

VET VOICES Guidelines: Türkiye (2)

Pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Türkiye

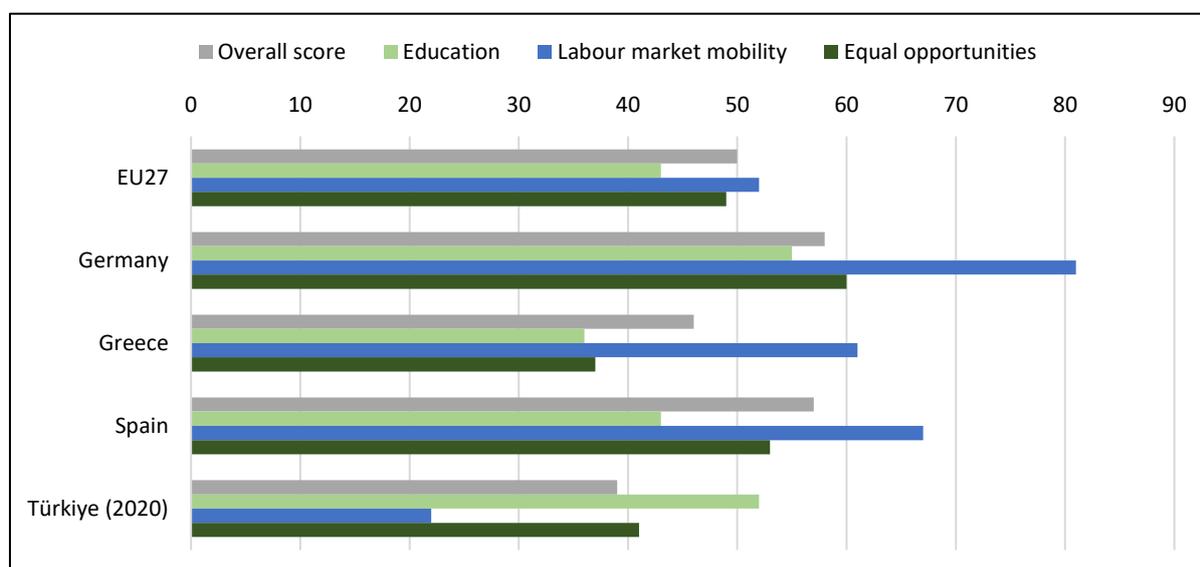
It is estimated that the number of persons living outside of their country of origin reached 281 million in 2020. The largest number of international migrants resided in Europe, with a total of 87 million. When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to robust and inclusive economies and societies in countries of destination. However, integration challenges persist for many migrants, especially those who have experienced forced migration. *The VET VOICES project seeks to expedite integration by allowing migrants to quickly and easily assess their interests, explore jobs, create a watchlist, network with professionals, and watch short videos of other migrants who have made it in relevant fields.*

This Guideline outlines **pathways to vocational education and training for asylum-seekers and other migrants in Türkiye**, with examples of good practices implemented by a range of institutions.

Rights to education and educational integration policies

Compulsory education in Türkiye lasts 12 years, in three stages: four years of primary education, four years of lower secondary, and four years of upper secondary (high school). All legal residents of Türkiye enjoy the right to education in public schools, under the principles of universality and equality, the fulfilment of individual needs, the right to lifelong learning, and other fundamental rights guaranteed by the Turkish constitution (Presidency of Migration Management, 2019). A legal ID – for instance, a temporary protection beneficiary identification card – is required to enrol in public schools; children without an ID can enrol as guest students, but cannot receive qualifications. The Provincial Directorate of National Education is responsible for assessing the educational level and qualifications of foreign students prior to enrolment, and for offering distance education in cases where catch-up work is needed. The Migrant Integration Policy Index rates school integration policy in Türkiye as higher than the EU27 average, as well as Greece and Spain, and nearly on par with Germany (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migrant Integration Policy Index 2019 – maximum score = 100 (Solano & Huddleston, 2020)



Access to the vocational education and training system

As with compulsory education, refugees, tolerated persons, and asylum-seekers have the right to access vocational education and training systems in Türkiye. As mentioned in the *VET Voices Guideline: Türkiye (1)*, the VET system in Türkiye entails formal qualification-granting programmes at the secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as non-formal programmes (Numanoğlu et al., 2018). Several tracks are available: after completing the standard eight grade, students can take an examination to qualify for an Anatolian Technical High School, Anatolian Vocational Program, or Vocational Education Center Program; alternately after completing the ninth grade, students can enrol in Vocational and Technical Secondary Education. Vocational and Technical Schools of Distance Education are also an option, including for adults, as there is no age limit to enrol. Finally, Vocational Open High Schools, which follow a journeyman/master system, provide an alternative to formal vocational education tracks. For students who have not completed their compulsory education in Türkiye, an equivalency certificate provided by the Provincial Education Directorate is required.

Another prerequisite for vocational education (as with compulsory education) is sufficient Turkish language ability. Language courses are available at Public Education Centres for any foreigner with a legal ID, such as a temporary protection beneficiary identification card. Adult foreigners may furthermore take advantage of a free eight-hour social integration and social life course (ESSN), as well as cultural, vocational, and technical courses offered by the General Directorate of Lifelong Learning.

Key institutions and good practices

As mentioned in *VET VOICES Guidelines: Türkiye (2)* vocational high school graduates earn significantly more than high school graduates without vocational certification, not to mention primary or secondary school graduates (Turkstat, 2020). Improving asylum-seekers' and other migrants' access to VET is thus an effective means of improving their quality of life, as well as their ability to contribute to the economy and meaningfully participate in Turkish society. The General Directorate of Lifelong Learning, Department of Immigration and Emergency Education, and Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) have taken a proactive approach to upgrading job-seeking refugees' skills and facilitating their access to employment: in 2020, there were a total of 156,332 trainees (67,423 male and 88,909 female) from 135 different countries who benefited from public vocational education and training, of whom 83,214 completed their courses and received certificates (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, 2021). Civil society organisations (such as UNHCR, UNICEF, and the Turkish Red Crescent) play an important supporting role by developing targeted vocational consulting, language education, and other services.

In the wake of the European Union's refugee hosting agreements with Türkiye, EU-based aid and development organisations have also played a role in supporting vocational education and training for Syrians in particular. For instance, the **GIZ Project for Vocational and Technical Education and the Labor Market Services for Syrian Refugees in Turkey and Host Communities** provided training equipment for 10 schools in Ankara, Bursa, and Gaziantep, along with training on intercultural education and integration for 144 teachers and administrators (Numanoğlu et al., 2018). Similarly, the **VET4JOB: Vocational Training for Employment** (2022) programme, co-coordinated by Expertise France, the Turkish Ministry of National Education, and the Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK), provides train-the-trainer activities, mentorship services, and small technical and construction grants for businesses that take on apprentices, as well as for unions and other supporting organisation in Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Gaziantep, Hatay, İstanbul, İzmir, Kahramanmaraş, Kayseri,

Kocaeli, Konya, and Mersin. VET4JOB also directly provides Turkish language and career development courses for Syrian youth and adults, assistance with qualification equivalency recognition, and registration to İŞKUR. In the spirit of fostering dialogue, the programme has also organised discussion forums for asylum-seeker apprentices, vocational skill contests, and a startup competition.

International and Turkish higher educational institutions also frequently cooperate on capacity-building and practice transfers. An example is the **CMinaR project** (2019), coordinated by Hochschule der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, Istanbul Technical University, Canterbury Christ Church University, Kaunas University of Technology, University of Padua, and University of Stockholm with funding from the Erasmus+ Programme. The CMinaR project developed and piloted blended-learning higher education courses on context-sensitive, intercultural career counselling for counsellors in training in all six of its participating countries, as well as launching a portal on which curricular material and lessons learned were shared. Like the VET Voices project itself, CMinaR confirmed the critical role of the Erasmus+ Programme in fostering international cooperation on the shared challenge of integrating refugees and asylum-seekers into vocational education and the job market.

The forthcoming *VET VOICES Guidelines: Cross-Country Research Report* will focus on young refugees' and other migrants' experiences navigating vocational education and training systems in the target countries, and will offer concrete recommendations for addressing common barriers and concerns.

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