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# REFUGEE ORIENTATION

## HANDBOOK FOR OPERATORS



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## Introduction

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Anyone that moves to a country with different cultures, traditions and practices from one's own can be expected to undergo a significant adjustment period. Refugees accepted for resettlement often come straight out of refugee camps and have little if any knowledge of the societal and economic realities which await them. Like others who have left their homes and resettled in a foreign land, refugees may feel worried and frustrated as they adjust to life in the host country. This is especially evident for young refugees in transition to adulthood who can experience unsafe or problematic living conditions, non-access to schooling, years of insecurity with uncertain status, multiple moves, unemployment, social exclusion, and in the medium- and long-term maladaptation with respect to the cultural norms of the hosting country.

BLEND-IN is an Erasmus+ funded project that aims to prepare and empower young refugees and migrants seeking a better life in a developed and safe community. The ultimate objective of the project is to facilitate the young refugees' smooth integration in the countries of resettlement, prevent their social exclusion, inform on their rights and promote their autonomy, active citizenship and participation in social life and labour market.

In order to assist young refugees settle into a new community, country and society and move towards independence and self-sufficiency, and at the same time enhance the role and efficiency of refugee integration workers, the BLEND-IN project developed a comprehensive orientation toolkit, packaged in a mobile application for Android devices, orienting newly resettled young refugees and migrants into the national social, cultural and economic realities of the receiving countries. The orientation toolkit includes, in several languages, basic topics such as language use, living and housing conditions, access to mainstream services such as health and education, access to employment, community services, keeping and sharing your cultural identity, national laws, and their rights and responsibilities.

This handbook intends to support professionals and volunteers willing to make use of BLEND-IN outcomes to make the best out of them with the goal of supporting newly arrived young migrants and asylum seekers.

## Partnership

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The BLEND-IN partnership is made of 7 partners from 5 European countries (Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus and United Kingdom). The project will be implemented in all countries except the UK.

### Italy

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Anziani e Non Solo is a NGO working since 2004 in the field of social research, community development, advocacy and training for vulnerable groups, including migrants and asylum seekers, with a focus on women. Our approach is based on empowerment and is evidence-based. ANS is actively involved in both national and EU/international projects addressing social issues.

Find us on: [www.anzianienonsolo.it](http://www.anzianienonsolo.it)



Based in Modena, Italy, Caleidos is a Social Cooperative dealing with the immigrant population since 1994. On the behalf of different public bodies we are running info points and special projects addressing the migrants and promoting the social inclusion, giving support to social and medical discomfort. Since 2001 we are part of the national network called SPRAR, namely System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees: these are residential welcoming programs offering opportunities for the integration in the world of work through the learning of the Italian language, training courses and internships. The projects also provide medical support and legal assistance for the presentation of the request for protection. Since 2011 on the wave of the big moving of people from Northern Africa to Europe, to Caleidos has been entrusted the managing the emergency hosting programs on Modena Province: nowadays we are hosting more than 1100 people.

Find us on: [www.caleidos.mo.it](http://www.caleidos.mo.it)



KMOP is one of the oldest Greek NGOs with 40 years of accumulated experience in the provision of services to disadvantaged groups. KMOP's main areas of expertise include social welfare and health, employability and human rights protection, scientific research and the development of know-how in social policy issues. Apart from direct provision of services through decentralised community based facilities (Three Group Houses and one Day Care Centre for mentally ill as well as counseling centers in various towns), KMOP is also actively involved in both national and EU/international projects addressing social issues particularly focusing on low-skilled youth and long term unemployed, victims of violence and trafficking, disabled, elderly, migrants and minorities.

Find us on: [www.kmop.gr](http://www.kmop.gr)



EEO GROUP is a leading niche consultancy specialised in human resources development, education and lifelong learning, labour market and public administration reform. The company delivers added value services to the public sector in improving the effectiveness of their policies. It provides in depth expertise for efficient management of EU funds e.g. planning, managing and evaluating Operational Development programmes at national and EU level. EEO Group has contributed to research of the current status in the VET and adult education in Greece, apprenticeship schemes, the development and implementation of training activities, IT instruments, quality assurance as well as dissemination activities through the organisation of workshops, conference and various other events aimed at the dissemination of the results of these projects. It has led work packages in Research; Quality assurance; Training and Piloting with great success.

Find us on: [www.eeogroup.gr](http://www.eeogroup.gr)



CARDET is the leading centre for training and development in Cyprus, with partners around the world. The centre's mission is to inspire next generation education, and promote research, innovation and development through evidence-based practices, cutting-edge research, and empowered people. CARDET brings together an international team of passionate professionals with global expertise in literacies, reading promotion, vocational and adult training, e-learning, and evaluation. CARDET has been advising organisations and Ministries in Asia, Europe, and the USA. Members of the CARDET team have successfully participated in more than 100 projects in over 30 countries, several of which were supported by the European Commission, the United Nations, Microsoft, and governments and agencies from around the world.

Find us on: [www.cardet.org](http://www.cardet.org)



The Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants in Malta (FSM) strives for the integration of migrants through support services, education, research, capacity building and advocacy. It initially provided support services for asylum seekers and refugees at the Marsa Open Centre between 2010-2015 in collaboration with the Ministry for Home Affairs. Between 2014-2016 it supported 20 migrant led organizations in developing a national platform (Third country National Support Network, TSN Malta) for promoting solidarity and integration. Today FSM works with TSN Malta in providing mental health support services, adult education programmes, and training workshops for professional teachers, social workers and service providers. FSM organizes several conferences and events focusing on peacebuilding, leadership and cultural empowerment.

Find us on: [www.fsmmalta.org](http://www.fsmmalta.org)





Canary Wharf Consulting is a fast-growing management consulting firm, serving a range of geographical areas like Europe and the Balkans, Middle East, the Caucasus region and other since 2013. The firm is the result of the long-term cooperation of highly qualified management, business and finance consultants who have been supporting public and private sector organizations and companies to improve their sustainability and performance by offering innovative, practical and implementable solutions. The expertise of Canary Wharf Consulting spans a variety of service areas and sectoral specializations. Our expert team provides advisory solutions in the areas of: Management & Development Consulting, Marketing & Communications, Project Implementation, Accreditation, and others.

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## 1. The BLEND-IN Mobile Application

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*In this chapter we illustrate the main features and concept of the BLEND-IN App*

### 1.1 An innovative mobile application for arriving young migrants and refugees

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Innovative in its scope, the BLEND-IN project seeks to provide sustainable contribution to the issue of refugee integration, an issue that lacks coordinated and viable response at a practical level, even though policy frameworks for resettlement and refugee integration exist at national and European levels.

To assist young refugees in settling into a new community, country and society, and move towards independence, self-sufficiency, active citizenship and participation, and at the same time enhance the role and efficiency of refugee integration workers, BLEND-IN project consortium has developed a comprehensive orientation toolkit in the form of a mobile application, orienting newly resettled young migrants and refugees into the national social, cultural and economic realities of the host/ receiving countries.

### 1.2 Structure and Content

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The BLEND-IN orientation toolkit is divided in 6 main subjects, providing useful general information as well as country-specific subsections that provide practical information and links to other web sites, with content which is relevant to the needs of refugees/migrants. The contents of the six main subjects are as follows:

**Country Information:** Country-specific information about the population, language, climate, economy, language and religion of the host country;

**Communication:** Useful information and links about how to better learn the language of the host country to succeed in social integration;

**Job:** Information and useful links related to employment, including links to job opportunities and legislation in the host country, as well as online support resources on how to write a Curriculum Vitae;

**Education:** Information on training and education opportunities in the host countries, including links to the Ministry of Education, official websites of the European Union’s education and training platforms, and links to Universities and Vocational Institutes;

**Health:** Information on the importance of well-being, security and health in the life of a migrant, available health and psychosocial services, (including sexual health, women’s health, and mental health), as well as useful links to NGOs that provide services for refugees and migrants;

**Safety:** Information that raises awareness on sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, discrimination, harassment and trafficking, providing links to services for victims of these situations.

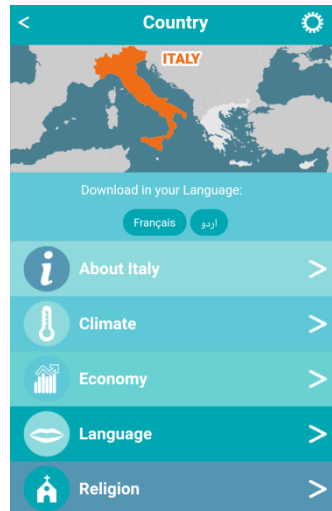
### 1.3 Availability & Use

With country-specific content and a functional structure and features, the BLEND-IN mobile application is available free of charge 24/7. Refugees and migrants will have at their disposal a free comprehensive tool that will help them increase their awareness of the life and society of the country of resettlement. In order to cover the widest possible migrant and refugee population in the host countries, the mobile application is translated into the following languages: English, French, Arabic, Pashto, Urdu, Somali, Tigrinya, and Russian.

In the main menu of the application, you can find the **Welcome – Choose country** section. From the four available countries (Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus), one can choose the host country he/she is currently residing in. After selecting the country, the user can have access to the six main subjects as shown below:

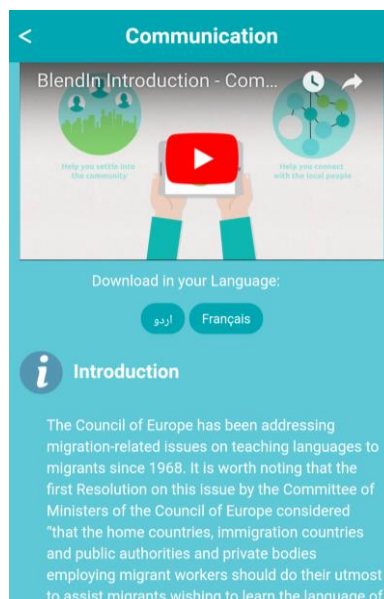


In the first section “Country Information”, the user can find basic information about the country, allowing the refugee to familiarize with the context of each country and learn about the climate, economy, language, religion and other issues.

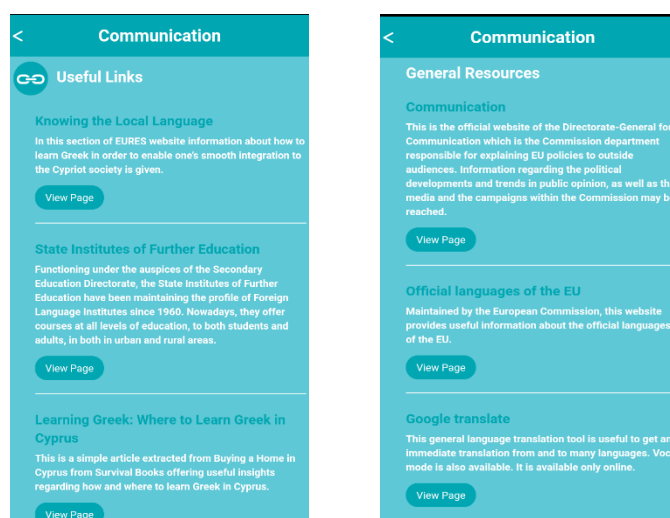


Each sub-section provides a small paragraph that describes the main context of the subject. Moreover, the last sub-section - “useful links”, provides information on various useful websites about public services, education, transportation etc.

In all of the 6 main subjects of the App (Country Information, Communication, Education, Job, Health, Safety) the structure of the context is the same. In all six main sections, the user can find **an introductory video and a text**, which describe the importance of the subject.



After the introductory video and text, the user can visit the “**Useful Links**” section, where he/she can find relevant web sites that offer guidance and solutions regarding the national context. These web sites are mainly public services, educational or other institutions and useful platforms and tools, which can help the user identify the possible solutions for his/her needs. Additionally, there is the “**General Resources**” section, which provides relevant information for all EU countries, such as the web site links of European agencies, institutions and other relevant organizations.



Taking as an example the “**Communication**” section for the purposes of this brief guide, the picture above depicts the video and the introduction text available for all six subjects of the App. In the next picture at the bottom left, it depicts the section “Useful Links”, where the user can find web sites with information on how to learn the host country’s language. Finally, the picture at the bottom right depicts the “General Resources” subsection which provides information on the official web site of the Directorate-General for Communication of European Commission, as well as on the web site of the official languages of the EU and lastly to the “google translate” tool where the user can easily have access to the translation of basic words regarding the host country’s language.

## 1.4 Significance and achievements

This mobile application addresses the issue of pre-departure and post-arrival orientation that is currently a priority of local and national authorities, due to the lack of organization and scarcity of resources needed to respond to the unprecedented patterns of migration flows. From a regional perspective, for Mediterranean countries such as Malta, Italy, Greece and Cyprus, this service will be of exceptional added value, as such orientation programmes do not exist in official, structured

form. The project will therefore increase the capacity of such countries for social inclusion of refugees and migrants, through the accessibility and availability of a new practical, up-to-date and innovative orientation toolkit.

The BLEND-IN toolkit can be used by NGOs, refugee resettlement and integration centres, as well as authorities and other stakeholders that seek to reach out to young refugees with information on the host country's context. The information can be both a pre-departure and a post-arrival tool, used as a stand-alone instrument or as part of integration services/courses to support refugees in making informed decisions in relation to existing opportunities in the host countries.

The BLEND-IN application is the result of a project which exploits the availability of contemporary tools and technologies to address real challenges in the field of migration, ensuring the most widespread outreach possible in a particular region (the Southern Mediterranean Region). The majority of young refugees arriving in the EU possess a smartphone, and therefore the BLEND-IN mobile application will be accessible by a vast number of beneficiaries. As the UNHCR notes, mobile applications have proven to be excellent ways of addressing the specific needs of refugees, contributing to their well-being and improving coordination in humanitarian action.<sup>1</sup>. Retrieved on May15th 2018 from <http://www.unhcr.org/5770d43c4.pdf>; Furthermore, at the moment there are no toolkit/programme available via smart devices, providing opportunities for pre-departure and post-arrival cultural orientation specifically tailor-made for young refugees.

The BLEND-IN mobile application aims to succeed in:

*1. Improving the availability of sustainable cost-effective resources for young refugees*, which can be used by individuals, or to accompany refugee and migrant orientation and integration programmes, providing opportunities for better re-allocation of national and EU funds for refugee resettlement mechanism and programmes;

*2. Supporting the cultural literacy of young refugees and migrants*, by improving information and knowledge, and increasing awareness on the host country's cultural, legal, political and social context. This will improve the cultural literacy of young refugees and migrants, and increase opportunities for inclusion, contributing to a more effective response to xenophobia and discrimination, and the long term fostering of social cohesion, security and respect in the communities for both locals and refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, Connecting Refugees: How internet and mobile connectivity can improve refugee well being and transform humanitarian action, 2016

The BLEND-IN Mobile Application can be used in several creative ways to address existing gaps in the social inclusion of the young migrants and refugees in the particular context of the Southern Mediterranean host countries, and can serve to motivate further attempts in the use of technology to meet global and regional challenges by address strategic needs of persons and groups in specific contexts.

## **2. Strategic value of the BLEND-IN mobile app: maximising opportunities for decision making and integration for refugees**

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*In this chapter we provide practical examples of how the APP can be integrated into the working practice of professionals and volunteers supporting young migrants and asylum seekers.*

### **2.1 Promoting the use of the BLEND-IN Mobile Application**

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The objective of the BLEND-IN project in producing this Mobile Application is to reach out to migrants in the European Union and improve their access to information. The information generated in the BLEND-IN Mobile Application refers to the social and legal context of Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Greece, as host countries for thousands of young asylum seekers and refugees. The information enables them to consider and analyse their options, to know where they can find assistance to understand their rights and options, and to ultimately make decisions that can benefit them in the long run. The BLEND-IN Application was developed with consideration for important components of integration, including employment, education, health and wellbeing.

The use of the Mobile Application can be promoted in several ways, depending on the role of the institution or agency in the integration of migrants and refugees, as well as the type of services provided and the needs and aspirations of the migrant groups accessing these services. As a starting point, an organization can make a plan for the promotion of the Mobile Application, including:

- a) Dissemination of posters in centres, municipalities, schools, churches, or any place which is frequented by the target migrant groups;
- b) Dissemination of project information and the Mobile Application link on the website and Facebook pages of the organization, reaching out through any social media links of migrant communities;

- c) Dissemination of project information and the Mobile Application link to regional and national stakeholders, including partners, key organizations working with migrant youth and communities, and national platforms that have a wide dissemination audience, including migrant platforms and organizations.

## 2.2 Supporting Young Refugees in Accessing Opportunities for Integration

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An organization providing services to migrant individual clients can also ensure that information about the BLEND-IN Mobile Application is given to these service users, and that they are being supported to use this Application, even in exploring further opportunities related to the specific identified needs and aspirations of individual clients.

The following examples are used to highlight the application of this tool in diverse contexts:

- *A Social Worker* is supporting a client in improving employment prospects; the session focuses on a careful assessment of the client's skills and competences, and at the end the Social Worker shares information about the BLEND-IN project and Mobile Application link, asking the client to explore relevant information about education and employment in the Application, in order to discuss options in the following sessions. The Social Worker can use this exercise as a general assessment of the client's media and language literacy, to find out the client's preferences, and/or determine the type of choices the client would like to pursue.
- *A migrant Youth Leader* is volunteering at a youth centre, meeting other migrant youth and working to promote dialogue and solidarity, as well as inclusion and community development. The leader uses the BLEND-IN Mobile Application to train the migrant youth in the group on how to reach out to other youth, using the information in the Application to support individuals in finding resolving conflicts, meeting particular needs, and correcting certain perceptions and understandings that may not be based on correct information. The leader is also using the information in the Application to contact other organizations in order to refer clients, or to inquire about the services they provide.
- *A Counsellor/Mentor* is working with a non-governmental organization to inform migrants about the prospects of relocation to other countries in the European Union. The Counsellor/Mentor can share the Mobile Application link with the client, so that the client



can find more accurate information about other countries of relocation, especially in relation to the country's processes related to asylum, migration and integration. The client is given some days to explore the Application, after which the Counsellor/Mentor can then discuss the client's options and preferences, as well as challenges to integration in the country of relocation. This careful assessment can lead to a better preparation of migrants for relocation decisions.

### 2.3 Supporting Young Refugees in Learning and Developing New Skills

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The contents of the BLEND-IN mobile application are related to the integration themes of Education, Employment, Self-Care, Safety, Human Rights and Non-Discrimination. These contents can easily be used to add value to non-formal and formal courses being provided to migrant youth in an educational institution, an employment training centre or an organization which is providing training courses for migrants. Teachers and trainers can share the Mobile Application with migrant students, allowing them time to explore the content, and encouraging them to look at all the links to find out more about a specific subject. Group activities can also be developed for these activities. Teachers and trainers can use this exploration observing and addressing the following:

- a) The ability of participants to use their mobiles in order to identify content related to questions presented by the teacher or trainer;
- b) The ability of participants to explore content and understand the information;
- c) The ability of participants to share and discuss the information found in the BLEND-IN Application.

Teachers and trainers can therefore use the BLEND-IN Application to assess and improve the technical, critical, creative and leadership skills of participants. Content topics can be used to design courses for migrant youth, especially for newcomers who are in need for information related to decisions they need to make. Cultural aspects of legal, social and organizational provisions of the country can be discussed, giving space for questions and comments. Organizations providing such programmes need to ensure that teachers and trainers are open to connect with participants on an individual level. After class or activity, teachers and trainers, or other assigned professionals need to be available for supporting individuals who come forward with questions. This is because new knowledge and understanding of one's rights and opportunities often empowers individuals to solve problems, start new activities and evaluate past and/or current decisions. By allowing time for

individual participants to interact with professionals after a class or activity, further mentoring can take place, and referrals can be made to relevant service providers.

## 2.4 Maximising opportunities for decision making

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The phenomenon of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, who for various reasons move from the country in which they first arrived, to seek protection or permanent resettlement elsewhere is often referred to as “secondary movement”.

Such secondary or onward movements are often done in an irregular manner<sup>2</sup>, that is 'without the prior consent of the national authorities or without an entry visa', however it could also happen legally, because of resettlements, for one of the reasons foreseen by Dublin III regulations<sup>3</sup> or internal migration.

For example, between January and September 2015, Italy was the main point of entry to the EU for Eritrean and Somali nationals. However, less than 1% of Eritrean and 3% of Somali asylum applications to the EEA were made in Italy. Similarly, between January and September 2015, Greece was the main point of entry to the EU for Syrian's, Iraqi's and Afghani's. However less than 2% of Syrian, Iraqi or Afghani asylum applications, in the EEA were in Greece<sup>4</sup>.

Some studies<sup>5</sup> aimed to explore what motivates asylum seekers and refugees towards “secondary movements” concluded that the motivations are various. These include:

- Economic factors (differences among living standards, labour-market conditions and access to government support in Member States)
- Presence of other migrants from their country of origin
- The reputation of the destination
- Language
- Past colonial links
- Likelihood that the country recognizes asylum-seekers' competences and to value their skills.

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<sup>2</sup> Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme, *Problem of Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Who Move in an Irregular Manner from a Country in Which They Had Already Found Protection*, October 1989

<sup>3</sup> For example, family unity or persons who are dependent from another refugee

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, *EMN Policy brief on migrant's movements through the Mediterranean*, September 2015

<sup>5</sup> European Parliament, *Secondary movements of asylum-seekers in the EU asylum system*, Briefing October 2017

Although it is not possible for refugees to choose their relocation destination, it is nevertheless important that refugees and asylum seekers make informed choices when it comes to deciding where to apply for asylum, based on Dublin III regulations, or where to relocate in relation to internal migration in the host country.

The various contents of the BLEND-IN application can support refugees in making decisions that offer them the opportunities they need.

## 2.5. Maximising opportunities for integration

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### 2.5.1. Meeting local gaps in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers

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The UNHCR has conducted assessments in several EU countries in which refugee men, women, boys and girls have participated. These assessments have revealed what refugees perceive as key obstacles to integration. These include:

- Difficulties due to lack of knowledge of local languages and differing cultures;
- Discrimination and unreceptive attitudes towards foreigners;
- Lack of understanding within host societies of the specific situation of refugees;
- Psychological impact of protracted inactivity during asylum procedures, and
- Limited access to rights for persons with subsidiary protection<sup>6</sup>.

In the same report, UNHCR recommends – in order to support the integration of this target group, to concentrate on:

- Language learning;
- Vocational training and recognition of qualifications;
- Employment, and
- Addressing the Consequences of Trauma.

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<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, Note on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union, May 2007, p.2

### 2.5.2 Using the BLEND-IN Sections

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The BLEND-IN application can be used to help newcomers, and professionals working with them, to start addressing integration challenges at an early stage, providing beneficiaries with inputs and tasks that could also mitigate the psychological impact of protracted inactivity during asylum procedures.

Concerning language learning, the **Communication** section provides links to free resources, such as online trainings and digital dictionaries that support the learning of basic language, and reinforce the knowledge acquired through training offered by NGOs at community level.

The **Education** section provides information on vocational training, education and recognition of prior qualifications. The user can be encouraged to explore the different information and links in order to understand how the education and training system of the hosting country is organized, including opportunities for career development and scholarship. This could be the starting point for beneficiaries and professionals to work together in the development of individual plans for career and self-development.

Employment is normally a priority for newcomers, although in most EU countries asylum seekers have to wait for some time before having the permission to work, often facing frustration and disappointment. The **Job** section can be helpful for understanding the opportunities and constraints in finding a job in the host country. Support workers can use this to address the users' expectations, as well activities such as the development of a curriculum vitae, whether in one-to one sessions, or in small groups. Groups can also be used to encourage users to help each other in presenting and articulating their skills and competences, and in practicing interview skills.

The BLEND-IN application also addresses the topic of health and trauma in the **Health** section. This section gives basic information about the importance of mental health, and the availability of diverse health services in the host country. Practitioners working with clients who may have mental health difficulties, or who have experienced trauma, can support them to explore this section, and make use of appropriate services. This section can also support practitioners in addressing stigma and prejudice related to mental health, by presenting information in an accessible manner to the users.

Finally, the **Safety** section addresses issues of security, such as labour and sexual exploitation, discriminatory treatment and connected services. The section gives an explanation about these various threats to personal security, and the legal rights of persons experiencing such issues. It also gives a list of links to services available, that assist persons experiencing such treatment.

### 3. BLEND-IN mobile app for social workers

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*In this chapter we explore how the BLEND-IN app could be used by social workers in their daily work*

#### 3.1. Exploring the value of the mobile App with asylum seekers in one-to-one sessions

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Social workers are key players for using the BLEND-IN Mobile App to support young asylum seekers in improving their integration prospects. They can raise awareness on the different topics explored by the APP with different persons they may work with. Depending on the specific needs of clients, social workers can decide on which section to explore, meeting interested persons in one-to-one sessions to improve their knowledge on subjects of interest and finding innovative ideas on how to approach “delicate” topics, such as human trafficking or exploitation at the place of work. Social workers can include cultural mediators to assist them in communicating effectively when explaining the APP contents to clients, and how to use the BLEND-IN APP in one to one sessions. Several sessions can be organized with a client, in order to move from introducing the subject to an in-depth exploration of personal needs and interests.

Social workers can approach asylum seekers to inform them about the App within a few weeks from their arrival in the host country, or they may also choose to wait for some months due to various reasons. For example, persons who have experienced significant trauma might not be ready to focus and process information regarding their current situation and future pathways to improve their education or employment prospects.

##### 3.1.2. Supporting clients to access information and explore the BLEND-IN APP

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The App has been translated into several languages: English, French, Arabic, Pashto, Urdu, Somali, Tigrinya and Russian. This can help young asylum seekers from diverse language backgrounds in accessing basic useful information in their own language or the language of the host country as a second language.

The following is an example of a session in which the young asylum seeker is approached as user of a new service of APP:

- a. Meet the User and introduce him/ her to the BLEND-IN APP, explaining the meaning behind the name, which refers to the inclusion of asylum seekers in the host country. Explain to the User that the BLEND-IN APP has been developed by a group of practitioners and researchers at European level to support young asylum seekers to explore their opportunities in the host country. This App will provide the User with several pieces of information on the host Country. Ask Users to download the App on their smartphone or tablet through Google Play (it doesn't work on iPhones) at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.cardet.blendin>.
- b. Instruct the User to choose the country of interest and the preferred language among the ones available on the APP. Show him/her how move from one Country to another by using the small wheel at the right top position of the screen. To go back to the previous section, instruct them to press the small arrow at the left top position of the screen.
- c. Instruct the User to explore the sections:
  - a) “**Country information**”, including the six sub-sections: About Country, Climate, Economy, Language, Religion, and Useful links, as well as the map of the host Country.
  - b) “**Communication**”, containing information on European policy, languages, and useful links to online resources for learning local languages. It is important to explain to the User that learning the host language is crucial in order to find a job, even though the job market in Europe may be difficult, even for Europeans themselves. Therefore, language is the first step to relate with local people, make friends and start a new life in the host country. It is also important, however, to remember that asylum seekers might not be in the condition (physical and or mental) to start language learning. Experts state that after a traumatic experience there are both chemical and physical changes taking place in the brain, resulting in the loss or the inhibition of normal brain functions. Besides trauma, there are three types of general stressors in the resettlement process:
    - migration stress (sudden, unplanned move from one's home),
    - acculturative stress (attempt to function in a new culture or society), and
    - traumatic stress (wilful harm committed by another human being).

Do not to place the User under unnecessary pressure in the learning process, as this will affect the so-called ‘affective filter’<sup>7</sup> that would interfere with the language learning.

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Krashen, Theories on Learning Languages, <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash-english.html>

c) “**Education**”, providing information on topics such as the local education and VET System, Adult Education centres, accreditation and validation in the host country;

d) “**Job**”, providing information on the different steps one can take to find a job. Explain to the User the importance given to literacy when it comes to finding a job, as well as the importance of formal qualification in improving one’s employability. Point out that there are risks, especially for asylum seekers with limited education, to work in precarious conditions, risking their health and working in exploitative conditions. Explain the benefits of obtaining a work licence/permit, such as unemployment benefits and paid vacation and sick leave, as well as the risks of having no health insurance and no proper access to health services. Use the application to talk about the importance of having a curriculum vitae, its characteristics, its scope and use. Instruct Users to explore the field of work they are interested in, and train them how to handle interviews, what to avoid and how to market their skills and competences to recruitment agencies and employers. Give space to Users to also explore new fields of interest, especially since they are young and can easily start studying new subjects or practicing new skills.

e) “**Health**”, providing information related to mental and reproductive health, human rights and substance abuse. Use the APP contents in this section to discuss different approaches to medicine (traditional and modern approaches), and the various health networks and services available. You can explain the availability of medicine and medical equipment in the host country, such as thermometers and medicine for controlling pain and fever. Point out the dangers of abusing such resources, including the reality that relying on available medicine without consulting a doctor can be dangerous and lead to complications because illnesses cannot be identified.

f) “**Safety**”, including delicate topics, such as human rights, sexual and labour exploitation, and discrimination, with relevant links to online resources. By discussing these topics with the user, one can contribute to a more in-depth assessment of their needs and goals in the host country.

These activities will also provide a space for discussion and communication, as an opportunity for building trust between practitioners and clients, and an opportunity for developing peace and solidarity between clients coming from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.



## 4. BLEND-IN mobile application for community workers

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*In this chapter we explore how the BLEND-IN app could be used by community workers in their daily work*

### 4.1. Exploring the value of the mobile application in outreach and community development

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Community workers are also key players in the support of refugees to integrate in the host country, mainly because they visit persons in their living spaces and neighborhoods, and therefore they are well connected with people in their own environment and family contexts.

The term ‘community worker’ can refer to any professional working in the community, and includes care workers, nurses, health assistants, psychologists, social workers, volunteers and other persons who can reach out to migrants and disseminate information effectively, using the Blend-In App. Often community workers have access to complex networks that exist in the immediate environment of persons they visit, including family members, friends, and other persons who may also be interested in the wellbeing of individuals in the community, and the development of the community itself. Community workers have an advantage since they can use these networks to reach out to persons they may not be in touch with, who are not part of their visiting programme.

If you are a community worker, these are some simple instructions you can follow:

1. Share information about the BLEND-IN App, as found in Section 2.1;
2. Encourage the User to explore the App until your next visit, and to think of questions to ask;
3. Encourage the user to share the App link with others in the family and community;
4. Be sensitive to any questions that may arise from exploring the App, explore the questions further, and always refer to other professionals who may be able to offer appropriate services;
5. Always respect confidentiality when discussing with the client;
6. Encourage the User to invite friends and/or family to an information session;
7. If you have already established a strong relationship with the User and the community, organize sessions where you can discuss topics presented in the App;

8. Monitor persons who may have particular questions and experiences to share, especially if you feel they are at risk, or in a particular situation of vulnerability.

#### 4.2. Organizing community outreach events

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An outreach event requires planning and coordination activities, as any other project and event. Understanding who is the target group is critical. One can use a prior needs assessment to determine the needs of the target group, in order to make sure to address those needs in the outreach event. Then one can use a process of planning, developing:

- a) the goals of the event;
- b) the particular tasks and activities;
- c) the available and required resources;
- d) a timeline for preparation and implementation of the event;
- e) a plan for publicity and dissemination.

In planning and implementing outreach events, it is always best to use a ‘bottom-up approach’, where individuals and/or groups in the community can actually be a part of the outreach planning and implementation. If there are trusted members of the community who are respected by individuals and groups, especially if they are hard to reach, then it would be best to include their participation from the planning phase. Their ideas and contribution can be greatly significant in terms of success of the event. Flexibility is important; one needs to respond to changes, especially when dealing with transitional communities, or persons who face unstable work situations. The approach of community workers to community members is critical for organizing outreach events. Community members appreciate the reliability and flexibility of community workers, but they may not be in a position to be as reliable and flexible. Unstable, shifting work patterns may be one of the causes. Other causes may be related to mental health difficulties persons may be facing, or to lack of trust in community workers and their methodologies. People can easily be angry and frustrated with the system of the host country, or the attitude of other people, especially if they feel isolated from society. Community workers can win trust by exercising good communication skills, and respecting the dignity of the person, their opinions and feelings. and feedback. It is always important to ask community members for their feedback, especially after any meeting or event, in order to address additional concerns and questions they may have.

The following are essential tips for organizing outreach events to promote the BLEND-IN mobile application:

1. Address Relevant Actors involved in the Reception of Asylum seekers (i.e. First Reception Authorities, Camps of Asylum Seekers, NGOs specialised in the protection of Asylum seekers, etc.)
2. Ask the support from relevant staff of stakeholders to ensure the participation of beneficiaries
3. Book a training room with internet connection and ideally a projector and a screen, so that you are able to present the BLEND-IN App to the beneficiary group. If the event will take place in a camp make sure the organiser has internet connection
4. In case you need translation check if translators are available in the camp/facility
5. Make sure all participants can hear you and of course understand you
6. Leave some time at the end for questions and summarize

#### 4.3 Using Social Media as a means for reaching out

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Social Media is the most popular and widespread tool for communication of young people especially nowadays. Social media channels are popular in advocacy campaigns, for raising awareness on specific issues. An academic study found that social media networking sites are particularly relevant for refugee participants to acquire language and cultural competences, as well as for building both bonding and bridging social capital<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, community workers can harness the power of social media and use these platforms to promote the usage of the mobile application from young refugees and migrants.

The following are essential tips for using social media to promote the BLEND-IN mobile application:

1. Create a message on the Facebook page of your organisation promoting the BLEND- IN App; the message must be precise, clear and to the point;
2. Use emotional and / or witty headlines to increase social traffic. For example, “How to (do something) that will (help you)” or “(number of) ways to (do something)”;

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<sup>8</sup> Alencar, A. (2017). Refugee integration and social media: a local and experiential perspective. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-16.

3. Schedule your social messages at the best times i.e. for Facebook, the days: Thursday/ Friday / Saturday / Sunday and hours: 9am / 1pm / 3pm; For Twitter, on Wednesdays / the weekends and hours 9 am / 3pm / 5-6pm;
4. Ask other stakeholders and partners of yours to like it or share it, so it can be spread across social media.

#### 4.4. Training cultural mediators, migrant community leaders and volunteers

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Cultural mediators are strategic to the development of a community, since they form part of several formal and informal networks, and often know how to access resources in order to reach persons with the right type of information. Involving the participation of cultural mediators and community leaders can have a strong impact on the effectiveness of information outreaches.

Cultural mediators, migrant community leaders and volunteers can be trained on how to use the BLEND-IN application, and how to teach others to use it. Sessions can be organized with them to introduce the application, to support them in exploring the various subjects, and to reach community members. Since they often work with local and international organizations, as well as Government Ministries, they can be extremely strategic to the dissemination of information. Organizing regular meetings and discussions can provide continuous support to cultural mediators, community leaders and volunteers, for conducting outreach activities. Supplying such colleagues with contact information of the organization they can share with users, is also important. There are several situations where people may hear about the BLEND-IN application, but may not have time to attend follow up sessions. If such persons encounter certain situations or questions at a particular moment, or they are helping a friend, contact information can help them find timely support.

## 5. Conclusion

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This handbook introduces the BLEND-IN mobile application, which is a useful digital tool that allows refugees and asylum seekers in a European host country, and specifically in Malta, Cyprus, Italy and Greece, to have access to basic information on the host country. The application can help them learn about their rights and opportunities, and support them in making informed decisions that improve their integration in the host country. The information provided in the mobile application relates to the important subjects of communication, education, health, safety and employment. It can guide the questions of users, their families and communities. Access to this information is enhanced through the diverse languages available: English, French, Arabic, Pashto, Urdu, Somali, Tigrinya and Russian.

This handbook is a practical guide on how the social and community workers can use the BLEND-IN mobile application for assisting Users (young refugees and asylum seekers) in their integration process in the host countries. It is addressed to social workers, community workers, migrant community leaders, cultural mediators and counselors/ mentors – in other words, persons who interact on a daily basis with refugees and asylum seekers – who can facilitate the introduction of the BLEND-IN mobile application to the potential end users and facilitate its application to real life questions and situations. In this way the handbook empowers refugees and asylum seekers to make informed choices, especially in their decisions on intra-EU resettlement processes. This information can support refugees in making informed decisions when considering moving to another European country.

**Have you used the BLEND-IN App in your work?**

**We would love to hear from you!**

**Please contact us: [www.blend-in.eu](http://www.blend-in.eu)**



[www.blend-in.eu](http://www.blend-in.eu)