

Share survey 2021

Welcome & Integration in the EU: COVID-19 Impact & Responses

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt around the world. For refugees, migrants and those working with them, the crisis has created new challenges and intensified those that already existed. Across the EU, integration actors and stakeholders were required to develop new approaches to respond to the rapidly changing context.

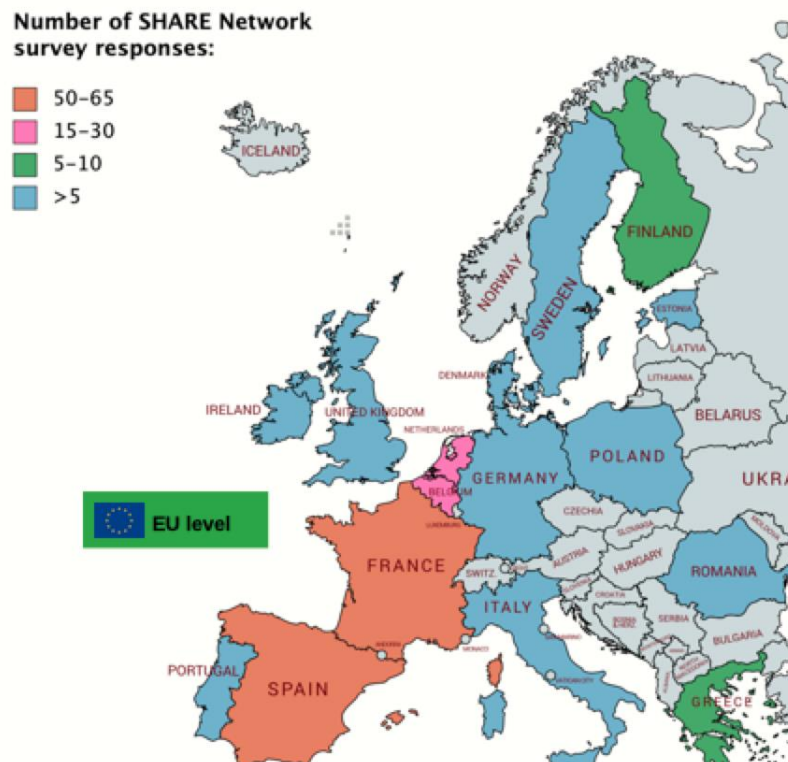
In recognition of this new context, during October-December 2020 we conducted an online survey, accompanied by targeted desk research and stakeholder interviews, to:

- map the impact of the pandemic on welcome and integration for refugees and migrants across the EU; and
- map welcome and integration responses to COVID-19, and identify best practice that could be taken forward in the pandemic recovery.

Survey support in France and Spain was provided by SHARE Network partners [Entraide Pierre Valdo](#) and [Jesuit Refugee Service](#) in Limousin (France), and [Fundación CEPAIM](#) (Spain).

Who responded to the survey?

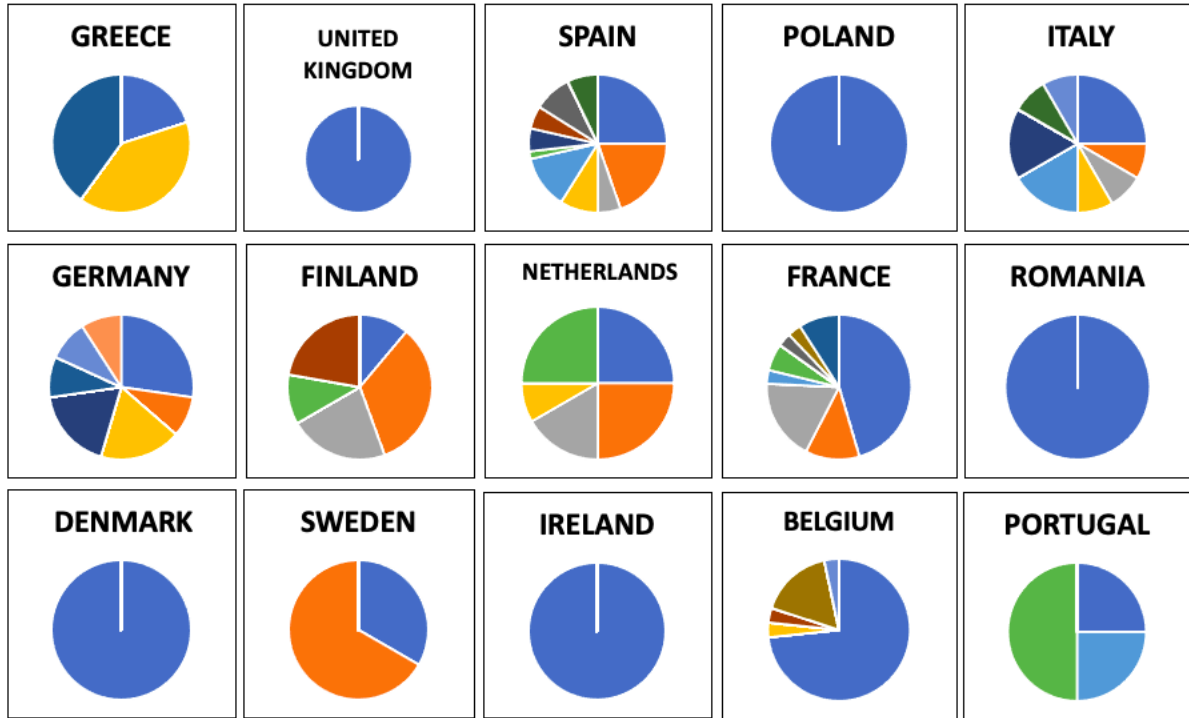
We made the Share COVID-19 survey available for completion in eight EU languages, and received **224 individual responses from 16 EU countries:**





Just over 40% of all responses were from civil society organisations (CSOs), 16% from public authorities and 15% from community, voluntary, and refugee and migrant-led organisations.

The types of organisations from which survey responses were received varied greatly across countries:

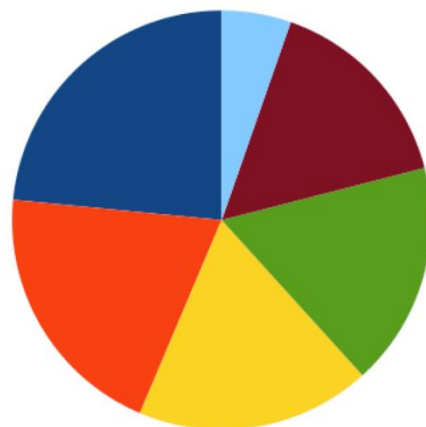


- Civil society organisation
- Refugee/migrant-led organisation
- Community association
- Voluntary initiative/association
- Local authority
- Regional government
- Training provider
- European institution
- National government
- Faith-based organisation/institution
- Other
- International organisation
- Regional public agency/authority
- Cultural/arts organisation

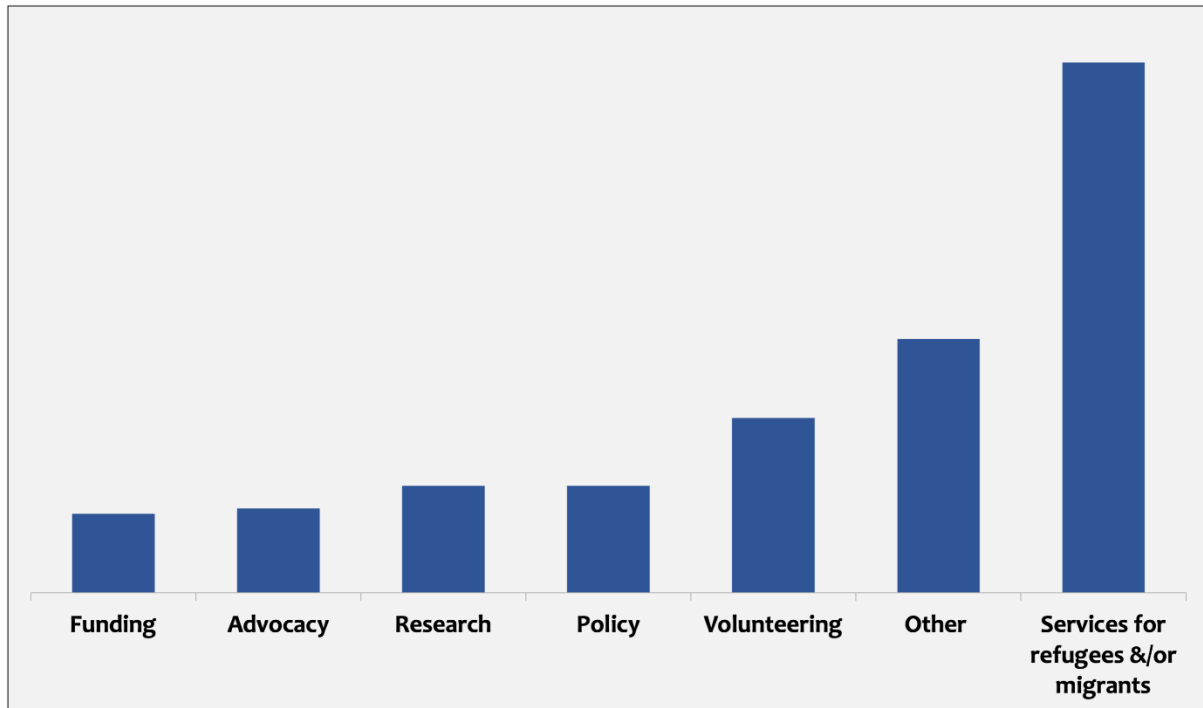
Countries from which the largest number of responses were received (France, Germany and Spain) tended to have a more diverse range of respondents. This was also the case for countries that were less well represented in survey responses, such as Finland and Italy.

In 6 countries (Denmark, Estonia, Ireland, Poland, the UK and Romania), responses were submitted solely by CSOs. CSOs also constituted the majority of survey responses received from Belgium.

The largest proportion of survey respondents (44%) identified their **level of work** as 'local' (24% in smaller/rural communities, and 20% in urban areas), with a further 38% working at regional level and the remainder working at national (18%) or EU level (5%):



- Local (smaller city/rural area)
- Local (larger city/urban area)
- National
- Regional (small cities/rural areas)
- Regional (larger cities/urban areas)
- EU level

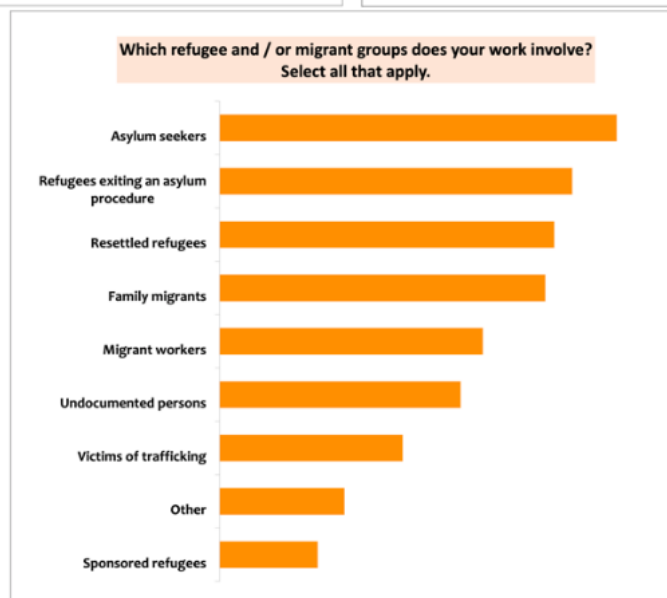
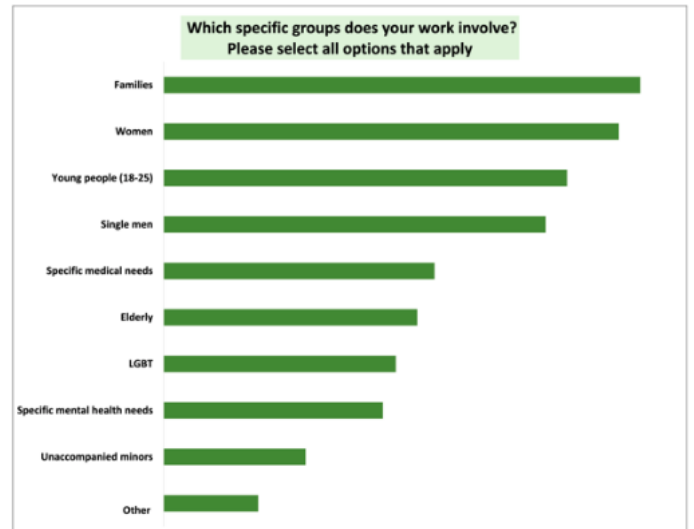
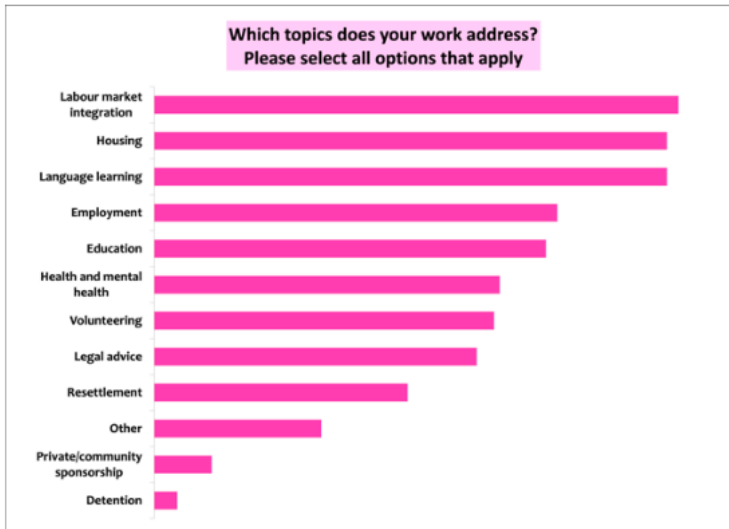


In terms of the **type of work that survey respondents do**, the largest proportion (40%) were involved in direct service provision for refugees and/or migrants. A further 13% were involved in volunteering, as volunteers or in as paid coordinators of volunteer initiatives, and smaller numbers worked in policy (8%), advocacy (8%), research (6%) and funding (5%).

The work of the 19% of respondents who answered 'other' took place in sectors including healthcare and health promotion, legal advice and representation, education, arts and culture, sports and programme coordination:



Our survey also compiled additional data on respondents: the topics addressed by their work, the extent of refugee and migrant participation, and the refugee and/or migrant groups addressed by their work:



What did we find out?

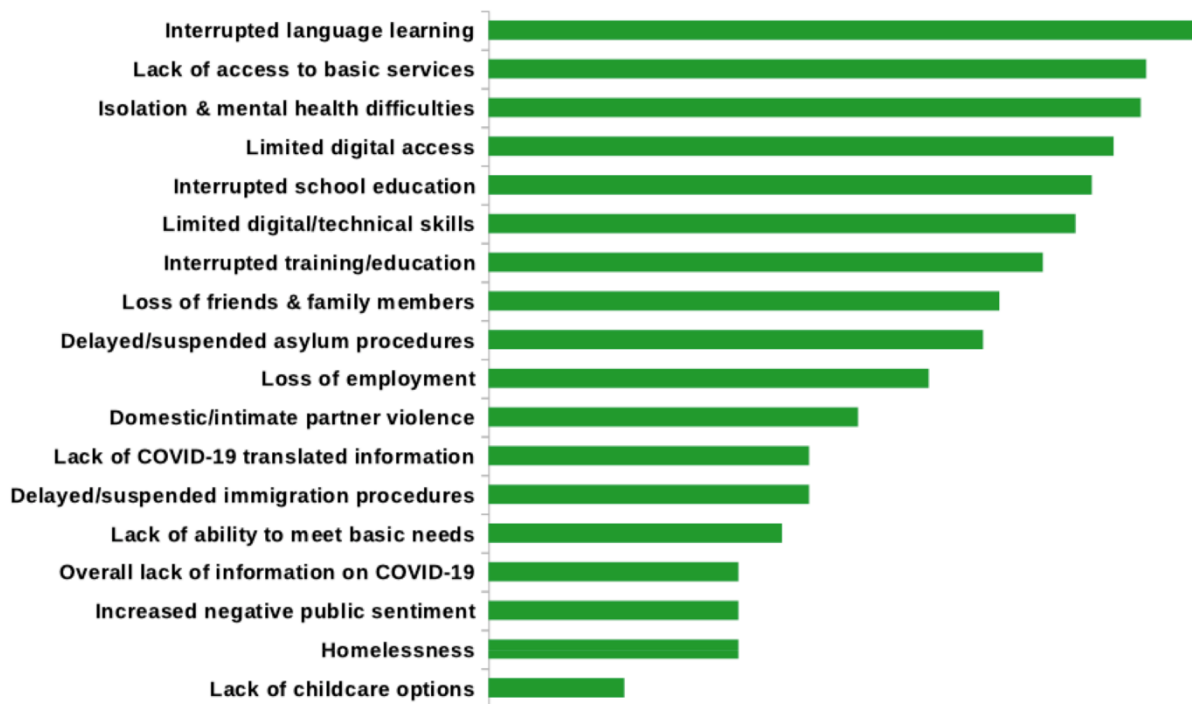
- **Impact of COVID-19 for refugees, migrants & the organisations working with them**

Our survey mapped the impact of COVID-19 for welcome, integration and inclusion in the EU - for asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and the organisations working with and alongside them.

Our questions covered the negative impacts of the crisis, and also asked about potential opportunities it had presented - for refugees migrants, and integration - that could be taken forward into the recovery. Our questions provided suggested responses from which to select multiple answers, alongside space for respondents to note any impacts not included in our answer choices.



COVID-19 continues to cause prolonged lockdowns and restrictions across Europe. The SHARE Network has identified various ways in which this situation and lockdown has negatively affected migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Please select all those that apply to these groups in the area(s) in which you work, and add any others.



Just over 23% of survey responses highlighted **interruptions to education and training** as a key impact of COVID-19 restrictions for refugees and migrants. Interrupted activities included language learning (8.8%), school education (7.5%) and adult education and training (7%). Although many of these activities moved online, **digital access for refugees and migrants** was limited by a lack of equipment or internet connection (8.2%) and sufficient digital/technical skills (7.3%).

8% of responses pointed to how lockdowns had exacerbated the **isolation and mental health difficulties** already disproportionately experienced by refugees and migrants. The **specific impacts for refugee and migrant women** were highlighted, particularly their increased vulnerability to domestic and/or intimate partner violence (4%).

Just under 9% of responses noted a **lack of access to basic services** for refugees and migrants, due both to legal status (particularly undocumented persons) and to services moving to online/telephone provision without accompanying translation or interpretation. This lack of mainstream support is particularly important given the 3.6% of responses that indicated **the pandemic has affected refugee and migrants' capacity to meet their basic needs**.

10% of responses noted negative impacts for asylum seekers and migrants caused by **delayed asylum (6%) and immigration (4%) procedures**. Continued procedures were not always viewed positively,



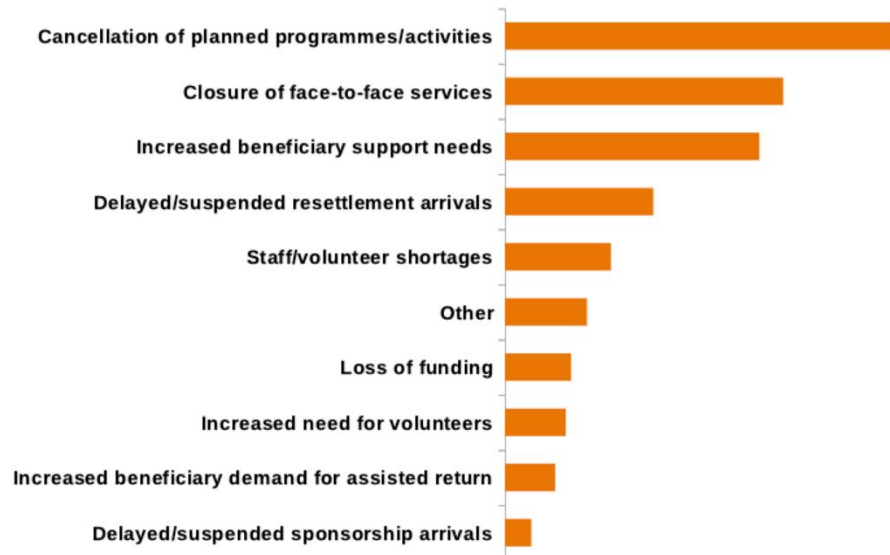
however: others noted how asylum procedures ongoing during lockdowns had caused **people refused asylum to become ineligible for mainstream support and pandemic assistance.**

Additional comments also highlighted the significant impact of the pandemic on development benefits accruing from labour migration, including **declining global remittances** and **increasing requests for return assistance made to national authorities in countries of origin by migrant workers who had lost their jobs in destination countries.**

How has the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions and lockdown periods affected your work and that of your organisation?

The biggest impacts of COVID-19 for survey respondents were on the **operational activities** of their organisations.

Just over a quarter (26.5%) noted the **closure of planned programmes and activities.** Negative impacts here included donors unable to disburse allocated funds, and receiving organisations unable to use resources that had been allocated to their work. 4% reported a **loss of funding** caused by these delays.



19% highlighted the need to **remove face-to-face contact from their service provision** to comply with social contact regulations, and 12% the pandemic travel restrictions causing the **suspension of arrivals under resettlement (10%) and sponsorship (2%) programmes.**

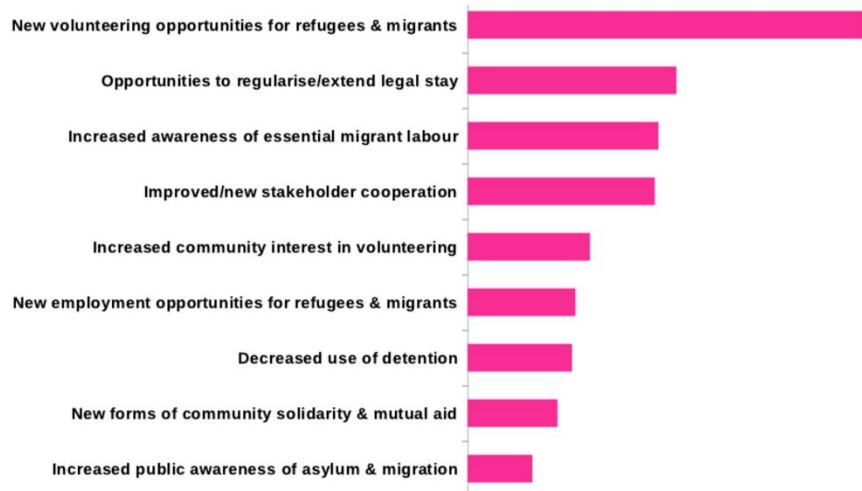
Increased support needs amongst refugees and migrants resulting from the pandemic also created significant challenges for organisations working with them, as noted in just under 20% of survey responses. 8% of responses pointed to **staff and volunteer shortages**, including temporary staff lay-offs and older volunteers with health vulnerabilities no longer being able to carry out their roles.



SHARE Network members have identified opportunities presented by the COVID-19 situation, for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, and for the organisations and individuals working with them. Please select any that are relevant for the area(s) in which you work.

27% of responses noted an **increase in volunteering opportunities for refugees and migrants** arising from the COVID-19 situation, alongside an **increased interest from local communities in volunteering for integration** (8.5%).

New employment opportunities for refugees and migrants were more limited by comparison, and noted in 7.3% of responses.



Just over 14% highlighted **increased opportunities for migrants to regularise or extend their legal residence** in European countries. Highlighted examples included the Portuguese government's initiative that offered temporary regularised status and access to health and social care to approximately 375,000 migrants. Additional comments urged that national authorities make regularisation schemes permanent, using lessons learned from the successes of temporary initiatives developed in response to COVID-19.

13% of responses noted an **increased public awareness of the role of migrant labour in essential roles and sectors** brought about by COVID-19. Examples included Finland, in which difficulties in recruiting migrant fruit pickers during lockdown led to the hiring of Finnish citizens to carry out these roles. Some Finnish fruit-picking recruits made complaints about working conditions and pay, which prompted new public discussion and interest in improving conditions for migrant workers in Finland.

7% of survey responses noted **improved and new cooperation between stakeholders and institutions in the context of integration and inclusion** during COVID-19, in particular the closer engagement of public authorities and the private sector.

What did we find out?

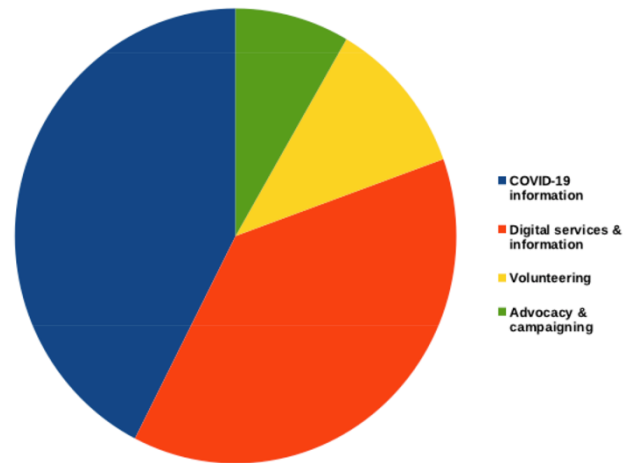
- Responses to COVID-19: welcome, integration & inclusion in the EU

Our survey asked respondents to indicate **the areas of work in which they implemented specific responses to manage the impact of COVID-19** during 2020-21, and the **types of activities** they undertook.

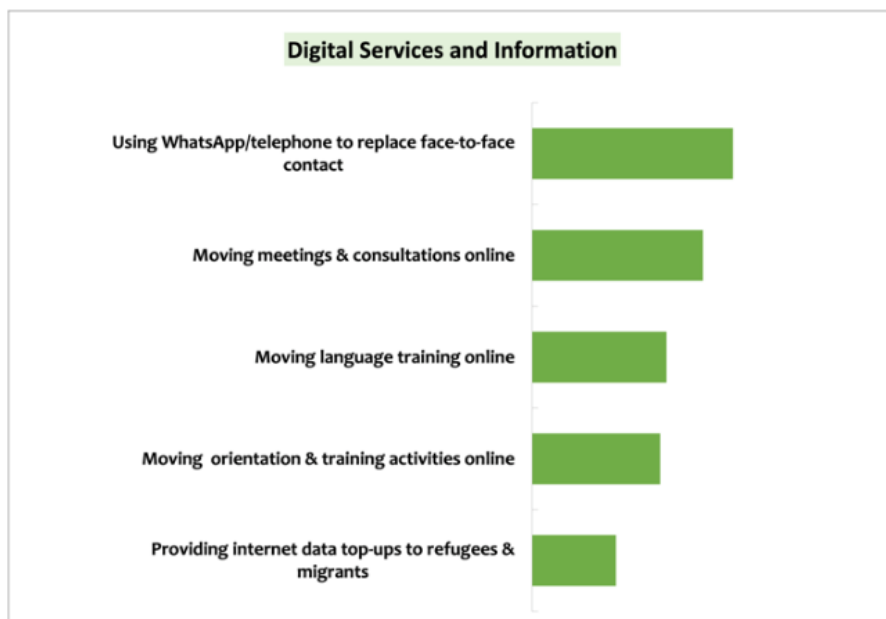
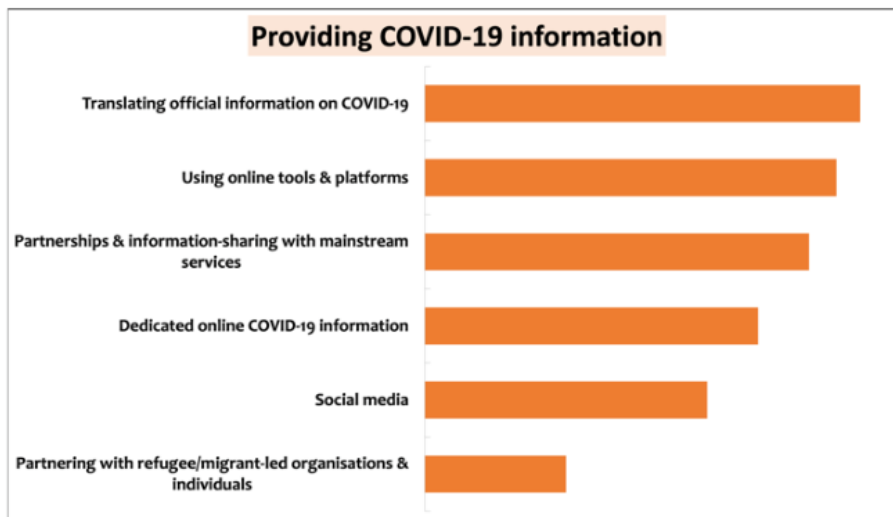


Participants submitted **1194** answers detailing COVID-19 responses in four areas of work.

We also conducted a programme of **outreach and follow-up interviews with 44 survey respondents** who had submitted detailed COVID-19 response integration practice examples.



The **types of activities** implemented in each area are shown below:

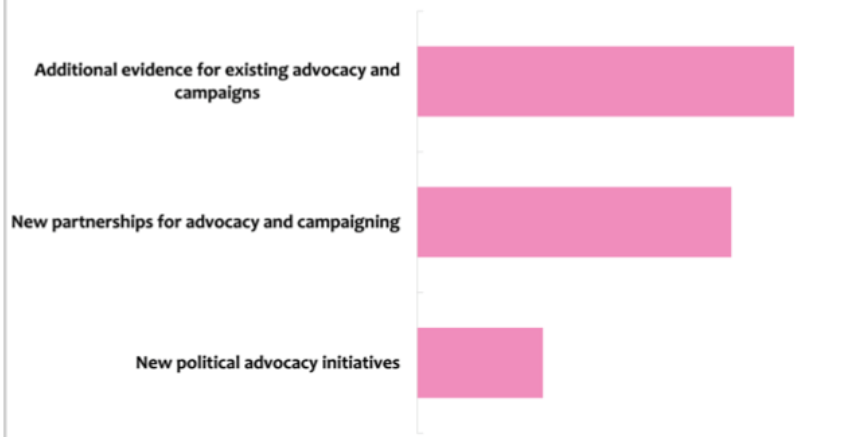




Volunteering

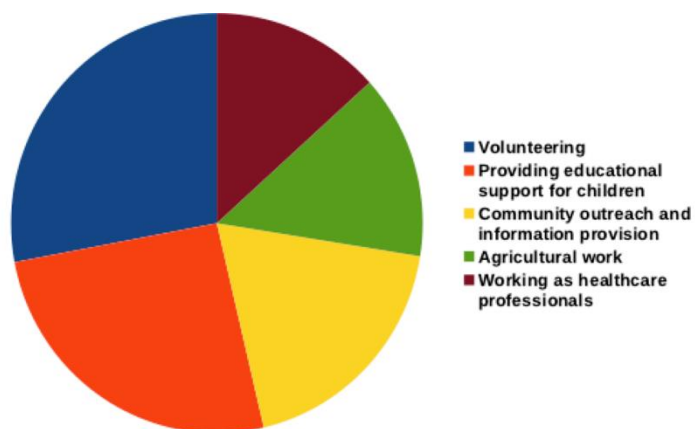


Advocacy and Campaigning





We also asked about the ways in which asylum seekers, refugees and migrants have been involved in pandemic responses across European territories and communities. The responses indicated involvement in five key areas:



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