

Ensuring Refugee Participation: The Way Forward for Effective Inclusion

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is publishing a study showcasing initiatives enabling refugees to actively participate and promote their inclusion in Switzerland and Liechtenstein. This research highlights recent advancements and opportunities to make refugee participation more accessible at various levels.

This publication highlights projects and best practices in the field of refugee integration in Switzerland and Liechtenstein, implemented and/or financially supported by local authorities in 2023. The focus has been on the active involvement of refugees and their participation as vectors for a successful inclusion. UNHCR thus provides an overview of the progress made so far in this area and highlights the challenges that remain to be addressed. About 50 projects from 24 different cantons and Liechtenstein have been identified.

The publication presents various possible models for including refugees according to the levels of participation. It also offers practical advice to inspire reflections on participation among actors in the integration field:

- **Structural and political participation of refugees:** Advisory commissions and dedicated consultation bodies, as well as “parliaments,” allow the foreign population to submit recommendations to authorities on integration and anti-discrimination measures. From the oldest [cantonal advisory commission in Neuchâtel](#) to the more recent [Migrant Parliament in Lucerne](#) and [resident councils](#) in Geneva municipalities, various examples show the added value of drawing on the expertise of refugees through their civic and political participation.
- **Consultation of refugees to shape integration measures:** Taking into account the perspective of refugees in the development of integration policies and measures improves their effectiveness. For example, the Cantons of [Graubünden](#), [Neuchâtel](#), [Vaud](#), and [Geneva](#), as well as [Liechtenstein](#), have consultation mechanisms in place, for the development of cantonal integration programs and the annual integration measures plan, respectively. This approach is also commendable within specific projects, such as [professional integration measures](#).
- **Support persons and refugee communities:** Several cantons and municipalities employ paid support persons from refugee communities to provide support to newcomers in their native language for everyday issues and to facilitate integration. This intercultural mediation can be addressed to a [general audience](#) or specific groups such as [families](#) or [people with disabilities](#).

- **Refugees and social integration in daily life:** [Meeting points](#), [discussion groups](#), or [matching with volunteers](#) are some accessible ways for refugees to participate and better connect within the host society. Informal exchanges between refugees and the local population promote information sharing and social cohesion.

UNHCR observes a growing interest from authorities and progress regarding the theme of refugee participation in Switzerland and Liechtenstein. It also notes the potential multiplier effect of investments in social integration and the development of local actors' skills in participatory approaches. UNHCR encourages integration actors to be inspired by these best practices and to make participation opportunities more accessible for refugees.

We will be holding some presentation events:

- online on 26th and 27th November 2024
- in-person on 11th December 2024 in Berne

You can already register [here](#) and this until 15th November 2024. More information will follow.