High concentrations of migrants with specific needs and vulnerabilities can complicate access to healthcare. Prohibited Factors:
 - language barriers,
 - complex administrative requirements
 - lack of staff trained in multi-cultural environments /intercultural communication
 - broader structural factors such as skills shortages and budget cuts
- **Access to mental health care services:** One of the most under-resourced areas in many refugee-receiving border-cities
 - The provision of these services can be viewed as a litmus test for cities' progress in shifting from an emergency response to long-term integration planning:
 - mental health conditions may emerge well after initial settlement or as a result of protracted "limbo" situations for those without secure legal status, limited social interactions, and forced inactivity.
 - lack of (interculturally trained) mental health specialists and interpreters who could help vulnerable groups obtain psychological support in their mother tongue or another language in which they are sufficiently proficient.

Challenges for local municipalities

- **Provision of local services:** the current system is developed for the indigent population
 - High concentrations of migrants in specific geographical areas resulted to new problems, which have not yet resolved:
 - Housing condition
 - Collection of garbage
 - Administrative registrations
 - Provision of information in additional languages
 - Residents' Obligation for the community (i.e. water, local taxes)
 - lack of staff trained in multi-cultural environments /intercultural communication
 - Establishment of services for migrant population
 - broader structural factors such as skills shortages and budget cuts

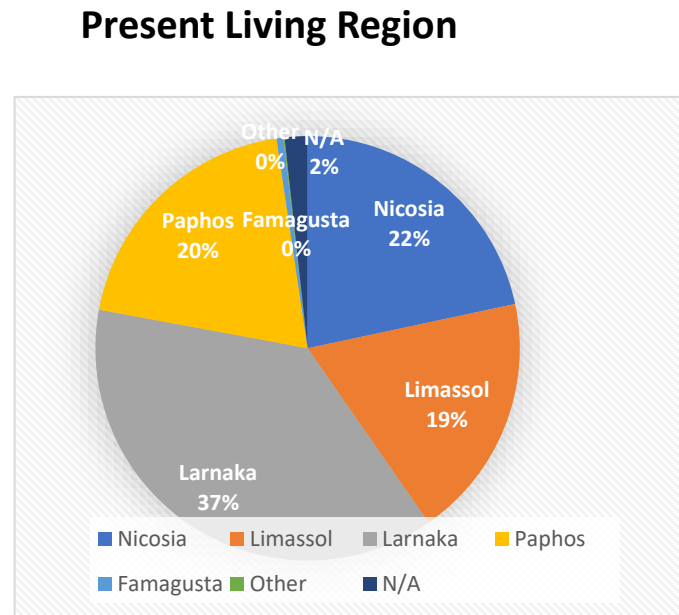
Research Methodology



- Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed to gather reliable and valid data (Leech and Onwueguzie, 2009).
- **Questionnaires** were constructed to collect the views of asylum seekers on
 - Social Welfare Services;
 - Accommodation;
 - Education;
 - Employment;
 - Legal Rights and Obligations;
 - Inclusion and Social Participation.
- The questionnaire was administered to 1212 participants;
- A proportional, stratified random sampling approach was followed (4 regions).
- **Semi-structured interviews** technique was utilised to collect data regarding the views of
 - a sample of the researched group (single persons and persons with families)
- 100 interviewees responded; .

Demographics and SWS support

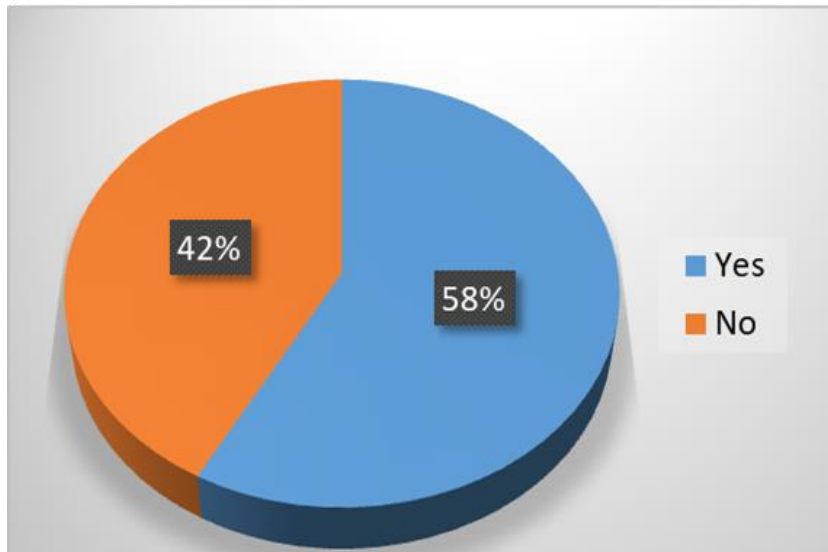
Countries of Origin		
	N	%
Cameroon	332	27.4
Somalia	38	3.1
Nigeria	179	14.8
Gambia	16	1.3
India	15	1.2
Siera Leone	11	0.9
Congo	63	5.2
Palestine	54	4.5
Egypt	24	2.0
Guinea	44	3.6
Syria	213	17.6
Iraq	30	2.5
Iran	73	6.0
Other	120	9.9
Total	1212	100.0



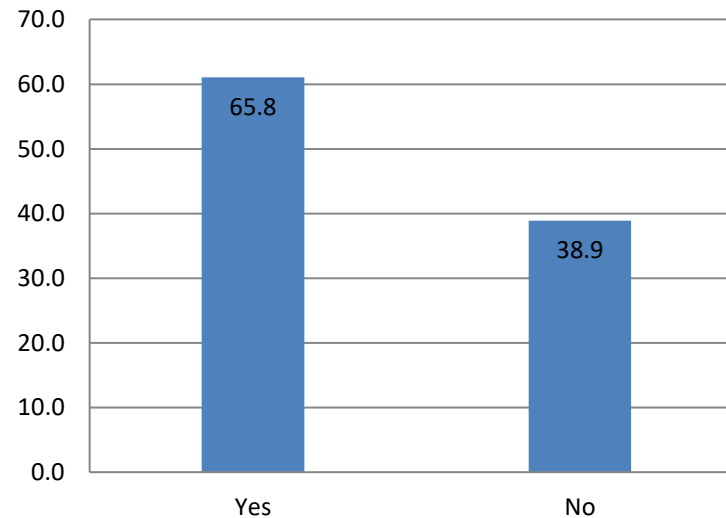
Kind of Support from SWS	%
Financial Support	59.5
Material Support	8.1
General information	7.4
Vouchers/Coupons	80.7
Housing Support	45.6
Psychosocial Support/ Counseling	7.5
Family Support	0.7
Food bank	14.6

Social Welfare Support

Figure 5: Do you ever feel not to have enough food?



Difficulties to access SWS



Type of Difficulties	%
Applying for welfare (Filling forms, procedures)	65.8
Waiting for a valid answer (that you are allowed to receive money)	26.4
Communicating (language)	55.3
Finding social welfare workers available	65.9

Frequency of Food Shortage

	%
Every day	13.8
Several times a week	29.8
Once a week	14.7
Several times a month	27.6
Every month – rarely	14.2

Satisfaction from SWS Officers

	Answers in %				
	1	2	3	4	5
To what degree are you satisfied with the social welfare services?	23.6	30.9	17.7	8.3	3.1
How would you describe the behaviour of the Social Welfare Officers toward you?	15.4	21.2	31.3	19.2	12.9

1 = Not at all, 2 = Little, 3 = Somewhat, 4 = Sufficiently, 5 = Very much, and for the second question: 1 = Not good at all, 2 = Not good, 3 = Average, 4 = Very good, 5 = Extremely good

Accommodation

The overall results reveal a rather 'disappointing image' in terms of accommodation types and satisfactory levels

- The main difficulty is that, although rents have increased over the years, asylum-seekers still receive the same amount:

“My living conditions are very poor.....I cannot relocate to a better house, as I don't have a job... I don't have money to afford it.” (Asylum Seeker)

- Shared accommodation is another option for them, however, due to the spread of pandemic COVID-19 may result to create multiple positive cases among them:

“I live in a shared apartment, with five persons in Limassol. I live upstairs. The conditions are very bad and overcrowded” (Recognized Refugee)

Table 16: How difficult was it to find Accommodation?

	F(x)	%
Not at all	88	7.3
Little	127	10.5
Somewhat	173	14.3
Sufficiently	275	22.7
Very Much	393	32.4
N/A	156	12.9
Total	1212	100.0

Level of satisfaction with the living arrangements



		Asylum Seeker	International Protection	Recognised Refugee	N/A	Total
Not at all	F(x)	235	59	42	5	341
	%	31.0%	19.9%	29.0%	35.7%	28.1%
Little	F(x)	183	66	33	5	287
	%	24.2%	22.3%	22.8%	35.7%	23.7%
Somewhat	F(x)	107	70	36	3	216
	%	14.1%	23.6%	24.8%	21.4%	17.8%
Sufficiently	F(x)	92	58	17	1	168
	%	12.2%	19.6%	11.7%	7.1%	13.9%
Very Much	F(x)	66	15	5	0	86
	%	8.7%	5.1%	3.4%	0.0%	7.1%
N/A	F(x)	74	28	12	0	114
	%	9.8%	9.5%	8.3%	0.0%	9.4%
Total		757	296	145	14	1212
		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Health

Table 20: Are you satisfied with the health care you received?

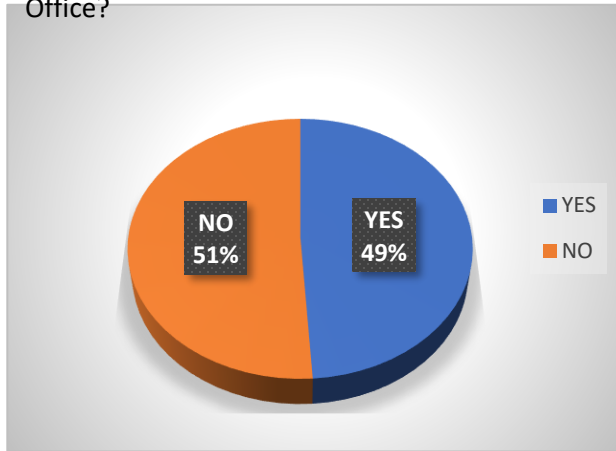
	F(x)	%
Not at all	143	11.8
Little	374	16.4
Somewhat	306	18.0
Sufficiently	241	15.3
Very Much	148	12.2
Total	1212	100.0

Table 21: What kind of difficulties you come across when you visit doctors in hospital?

	F(x)	%
Attitude issues	701	57.8
Difficulties in understanding the medical bureaucratic process	560	46.2
Difficult to set treatment with medical card	262	21.4
Lack of communication	922	76.1
Delay	272	22.4
There are not enough health care providers	525	43.3
Negative attitude by doctors	744	61.4
None	144	12.0

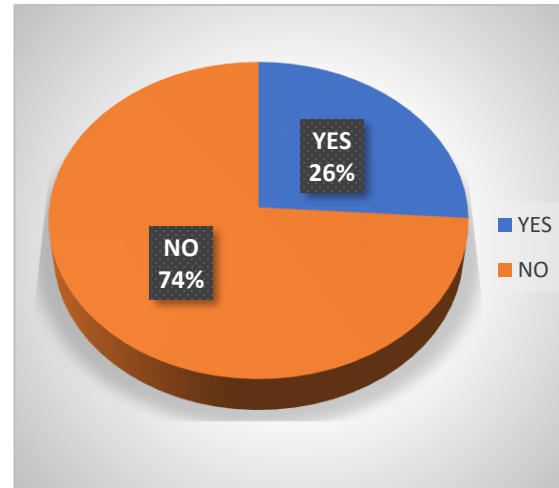
Employment

Figure 2: Are you registered with the Labour Office?



- it is important to notice the period of the research delivered. During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis and the country lockdown in March 2020, the Public Employment Service (until September 2020), did not accept new registration from asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection.

Figure 3: Do you presently work ?

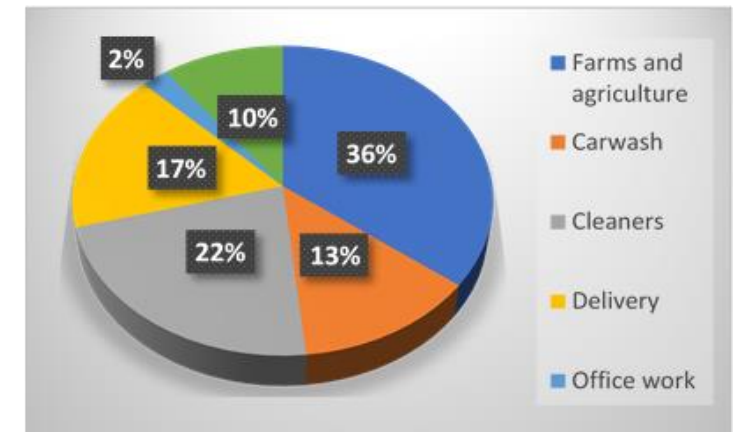


Difficulties with the Labour office

No who answered yes

Application (Filling forms, procedures)	701
Waiting for an answer (that you are allowed to work)	712
Difficult to get an appointment with a labour worker	700
Labour Officers availability	744

Figure 4: In case you presently work, in which of the following sector do you work?



Legal Rights and Obligations

Figure1. Upon your arrival did anyone inform you about your legal rights.

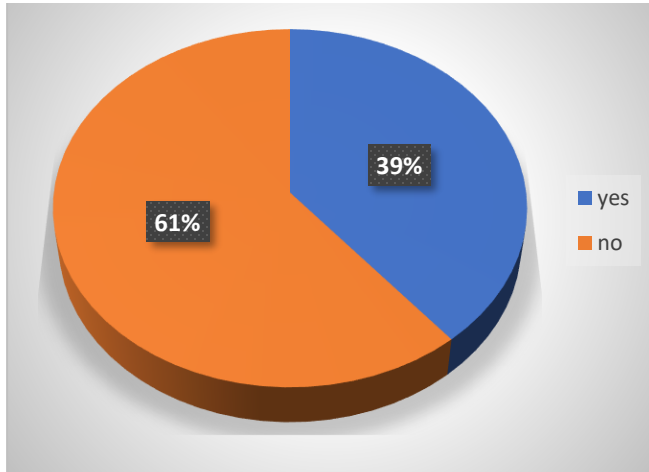


Figure 22: Did other parties inform you about your legal rights?

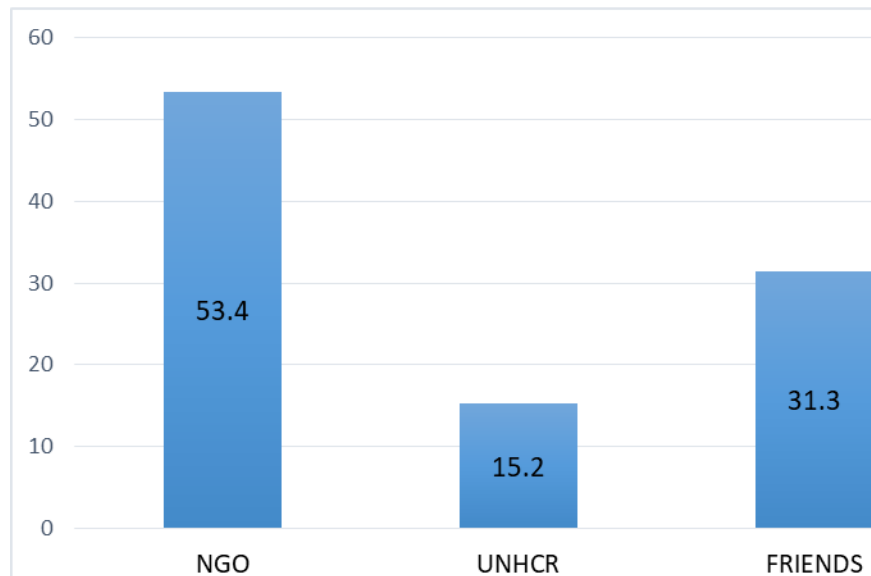
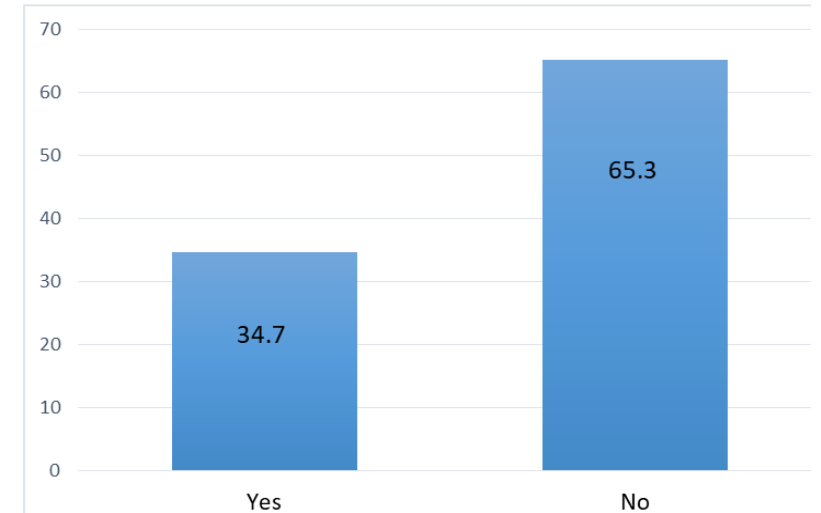


Figure 23: Did you receive any brochures/leaflets where your rights and obligations were stated?



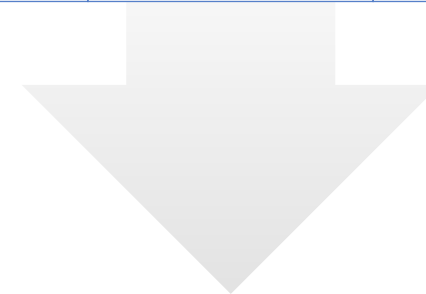
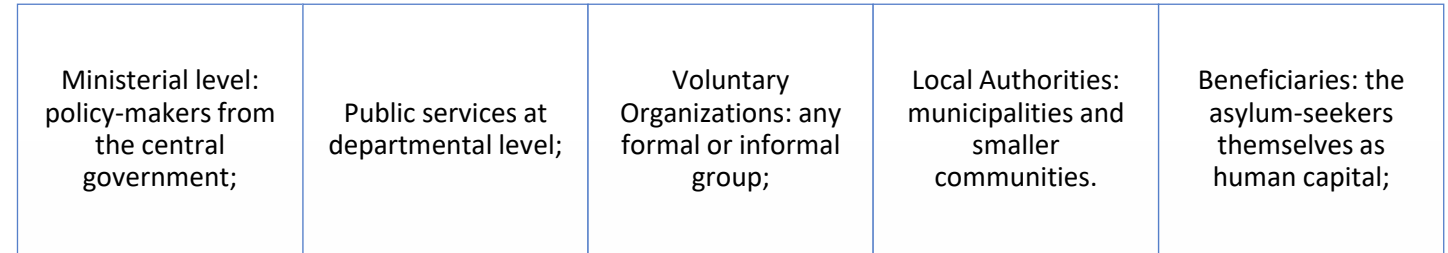
Provision of information is an area that was heavily criticized in the previous years. Although better performance has been achieved, many issues remain. This is another area for policy planners to concentrate on to promote relative strategies for fast track procedures.

Survey – Eurobarometer 469 (2018)

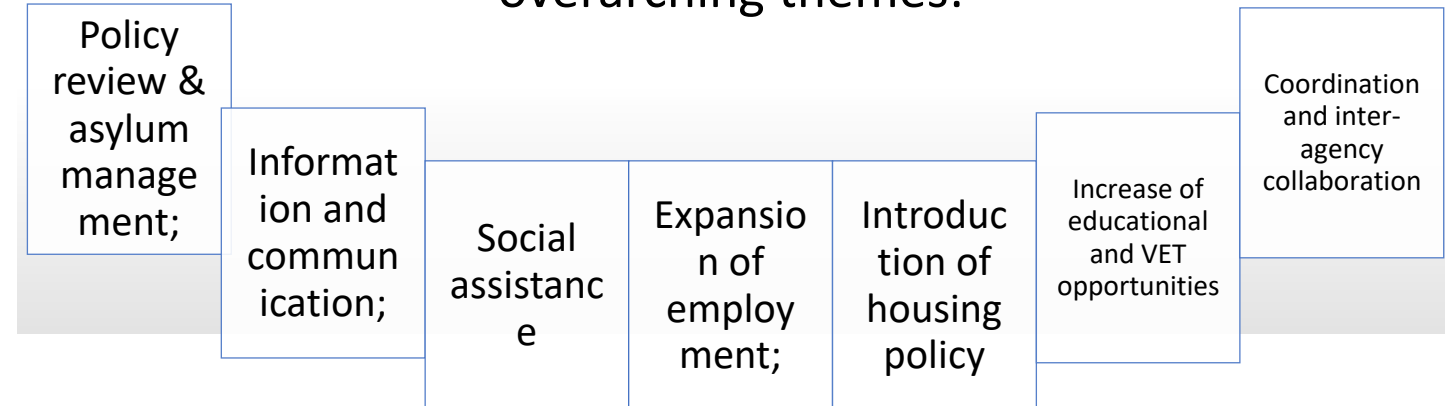
- 50% sees immigration as a problem, rather than an opportunity
- 58% believes that migrants are a burden on the welfare system
- 65 % believes that migrants take jobs away from workers, while 83% help to fill jobs for which it is hard to find workers
- 49% thinks that integration is not successful in Cyprus
- 62% thinks that the government does enough to support the integration of migrants
- (Mandatory) language courses and integration courses upon arrival are the two integration measures that most Cypriots agree with
- Providing more support to Civil Society Organisations and giving the right to vote to local elections the two integration measures that most Cypriots disagree with

Road-map to Integration

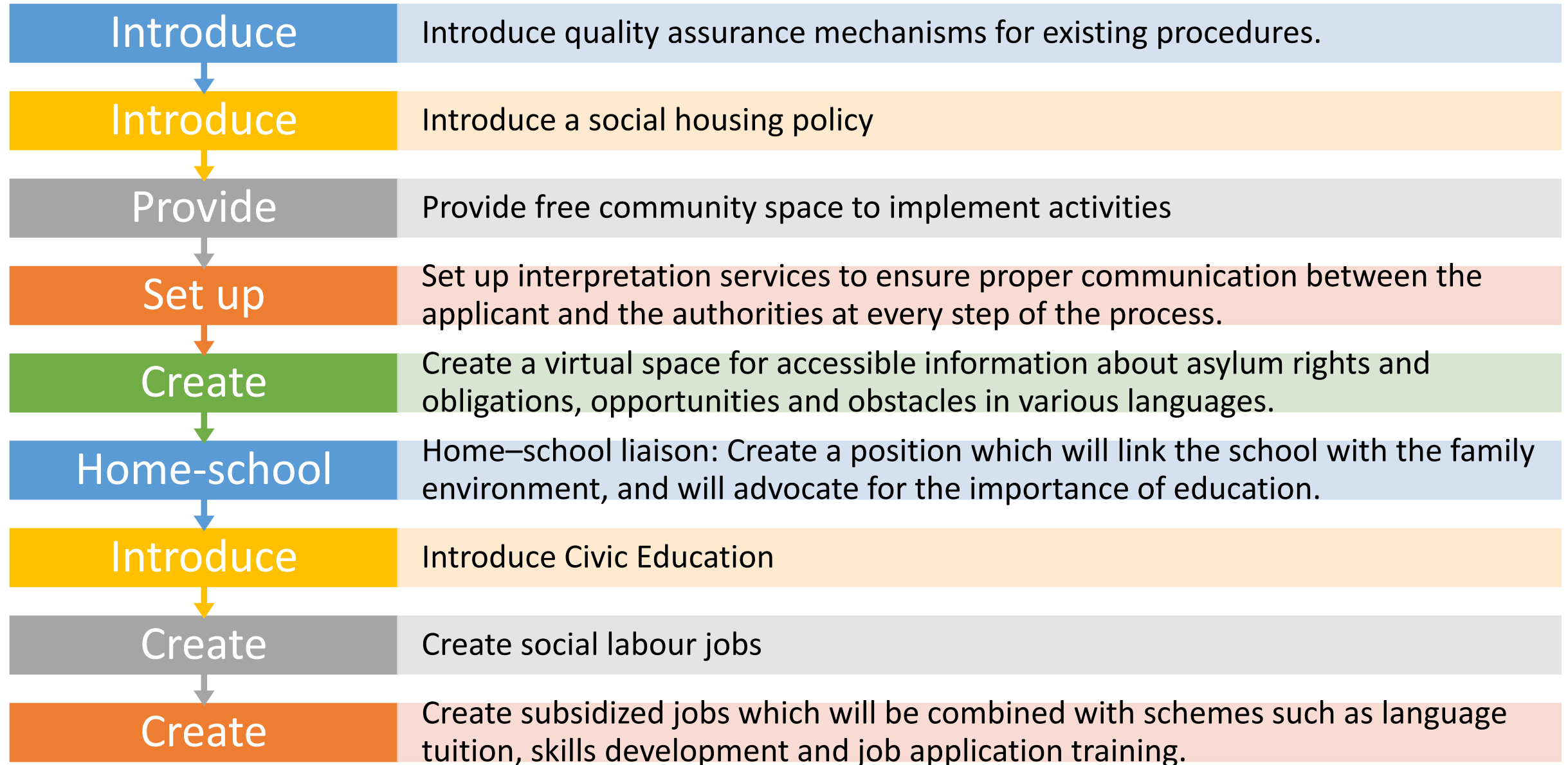
The recommendations comprise a combination of measures, to be further discussed by several stakeholders, which are classified into five main categories:



The policy recommendations are clustered in six overarching themes:



Road-map to Integration



Local Policy Approaches: How can cities may become able to tackle integration challenges?

Balancing

Balancing targeted and mainstream services

- Some cities largely rely on mainstream services to support migrants – either by default, if they are new to immigration or have limited awareness of migrant-specific obstacles and needs, or by design, if providing “special” support to immigrants carries the risk of political backlash
- the adoption of a mainstream approach can be a deliberate choice to address the diverse needs of all local residents.

Improving

Improving intragovernmental coordination: Establishment of interdepartmental working groups to improve coordination, as well as to give migrant inclusion cross-cutting policy relevance

- Appointing an integration Councilor within the municipal administration can help addressing some of the existed challenges and implement durable solutions
- Expression of political vision for migrant inclusion

Supporting

Supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships: Cultivate trust between local authorities and non-governmental partners

- Formalise responsibility-sharing
- Monitor immigrant integration at the local level
- Develop a participatory integration strategy and action plan
- Fostering multi-stakeholder networks

Local Policy Approaches: How can cities may become able to tackle integration challenges?

Design inclusive strategies

- **Re-examining the organization, location and accessibility of services**
 - Co-locating services
 - Adopting a neighbourhood-based approach
 - Creating inter-municipality clusters
 - Organising efficient referrals between services

Improving migrants' representation in local decision-making

Contact Details

Questions, proposals, comments ...
are welcome

Dr. Stefanos Spaneas

Associate Professor of Social Work

spaneas.s@unic.ac.cy

Tel : +357 22 842251

Mob : +357 96513182