

## REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

- The asylum applications are inadequately assessed, lacking proper consideration of the merits of the claim and adherence to the credibility criteria outlined in the Refugee Convention. The competent authority frequently grants status based on the applicant's current humanitarian situation rather than considering the genuine fear of persecution or serious harm.
- Asylum seekers are hindered from accessing the labor market freely due to their inability to obtain a personal identification number (PIN). Moreover, they can only exercise this right if the asylum authority has not made a decision on the asylum request within 9 months, thereby excluding access during appeal procedures. Acquiring a PIN would not only enable access to employment but also facilitate access to other rights.
- Since 2015, the country has not adopted a Strategy for the Integration of Foreigners and Refugees. This presents a major obstacle to strengthening the integration system for individuals under international protection and asylum seekers.

## DETENTION AND MOVEMENT OF MIGRANTS

- Migrants are being de facto unlawfully detained to serve as witnesses in criminal procedures against smugglers. Furthermore, children of various ages are frequently detained in such circumstances. Over the past five years, more than 350 children have been detained for migratory reasons, primarily as witnesses in criminal proceedings. There aren't any alternatives to detention available and used in practice for unaccompanied children/families or other vulnerable people, so everyone is detained in a prison-like center.
- The government regularly carries out informal deportations to neighboring countries, mostly to Greece. These informal actions don't follow proper legal procedures or readmission agreements for the returns of third-country nationals, risking human rights violations for the people involved.

## PRISON CONDITIONS

- Prison conditions continue to be substandard (regarding hygiene, sleeping arrangements, and food quality and quantity) particularly the access to medical healthcare and adequate medical personnel. In the biggest prison in North Macedonia the conditions are inhuman and degrading for the convicts. The internal mechanisms for reporting and prosecuting cases of torture and inhumane treatment of convicted persons remain ineffective.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Strengthen the decision-making authority's capabilities to ensure the high-quality processing of asylum claims.
- II. Revise legislation to enable asylum seekers to acquire personal identification number and access labor market during the whole duration of the asylum procedure, including appeal procedures.
- III. Adopt and implement a Strategy for the Integration of Foreigners and Refugees.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Children should not be detained on any grounds.
- II. Implement alternatives to detention for migration-related reasons, with particular emphasis on utilizing these alternatives, especially for children.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The authorities should respect the legal procedures for readmission and expulsion of third-country nationals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. Implement structural reforms to improve the situation and conditions in penitentiary institutions and ensure effective access to medical healthcare and treatments for convicted persons.
- II. Improve the mechanisms for reporting and prosecuting cases of ill-treatment of convicts.