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# Exploring how VET, skills and qualifications were used in the context of the EU Relocation Program, the case of France

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**CEDEFOP**

European Centre for the Development  
of Vocational Training

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# **Complementary Pathways for Adult Refugees - The Role of VET, Skills and Qualifications**

## **Work Assignment 2: Exploring how VET, skills and qualifications were used in the context of the EU Relocation Program**

National Country Report: France  
February 2019

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# CHAPTER 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background and policy context

Since the beginning of the 2000's French governments have elaborated seven laws on migrations and asylum, the last one voted in 2018 is known as "Loi immigration et asile" or "Loi Colomb" the name of the former Minister of interior Gérard Colomb. All these laws have strengthened the control on migration, threatened the rights of asylum seekers, generate a harsh environment without creating better conditions for the integration of the newcomers. The hard conditions of access to the labour market, to housing, and to basic needs and rights illustrate this situation.

However, France was involved in the European programme for the relocation of asylum seekers between September 2015 and September 2017. In the French case, national authorities decided in 2015 to relocate from Italy and Greece around 30,000 individuals during the relocation process. However, at the end of the dispositive in 2017 less than 5,100 refugees had been relocated to France, mainly from Greece. At the same time, French authorities focused on Calais<sup>1</sup> and Grande-Synthe (North of France) where almost 5,000 persons were waiting in camps and slums to reach Great Britain. The relocation dispositive of the migrants from Calais and Grande-Synthe to the other regions temporary halted the French implication in the European relocation programme.

According to the French-Italian Summit in September 2017 and despite the tensions that appeared between both States during the relocation dispositive, both governments agreed to continue the relocation programme including 200 relocations per month. This agreement ended with the new elected Italian government.

### 1.1.1. Hotspots

OFPRA (French Office for the protection of Refugees and Stateless individuals) agents went on missions to conduct interviews in Italian hotspots but refused to do the same in Greece. Between 2015 and 2017 the French Office organised information missions on European asylum programme in four Italian hotspots: Pozzallo, Trapani, Taranto, and Lampedusa Island. In Greece, as a consequence of the EU-Turkey agreement, OFPRA decided to not send its agents to the Greek hotspots, considering Turkey as non-safe country. However, OFPRA agents were sent by the EASO to help Greek authorities in Thessaloniki, Alexandroupoulos and Athens. During these missions' French agents collaborated with Greek agents in order to establish relocation candidates lists.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the relocation program was deliberately stopped by France at the time of the evacuation of Calais. Indeed, as Italy, or Hungary, France between 2015 and 2017 sometimes had to stop or slow down the relocation program for reasons related to the management of internal migration 'crises'. The case of the evacuation of the jungle of Calais was an episode which stopped the program, so that the national reception device is mobilized for the people who were in Calais waiting to leave for Great Britain.

The French government also decided to send agents from the Ministry of Interior to undertake in-depth security assessments of candidates for relocation involving also interviews. This decision led to the tensions with the Italian government who considered it as a non-respect of Italian sovereignty. This is one of the factors that explains the small number of asylum seekers relocated from Italy. Meanwhile in Greece the threat was considered as very high because of the presence of Syrian and Iraqi citizens. Greek authorities did accept the intervention of French security agents as a condition of collaboration for the relocation of the asylum seekers.

During the interviews we noted several points that explain this feeling of Italy and in particular a non-respect of Italian sovereignty. The Director of the Asylum explains the process that led Italy to feel disrespected:

« C'était un programme nouveau dans un contexte de crise migratoire qui visait à faire deux choses : 1/ veiller à ce que les États de première entrée jouent leur rôle (la Grèce et l'Italie), et tout en veillant à ce qu'ils jouent leur rôle (enregistrer les demandeurs d'asile), veiller et puis contrôler qui arrive, 2/ les soulager des personnes qui étaient en besoin manifeste de protection. Ce programme a été assez adapté à la Grèce qui accueillait un très grand nombre de demandeurs d'asile en besoin de protection, besoin d'un très grand soutien de l'union européenne, même si la densité des flux arrivés en Grèce, ce programme ne pouvait absolument pas suffire à répondre à leurs besoins, on a rapidement changé de pied, donc très rapidement on a trouvé l'accord via la Turquie pour soulager la Grèce des flux entrant, qui étaient trop importants. Le programme était moins bien adapté à l'Italie, parce qu'en fait l'Italie accueillait très peu de demandeurs d'asile en besoin de protection. L'essentiel des demandeurs d'asile en besoin manifeste de protection (selon la décision européenne), les seuls qu'elle accueillait qui étaient dans ce cadre-là c'était les Erythréens, une petite part. Et du coup l'Italie s'est estimée, et cela explique beaucoup y compris la situation politique actuelle en Italie, s'est estimée flouée par le programme de relocalisation parce que c'est un programme qui la contraignait à faire ce qu'elle n'avait jamais fait : c'est-à-dire enregistrer les demandeurs d'asile, et d'avoir en cela une demande d'asile qui croît très rapidement et qui de l'autre ne la déchargeait pas suffisamment de cette demande d'asile. Cela explique beaucoup une forme de raidissement de l'Italie dans un premier temps, ce programme n'était pas adapté à la crise que l'Italie traversait, il était plus adapté à la crise que la Grèce traversait, ou alors il aurait dû être accompagné d'un programme de réadmission, ou de retour beaucoup plus fort pour l'Italie ou de lutte contre l'immigration irrégulière pour l'Italie. C'est un programme qui a eu une conséquence funeste c'est la radicalisation des pays opposés à l'accueil des migrants. »<sup>2</sup>

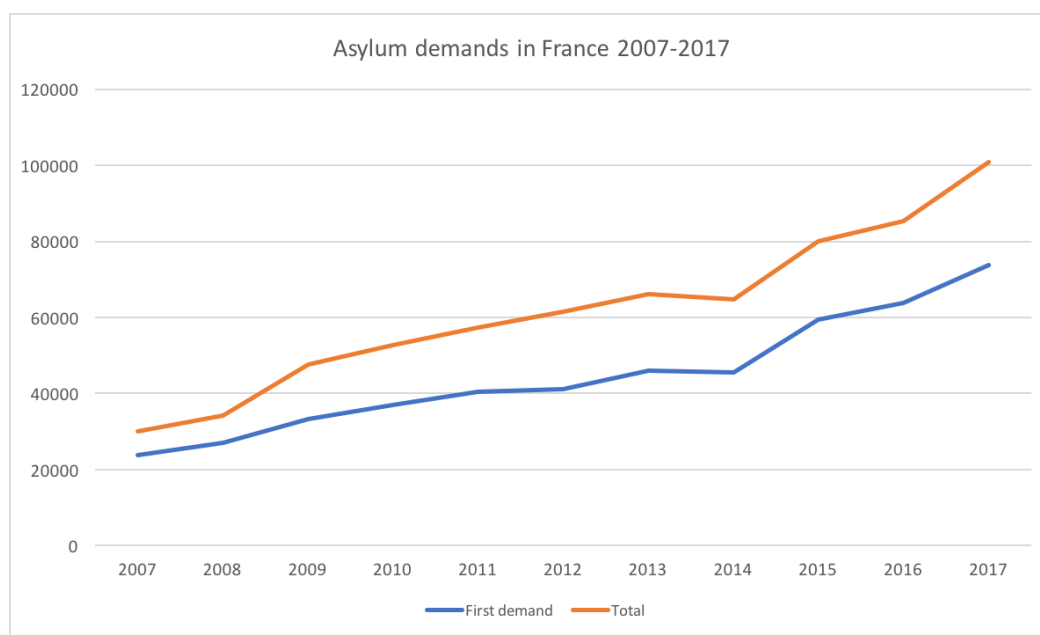
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<sup>2</sup> "It was a new program in the context of a migration crisis that aimed to do two things: 1 / to ensure that the States of first entry play their role (Greece and Italy), and while ensuring that they play their role (registering asylum seekers), watch over and then control who is coming in, 2 / relieve them of people who are in obvious need of protection. This program was quite adapted to Greece, which hosted a very large number of asylum seekers in need of protection, very much in need of support from the European Union, even if the density of the flows arrived in Greece, this program could not be enough to meet their needs, we quickly changed foot, so very quickly we found the agreement via Turkey to relieve Greece inflows, which were too important. The program was less suitable for Italy, because in fact Italy had very few asylum seekers in need of protection. The bulk of asylum seekers in need of protection (according to the European decision), the only ones it hosted that were in this context it was the Eritreans, a small share. And so Italy has estimated itself, and this explains a lot including the current political situation in Italy, was considered cheated by the relocation program because it is a program that forced her to do what she had never done: that is to say, register asylum seekers, and to have in this an asylum application which grows very quickly and which on the other hand did not discharge it enough of this request for asylum. 'asylum. This explains a lot of a stiffening of Italy at first, this program was not adapted to the crisis that Italy was going through, it was more adapted to the crisis that Greece was going through, or it should have been accompanied by a readmission program, or a much stronger return for Italy or the fight against irregular immigration for Italy. It is a program that has had a fatal consequence is the radicalization of countries opposed to the reception of migrants."

### 1.1.2. Statistics and evolution over time

The number of asylum demands in France has grown from 23,804 in 2007 to 73,802 in 2017. These statistics do not include the minors who accompanied the asylum seekers. Furthermore, these statistics do not take into account the asylum demands that are not treated. As a result, there is an accumulation dynamic i.e. in 2017 the total asylum demands reached 100,000.

Figure 1. **Asylum demands in France 2007-2017**



Source: OFPRA annual reports.

Legend: First demand means when a person asks for asylum for the first time. And the total represents the number of all asylum applications.

Whereas European relocation programme chose Eritreans and Syrians as the two main nationalities, the national origins of the asylum seekers who apply for a protection in France are quite more diverse. The figure below underlines two dimensions: first the importance of Haitians because of the proximity of French Caribbean islands to Haiti such as Guadeloupe, second the consequence of German asylum policy, which denies the protection to Albanians and Afghans who move to France to apply for protection. The apparition of Afghans at the second rank in 2016 and 2017 is also the consequence of French policy in Calais and Grande-Synthe, which forced them to register their asylum demand in France.



Table 1. **The evolution of the five main nationalities applying for protection in France 2013-2017**

<b>The evolution of the five main nationalities applying for protection in France</b>					
	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>Rank 1</b>	Congo (DR)	Congo (DR)	Sudan	Sudan	Albania
<b>Rank 2</b>	Kosovo	China	Syria	Afghanistan	Afghanistan
<b>Rank 3</b>	Albania	Bangladesh	Kosovo	Haiti	Haiti
<b>Rank 4</b>	Bangladesh	Russia	Bangladesh	Albania	Sudan
<b>Rank 5</b>	Russia	Syria	Haiti	Syria	Guinea

Source: OFPRA annual reports.

OFPRA organised 10 relocation missions in 2016 and 8 in 2017. In 2016 the first mission was in Bari (Italy) and then the relocation candidates from Italy had been interviewed in France, around 50 interviews every month. Nine missions were conducted in Greece and hundreds of asylum seekers were relocated every month. The total of relocated persons in 2016 is about 2,700. Between February and September 2017 several missions were organised in Athens where the agents interviewed asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Iran, Palestine (mainly from Syria), and Eritrea. Only three missions within the European Relocation programme had been conducted in Rome where OFPRA agents made interviews with Eritreans only. So, the total of relocated persons between February and September 2017 is about 1,800. However, according to the Directorate of the Asylum French authorities had collaborated with Italian and Greek authorities until April 2018. As a result, 561 persons had been relocated during this period, most of them Eritreans from Italy.

Table 2. The relocated people in France within and after the European Relocation Mechanism

Country	Relocated people										Time of departure
	Total relocated individuals	Over 18	Minors	Syrians	Eritreans	Iraqis	Palestinians (Syria)	Stateless	Families	Alone	
Greece	<b>2413</b>	1381	1032	1841	68	435	69	0	514	272	Total 2016
Italy	<b>282</b>	246	36	0	282	0	0	0	55	217	Total 2016
Greece	<b>32</b>	12	20	25	0	7	0	0	5	0	06/02/2017
Greece	<b>31</b>	10	21	23	0	0	8	0	5	1	10/02/2017
Italy	<b>45</b>	23	22	0	45	0	0	0	18	4	22/03/2017
Greece	<b>178</b>	97	83	147	2	29	0	2	35	22	23/03/2017
Greece	<b>176</b>	103	71	139	1	34	0	0	32	31	28/03/2017
Italy	<b>3</b>	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	19/04/2017
Greece	<b>244</b>	158	86	204	0	39	1	0	44	69	26/04/2017
Greece	<b>74</b>	28	46	74	0	0	0	0	12	1	30/05/2017
Greece	<b>157</b>	70	87	153	0	4	0	0	28	19	22/06/2017
Greece	<b>144</b>	64	80	139	0	0	5	0	30	1	29/06/2017
Greece	<b>166</b>	88	78	147	0	11	2	6	37	11	20/07/2017
Greece	<b>155</b>	89	66	139	0	6	10	0	32	18	27/07/2017
Greece	<b>178</b>	91	87	157	0	12	9	0	40	7	30/08/2017
Greece	<b>143</b>	66	77	107	0	17	12	7	27	7	07/09/2017
Italy	<b>47</b>	43	4	0	47	0	0	0	6	34	21/09/2017
Greece	<b>231</b>	130	101	187	0	27	11	6	36	52	18/10/2017
Greece	<b>34</b>	13	21	9	0	16	9	0	7	0	23/11/2017
Greece	<b>34</b>	14	20	21	0	13	0	0	5	5	29/11/2017
Italy	<b>41</b>	31	10	0	41	0	0	0	7	20	14/12/2017
Italy	<b>16</b>	16	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	16	14/12/2017
Greece	<b>4</b>	2	2	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	15/12/2017

Italy	<b>9</b>	9	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	9	19/12/2017
Italy	<b>16</b>	16	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	16	10/01/2018
Italy	<b>19</b>	19	0	0	19	0	0	0	0	19	23/01/2018
Italy	<b>8</b>	8	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	8	24/01/2018
Italy	<b>15</b>	15	0	0	15	0	0	0	0	15	31/01/2018
Italy	<b>12</b>	12	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	12	02/02/2018
Italy	<b>37</b>	37	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	37	09/02/2018
Italy	<b>10</b>	10	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	10	17/04/2018
Italy	<b>41</b>	41	0	0	41	0	0	0	0	41	18/04/2018
Italy	<b>34</b>	31	3	0	34	0	0	0	3	26	26/04/2018
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5029</b>	<b>2974</b>	<b>2055</b>	<b>3516</b>	<b>706</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>1000</b>	

Source: The Directorate of Asylum.

## CHAPTER 2. General outline of the EU Relocation Mechanism in France

### 2.1. Basis of policy

French authorities had two main criteria in order to select the relocated candidates: 1) the citizenship even if they had accepted Iraqis and Palestinians whereas European authorities focused on Syrians and Eritreans, and 2) the non-acceptance of isolated minors. The other specificity of French policy was to require Italian and Greek authorities to accept the presence of French security agents in order to lead the security aspect of the interviews.

The asylum chain: « Dans le processus de relocalisation c'est nous qui initialement faisons ce que l'on appelait les 'Pledges' (qui disions aux différents États membres qui avaient des demandeurs d'asile à proposer à la relocalisation combien nous étions susceptibles d'accueillir), c'est nous qui définissons parmi les personnes qui nous étaient envoyées qui nous acceptions au titre de la relocalisation dans le cadre d'un processus, c'est nous enfin qui indiquions à ces personnes dans quel lieu elles allaient être hébergées, qui définissons ce lieu en lien avec les autorités locales à chaque fois, c'est nous qui viellons à la fluidité du parcours du demandeur d'asile. **La chaîne de l'asile** en France est un peu compliquée, l'OFPRA donne le statut, la PREFECTURE donne le titre de séjour et l'attestation de demande d'asile, l'OFII donne l'allocation et l'hébergement et les associations sont délégataires de services publics. Pour que cela marche bien, on a mis en place un accueil spécifique des relocalisés, cet accueil spécifique on a été obligé de l'adapter rapidement, au départ on avait cinq guichets uniques. On faisait un tour de France des relocalisations, pour inciter l'OFII à geler des places, la seule logique était d'éviter l'Ile de France. Ce programme était déstabilisateur pour le dispositif d'accueil des demandeurs d'asile classique. Cela nous a appris et habitué à travailler rapidement (deux mois maximum), on a appris à compresser nos dispositifs, on a appris à travailler avec l'OIM. »<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "In the process of relocation it was us who initially did what we called the 'Pledges' (who told the different Member States who had asylum seekers to propose to the relocation how much we were likely to accommodate) it is we who define among the people who were sent to us who we accept as relocation in the context of a process, it is we finally who indicated to these people in which place they were going to be hosted, who defined this place in connection with the local authorities each time, it is we who live to the fluidity of the course of the asylum seeker. The chain of asylum in France is a bit complicated, the OFPRA gives the status, the PREFECTURE gives the residence permit and the certificate of asylum application, the OFII gives the allowance and the accommodation and the associations are delegated public services. For this to work well, we have set up a specific reception of the relocated, this specific reception was forced to adapt quickly, initially we had five unique wickets. We made a tour of France relocations, to encourage the OFII to freeze places, the only logic was to avoid the Ile de France. This program was destabilizing for the reception system of classical asylum seekers. This taught us and used to work quickly (two months maximum), we learned to compress our devices, we learned to work with IOM.

## 2.2. Financing and costs

The relocation programme between France, Greece, and Italy had been funded by the EU. French authorities pay the Ofpra and Ministry of interior agents with European funding only.

## 2.3. Actors and their roles

We will present different actors and their roles along the relocation mechanism:

### 2.3.1. At the international level

First the IOM – International Organization for migrations, which takes care of the asylum seekers in the hubs, for example in Athens, and escort relocated persons between Greece, Italy, and France. Then the EASO - Funding the French which is in charge of relocation dispositive and organizing Ofpra missions in Greece in order to help Greek authorities.

### 2.3.2. At the national level

The DGEF – *Direction Générale des Étrangers en France*, the Ministry of the Interior directorate which organizes the relocation dispositive, the coordination between all the actors involved – OFPRA, OFII, security agencies, IOM. The DGEF exercises a central role in the mechanism. Then the OFPRA – *Office Français pour les Réfugiés et les Apatrides* is a public institution created in 1952, makes interviews with the asylum seekers in Paris, accepts or rejects the asylum demands, generates official documents for refugees – residence permit, civil status certificate and birth certificate –, linked to the Ministry of the Interior since 2010. Ofpra is a very centralized institution. For example, all the asylum seekers must go to Paris for the interviews, except when the Office organized overseas missions like in Greece and Italy during the relocation programme. In the mechanism there is also the OFII – *Office Français pour l'Immigration et l'Intégration*, which is in charge of the asylum seekers and the refugees for settlement and housing, and for medical and social care.

### 2.3.3. Operational actors at the national level

There is the DIHAL – *Direction interministérielle à l'hébergement et à l'accès au logement*, who is organizing the settlement of the relocated refugees in a context of a lack of housing for asylum seekers. Then the GUDA – *Guichet Unique pour les Demandeurs d'Asile*, which means the Authority for foreigners (*Préfecture*), is representing State administration locally to which asylum seekers and refugees are related to for all administrative procedures and official documents issued by OFPRA. It is called the GUDA. Then the PADA – *Plateforme pour les Demandeurs d'Asile*, are the NGOs to whom French authorities delegate the administration of the offices in charge of the asylum seekers before there asylum applicant is approved or rejected. Asylum seekers must be registered in the PADA in order to have access to GUDA, and then OFPRA for the interview and to the OFII for the settlement. At the end the CADA –

*Centre d'Accueil pour les Demandeurs d'Asile*, are the NGOs to whom French authorities delegate the administration of the housing for asylum seekers and refugees in specific buildings or in dispersed apartments usually situated in the poor urban peripheries. The CADA is also the interface between French authorities and the asylum seekers/refugees. The NGO should help asylum seekers/refugees for administrative procedure, to have access to work, to French language courses, to school, to medical care.

## 2.4. Procedural steps

During the two years of implementation of the relocation program the procedure that was applied was as follows:

Step 1: The Greek and Italian authorities draw up a list of people who may be eligible for the relocation scheme.


Step 2: On assignment are liaison agents from OFPRA and the Ministry of the Interior who, in agreement with the DGEF, conduct the interviews with the applicants. The interviews are conducted collectively, cross-referenced to reconstruct routes, profiles and isolate individuals who may represent a terrorist risk.

Step 3: The people who are selected for relocation are sent to hubs in Athens and Rome where they are taken care of by IOM before they leave.

Step 4: Establishment of the list of relocated persons and transmission to the OFII for the preparation of their arrival (accommodation, psychological and medical care, administrative procedure)

Step 5: IOM agents escort them to their destination, the reception and integration process is implemented through the OFII (housing, payment cards, language courses, citizenship training).

ACTORS / STEPS	Greek or Italian authorities	Agents OFPRA/DGEF	HUBS in Athens and Rom / IOM	IOM agents / OFII
Step 1	List of people eligible to relocation			
Step 2		Interviews		
Step 3			Transfer of people selected and waiting time	
Step 4				Definitive list and transmission to the OFII
Step 5				Escorting, transit, reception, and integration process
Time	1 month			2 month



## 2.5. Cooperation between different actors and coordination

The actors cooperate at different levels. The first stage is an international collaboration between AESO, the DGEF, the OFPRA, the Greek and Italian authorities, the French Embassies in Rome and Athens, and the security agencies of the French Ministry of the Interior. The second stage is a cooperation between the DGEF, the OFPRA, the OFII and the Prefectures (GUDA). And finally, the cooperation is implemented with the NGOs that will manage the downstream part of the process like the CADA.

## 2.6. Summary: factors shaping the relocation process

The factors that determine the process of relocation are: nationality, age, 'historical' trajectory. When we talk about the 'historical' trajectory, it means that during interviews, the interviewers were attentive to the story of the people, in particular to ensure consistency and to be able to set apart (see exclusion from the program) people who could have disturbed the order and the security once arrived in France.

They are organized hierarchically, and particular points of vigilance have been developed during interviews with specific populations. First of all, unaccompanied minors<sup>4</sup>, then young people aged 18 to 25, and lastly risky courses. For the latter, the context of the attacks in France has involved this increased vigilance especially towards the Syrian populations.

### Box 1. **Other mobility practices involving applicants and/or beneficiaries of international protection**

During the summer of 2018, France used the relocation mechanism (developed from 2015 to 2017) to set up an emergency resettlement scheme for unresolved boat arrivals. This mechanism, which makes it possible to act in crisis situations (notably that of migrants and refugees at sea), has made it possible to resolve humanitarian crises in relatively short times – around 10 days. The specificity of this system is the sending of agents to the pre-reception area in Malta, Spain, and Italy through overseas missions.

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<sup>4</sup> *Les mineurs non accompagnés n'ont pas été pris en compte dans les dispositifs de relocalisation en France. Car dans le cadre de l'urgence les dispositifs publics de rémunération à mettre en place par l'État celui qui concerne les jeunes (18-25 ans) ne pouvaient pas être mobilisés.*

Unaccompanied minors have not been taken into account in relocation schemes in France. Because in the context of the emergency the public compensation mechanisms to be set up by the state that concerns young people (18-25 years) could not be mobilized.

## CHAPTER 3. Relocation stage

The stages of relocation are as follows:

First of all, once the populations have arrived in Italy and Greece, local authorities identify and preselect populations. French agents of the OFPRA who are on the spot perform a series of interviews to make the selection, and once the selection is made the agents issued temporary official documents to allow asylum seekers to travel to France.

### 3.1. Relocation decision:

The decision to relocate is made according to several criteria, first of all the nationality: for the period 2015-2017 the nationalities were the following: Eritrean, Syrian and Iraqi. Iraqi were still relocated by French authorities despite their exclusion by EASO of the relocation list. Then the second criteria is vulnerability. However, because of political issues, French authorities decided to not accept unaccompanied minor children. As the consequences of terrorist attacks in Europe and more specifically in France in 2015 and 2016, the interviews with the OFPRA agents were doubled or crossed with those conducted by the French security services. The decision of relocation needed the double check of Ofpra and Security services.

### 3.2. Preferences expressed in the EU Relocation Mechanism

Vulnerability and nationalities were the only criteria that informed the French relocation programme. According to the interviews with the Directorate of Asylum (DGEF), with Ofpra agents and Forum Réfugiés coordinator in Lyon (NGO), VET, skills and qualifications were absolutely not taken into account in the decision process, vulnerability was the only criteria, even though unaccompanied minors were excluded.

### 3.3. Assessing labour market needs

In the case of France, the relocation program has not been developed as a device related to labour market issues. It has been developed with state partners on the basis of an emergency programme to face a crisis situation. The device was developed in particular and designed to speed up the reception procedure and not to think about the long-term integration device. Moreover, given the restrictions that France has in terms of target population, people who came to France as part of the relocation programme are people in extreme vulnerability and therefore very far from the issues of employment and vocational training. In all the interviews our interlocutors mentioned to us this lack of articulation between integration process, accommodation, and employment.



### **3.3.1. Matching preferences, in relocation and dispersal**

In the context of an already failure asylum system, French authorities only tried to disperse relocated refugees around the territory, avoiding Paris region where almost 50% of asylum seekers and refugees are already located. Furthermore, for those who have a member of their family in France, family reunification was used as criteria of dispersion. Labour market needs and qualifications of the relocated refugees were absolutely not considered as tools to organize the relocation and the dispersion.

## CHAPTER 4. Part 4: Arrival, welcome programmes and status determination

### 4.1. Reception and dispersal of relocated persons

The asylum seeker has a typical path, he/she must register at the GUDA (management, prefecture, OFII). However, asylum seekers usually wait almost two months before getting access to PADA and then to GUDA. After GUDA registration, OFII should carry out the housing and the monthly allowance (350 euros for single), but thousands of asylum seekers and refugees have to find accommodation by their own, more specifically single men. Then, asylum seekers are contacted by Ofpra for an interview in Paris and then have to wait the Office decision. In 2013 the length of the procedure was about 9 months. In 2017 the length is about 3 months after GUDA registration thanks to the 2015 Asylum Law. If the asylum demand is rejected, asylum seekers are excluded from the accommodations and do not benefit of the allowance anymore. If the demand is approved, they benefit of higher allowance, have access to language courses, are allowed to work and have access to professional training, must stay in the town where they apply for a protection or could be moved anywhere else in France by OFII.

### 4.2. Post-arrival programs and status determination

For relocated refugees the OFPRA interviews had been done in Greece and Italy, and the protection approvals had already occurred. Then, the accommodations were planned according to the list sent from Italy and Greece by Ofpra agents. As a result, relocated refugees did not need to register in GUDA to have access to OFII and then to accommodations, or any medical aid. However, relocated refugees must register in GUDA, that is why at the beginning French authorities created specific GUDA for relocated refugees. This specific programme had been abandoned and relocated refugees had to follow the same procedure as the other refugees for the administrative procedure.

### 4.3. Preliminary status of integration of beneficiaries

Relocated refugees did not really benefit of special status once they get the protection status by Ofpra.

## CHAPTER 5. Lessons Learned & Food for Thought

The 2015-2017 relocalisation programme has involved a further 'securization' of the asylum process, including the speeding of the administrative procedure i.e. the access to Ofpra agents, to accommodations, to medical and social aids. However, when relocated refugees arrived in the France they have to face same obstacles as other refugees for the access to public administration, to language courses, and to the labour market.

Among the feedback and learning can be broken down several elements. First and foremost, a procedure that has made it possible to detect more quickly the vulnerability of people who have been less embedded in the traditional flow of asylum seekers. Secondly this device has made it possible to advance in so-called "masked time", in particular by freezing dwellings in order to reduce the time of waiting.

**Masked Time :** « Ça veut dire que dès qu'on a le début du programme de relocalisation qui démarre on va commencer à travailler sur l'hébergement alors même que les entretiens Ofpra et sécuritaires n'ont pas eu lieu, on commence déjà à chercher et bloquer des hébergements, on va se placer dans la perspective que tout le monde est éligible. »<sup>5</sup>

The decision of freezing dwellings had negative effects for local actors, who had been forced to keep accommodations unoccupied for weeks despite the lack of accommodations for traditional asylum seekers. This has created misunderstandings between the DGEF, OFII, and the NGOs in charge of implementing support and accommodations.

Among the restrictions that have been implemented in France we can count three: 1 / the programme strictly excluded the Île de France (Paris region), this territorial restriction has had an impact on the populations who wished to move to France. 2 / Many candidates to the relocation programme were reluctant to learn French, considering the language as too far from their cultural backgrounds. These two constraints suddenly created a 'push-back' effect for qualified people, whose desire was to integrate the labour market.

Family reunification is included in Dublin rules, but the procedure is really complex for those who apply to. The relocation programme made family reunification easier and opened it to "vertical", "horizontal", and "collateral" affiliation. In other words, the presence of sisters/brothers, uncles/aunts/cousins did facilitate the selection of asylum seekers and their spatial dispersal once relocated in France.

As a result of relocation programme analysis, which has highlighted the lack of articulation between accommodation programmes and the access to the labour market, French authorities in collaboration with NGOs, and economical actors have created a programme named HOPE (*Hébergement Orientation Parcours vers Emploi – Accommodation Orientation Routes to Employment*) in September 2018. The programme aims to build links between refugees and professional integration through training. Operated by AFPA centres (*Agence Nationale pour*

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<sup>5</sup> It means that as soon as we have the beginning of the relocation program that starts we will start working on hosting even though the Ofpra and security interviews have not taken place, we are already starting to search and block accommodation, we will put ourselves in the perspective that everyone is eligible. "

*la Formation Professionnelle des Adultes* – National Agency for Adult Vocational Training) since October 2017. The HOPE programme is part of a new process of welcoming, accompanying and integrating thousands of refugees settled in the territory.

In 2017, seven OPCAs<sup>6</sup> (Joint Collecting Bodies Approved) responded to the call for projects of the FPSPP (Parity Fund for the Securing of Professional Pathways) concerning the training of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. A framework agreement was then concluded on May 2017 between the State, *Pôle Emploi* (Employment agency), the FPSPP and the OFII (French Office for Immigration and Integration) to allow 1000 refugees to benefit from a global course insertion. For the HOPE programme, Afpā has developed a course engineering that offers "integrated training" including accommodation and the construction of a professional project. It also includes financial and social support. For exemple, In Burgundy-Franche-Comté (North-East of France), the Afpā centers of Belfort, Chevigny-St-Sauveur and Vesoul-Navenne have welcomed since mid-October 70 refugees in this context. They are trained in order to integrate specific companies which struggle to recruit, especially in construction and industry sectors.

The relocation program tools and strategies were remobilized in 2018 at the time of the crisis of the NGOs' boats like Aquarius. Based on same criteria – vulnerability but no unaccompanied minors –, France organized the relocation of refugees from Malta, Spain, and Italy in very short length. It shows that French authorities are able to facilitate the asylum procedure.

This relocation mechanism was a specific legal framework, a new programme in a context of migratory crisis. It was a question of ensuring that the States of first entry play their roles of protection. It is a suitable framework vis-à-vis Greece, even if that could not be enough, agreed with Turkey, program much less suited to Italy because less a less vulnerable public. This obliged Italy to register asylum seekers, a form not adapted to the crisis that Italy was going through. This program had a fatal consequence: the radicalization of the countries opposed to the reception of the migrants, diffusion to other States. A device that had the opposite effect.

The majority of relocated individuals from Italy had already had long months of waiting in Libya, under absolutely dramatic conditions. So, once they arrived in Europe most of them did not want to be retained in centres, waiting for the relocation dispositive, and tried to refused fingerprints registration in the Eurodac application. It was often difficult to explain or make people realize that if they did not fit into this relocation device, they took the risk of being faced with even longer delays. Furthermore, the question of Great Britain as an objective, despite all the prevention that was done on the stalemate of this destination, remained for many asylum seekers who refused to integrate the relocation programme in order to reach Great Britain by their own.

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<sup>6</sup> Organismes Paritaires Collecteurs Agréés engagés dans HOPE : Constructys, le FAF.TT, Opcalia, Agefos PME, l'Afdas, le Forco et l'Opcaim.

Thus, the “migration crisis” has highlighted the failures of the French asylum system, even though compared to other European countries France is not really affected by this crisis as said Raphaël Sodini, Director of asylum in the Directorate-General for Foreign Nationals in France (DGEF) interviewed in November 2018.

## References and Glossary

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CADA – *Centre d’Accueil pour les Demandeurs d’Asile*,

DGEF – *Direction Générale des Étrangers en France*, Ministry of the Interior

DIHAL – *Direction interministérielle à l’hébergement et à l’accès au logement*

GUDA – *Guichet Unique pour les Demandeurs d’Asile*

OFPRA - *Office Français pour les Réfugiés et les Apatrides*

OFII - *Office Français pour l’Immigration et l’Intégration*,

PADA – *Plateforme pour les Demandeurs d’Asile*

# List of interviews

## 1. OFII – Office Français de l’Immigration et de l’Intégration

Valérie Gilton – Directrice, Direction de l’Accueil et de l’Intégration

Samia Khelifi – Directrice Adjointe, Direction de l’Asile

## 2. OFPRA – Office Français de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides

Anatole Puisseux – Secrétaire Général Adjoint

Vincent Parral – Officier de Liaison, Programme Relocation en Italie

## 3. DGEF – Direction Générale des Etrangers en France (Ministère de l’Intérieur)

Raphaël Sodini – Directeur de l’Asile

Virginie Lasserre – Cheffe du Département de l’Accueil des Demandeurs d’Asile et des Réfugiés

## 4. FORUM REFUGIES

Chloé Monin - Cheffe de Service Emploi-Formation, Direction Intégration Santé