Inclusion, integration, and refugee protection in Sofia, Bulgaria

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1 Background

Bulgaria has traditionally not received large numbers of refugees. Since 2013 the refugee population of the country has quadrupled (World Bank data).

According to official data from the Bulgarian government, the top five refugee countries of origin in 2016 are:

- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- Syria
- Pakistan
- Iran

Previously, there had been a national integration program for status holders, by which selected candidates were provided with a temporary stipend as well as language and vocational training. In 2014 the National Program for Refugee Integration was terminated. The monitoring Report on the integration of the beneficiaries of international protection of the Republic of Bulgaria, baptizes 2014 as the “year of zero integration.”

2 Objectives

General Objective

Generate information that contributes to improving mutual accommodation of refugees and their receiving society

Specific Objectives

- Identify some of the challenges and opportunities that migrants face
- Describe individual life stories of migrants or volunteers that work with them
- Identify potentially harmful rumors and stereotypes about refugees

3 Methodology

- Semi-structured Interviews (18)
- Literature Review
- Informal Interviews (4)
- Ethnographic Observation

4 Results

A story of integration?

Detention Centers

Access to Health Care

Friendship with Locals

Consider Bulgaria for the Long Term

Employment

Housing

Document-ation

Reception Centers

No safe

Horrible

Unhealthy

ABUNDANT PRIOR RESOURCES

1. LANGUAGE

2. EDUCATED

Integration factors
Socio-economic factors
Experiences in the State Agency for Refugees Facilities
Refugee interviewees

5 Recommendations

- Open spaces for dialogue between refugees and Bulgarian nationals should be created
- Further efforts to reach out to refugees and coordination with public authorities
- Research on both the issue of stereotypes and rumors and on on efforts to coordinate the powerful work already being done

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Favorite locations at Sofia indicated for Refugees

Criminality

They have this huge concerns that the criminality level will go up, and that there will be a lot of murders and riots and so on.

Untrustworthy

Sometimes difficult for them to find an apartment, specially for the ones with darker skin.

Unhealthy

The first stereotype is that they bring diseases.

Unfair benefits

[They think that] “the state is giving so much money to them, the state is giving nothing to our kids.”

Government

Media

Right Wing Parties

Recent terrorist attacks

Bulgaria is a low income country

Reinforced by

Factors

Actors

Governance

Criminality: Unfair benefits

Unhealthy: Unfair benefits

Untrustworthy: Unfair benefits

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