



# Portraits of refugees

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## PREFACE

This brochure features a selection of portraits of refugees from a number of different countries. Their participation reflects their wider desire to inspire and encourage others who might face similar challenges that come with displacement.

The interviews shed light on seven individuals out of more than 1000 European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) holders; it must be kept in mind that many of those holding the EQPR preferred not to be interviewed and have their stories published due to political or personal reasons.

We sincerely hope that in our next publication, we can gather more portraits of refugees, further highlighting their diverse experiences and voices. As we continue to face the complexities of migration and displacement across Europe, it is essential that we foster an environment of understanding, inclusion, and empowerment for those who have been forced to leave their homes.

By promoting the recognition of qualifications and linguistic integration, the Council of Europe Education Department ensures that refugees can overcome barriers to learning and professional growth. This work affirms the Council of Europe's commitment to education as a fundamental right and a cornerstone for personal and societal development.

The Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on qualifications and linguistic competences of refugees

in Europe, set for adoption in 2025, further strengthens this commitment. It underscores the need for cohesive policies that recognise refugees' prior learning and qualifications, ensuring they can access education and employment in their host countries.

Complementing this policy initiative, the EQPR continues to serve as a hands-on solution, bridging gaps between displaced individuals and the opportunities they seek.

The EQPR is more than a technical solution - it is a symbol of our shared responsibility to uphold the right to education for all. By recognising the qualifications of refugees, we ensure that their talents and aspirations are not lost to displacement. This recognition not only opens doors to universities and vocational training but also inspires a sense of dignity and purpose in individuals striving to rebuild their lives.

A key strength of the EQPR lies in its adaptability and international reach. The project is establishing synergies with the UNESCO Qualifications Passport for Refugees and Vulnerable Migrants (UQP), extending the principles of qualification recognition to regions beyond Europe. This cooperation ensures a cohesive and global

approach to addressing the needs of displaced populations.

As we look forward, the Council of Europe is committed to furthering the development of the EQPR, ensuring its role as a critical tool for the integration of refugees. The initiative has already demonstrated its impact in supporting individuals to pursue higher education, secure meaningful employment, and establish themselves as active, productive members of their new communities. We are proud of what has been accomplished, and we remain dedicated to expanding its reach and effectiveness.

Together, through initiatives like the EQPR, we can build more inclusive Europe where everyone has the chance to learn, grow, and thrive.



**Villano Qiriazhi**

Head of the Education Department  
Council of Europe

### PORTRAITS OF REFUGEES

*The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.*

The reproduction of extracts (up to 500 words) is authorised, except for commercial purposes as long as the integrity of the text is preserved, the excerpt is not used out of context, does not provide incomplete information or does not otherwise mislead the reader as to the nature, scope or content of the text. The source text must always be acknowledged as follows "© Council of Europe, year of the publication". All other requests concerning the reproduction/translation of all or part of the document, should be addressed to the Directorate of Communications, Council of Europe (F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex or publishing@coe.int).

All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the Education Department of the Council of Europe.

E-mail: refugees.qualifications@coe.int

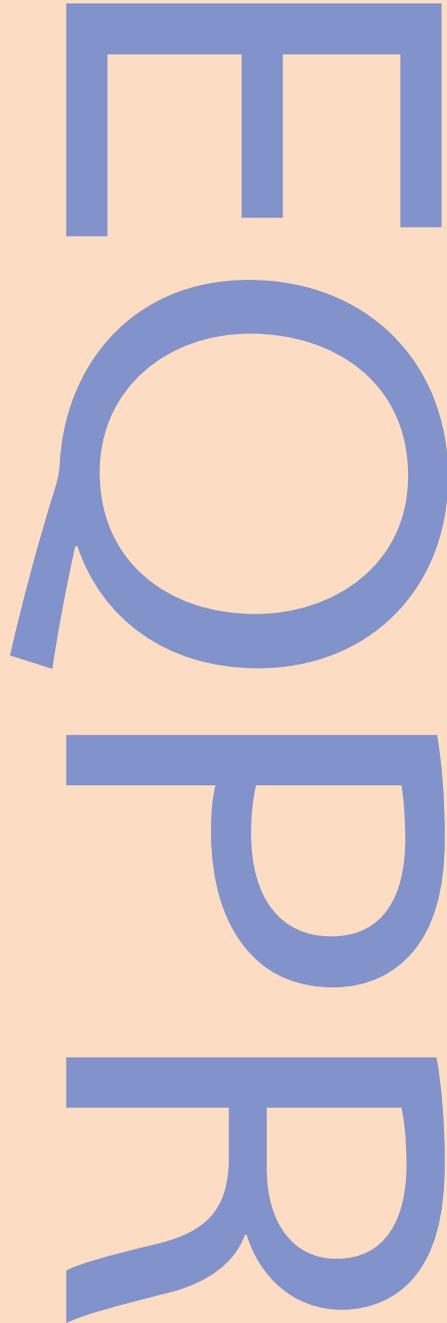
Cover design and layout:  
Luna Lazzarini Graphic Design

Photos: ©Freepik ©Pexels

Council of Europe Publishing  
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex  
<http://book.coe.int>

© Council of Europe, Mai 2025  
Printed at the Council of Europe

# European Qualifications Passport for Refugees



## Commitment to human rights and collective action

In a world where millions of refugees face barriers to rebuilding their lives in host countries, the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) is an initiative which bridges this gap by empowering refugees to continue their education, secure meaningful employment, and integrate into their host communities. Established by the Council of Europe in 2017, the EQPR is not a substitute for formal diploma recognition but a complementary tool that assesses the qualifications of refugees based on their educational and professional background, even in cases when the documentation which is normally required is incomplete or unavailable.

The EQPR was developed as a response to the pressing need for effective integration of refugees into European societies, particularly since 2015 when millions of people sought refuge in Europe due to war, persecution, and instability in their home countries, especially in the regions of Syria, Afghanistan, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Many of these individuals held educational qualifications, professional skills, and work experience but faced immense challenges in starting their new professional lives and utilising their qualifications in host countries. Among the refugee population, many young individuals were displaced before they could complete their education. Having been uprooted from their homes, they were seeking not only safety, but also opportunities to build a brighter future through education.

The EQPR emerged as a solution to these challenges, strengthening European solidarity by addressing the integration of refugees as a collective responsibility rather than one borne solely by the first receiving countries. By offering a standardised and practical solution for assessment of refugees' qualifications, the EQPR represented a solution to alleviate administrative pressures on individual nations by providing a unified framework that all member States can rely on. This shared approach clearly demonstrated European commitment to human rights and collective action.

## Collective effort to address country specific challenges

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) represents a collective European effort to address the complex challenges posed by forced migration. By creating a standardised yet adaptable tool to assess refugees' qualifications, the EQPR provides a flexible solution that responds to diverse individual needs and different national contexts.

This initiative underscores the power of collaboration among member States, international organisations, and host communities. Recognising that traditional systems of credential evaluation may not always be suitable for refugees, many of whom might not have access to their official qualification documents for logistical, political, or other reasons, the EQPR provides an innovative and practical alternative by combining self-reported information, supporting documents (if available), and interviews with credential evaluation experts to validate the qualifications.

Based on the methodology developed in the UK and Norway, where the interview-based evaluations for applicants with lacking and insufficient documentation have been implemented since 2013, the EQPR embraces the collective knowledge and commitment of the ENIC (European Network of Information Centres) and NARIC (National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union) to meet the needs of the refugees arriving to their countries, in compliance with Article VII of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention), and following the principles outlined in the European Area of Recognition (EAR) manual.

To address this, the EQPR aims to create a balance between a unified framework, adaptability to individual refugee cases, and respect for national specificities. From the onset, the project founding

partners – Greece, Italy, Norway, and the UK – recognised this balance as essential for addressing the complex and diverse challenges associated with the recognition of refugees' qualifications.

Acknowledging that every refugee's experience is unique, the EQPR is designed to adapt to varied cases. It accommodates individuals with both complete and incomplete documentation, varying levels of language proficiency, and diverse professional trajectories. The EQPR also ensures that language barriers are minimised by conducting interviews in the languages familiar to the applicants, such as Arabic, Farsi, Pashto, Ukrainian, Russian, in addition to commonly spoken languages like English, French, Spanish, and Italian. This flexibility allows the EQPR to remain inclusive and relevant, offering tailored solutions without compromising on the integrity of the assessment process.

To ensure consistency of the assessment process across borders, the EQPR introduces a standardised and unified approach, providing a common language for understanding qualifications and bridging the gaps between different education and recognition systems. The interview-based methods, first tested in Norway, were further elaborated and refined by the international teams of credential evaluators in the evaluation sessions regularly conducted in Greece, Italy, and later also in the Netherlands, France, and Germany. Subsequently, the format for the standardised outcome of the assessment, the EQPR document, was designed and introduced across the participating countries, as a transnational document,



enabling refugees to use it in multiple jurisdictions without the need for reassessment. This portability is critical for individuals whose journeys often span several countries before they settle.

Acting as a bridge to national recognition systems by offering a credible, standardised assessment of qualifications, the EQPR works within the context of existing national recognition frameworks, respecting their standards and procedures. It is designed to complement, not replace, national recognition schemes, assisting refugees in having their qualifications assessed and valued when traditional recognition pathways are unavailable or impractical due to refugees' circumstances.

Refugees often need guidance on how to use their qualifications in a new country with different education and employment systems. That is why the EQPR includes both general and individual recommendations for relevant further education, bridging programmes, and access to formal recognition and authorisation. Providing this roadmap for personal and professional development makes the EQPR an actionable tool for all stakeholders concerned by recognition procedures.



↳ [Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region \(Lisbon Recognition Convention\)](#)



↳ [EAR Manual: European Area of Recognition Project \(EAR\)](#)



↳ [ENIC NARIC Website](#)

## Growing and evolving to address contemporary challenges and societal needs

What began as a collaborative effort among the four founding project partners, under the leadership of the Council of Europe in 2017, has expanded into a robust initiative with 24 active partners by 2024, including Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Croatia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Spain, and the UK. In addition, the EQPR's inclusive and adaptable framework has encouraged diverse stakeholders like governments, universities, and NGOs, to contribute to its expansion and to promote fairness and support for refugees and the societies that welcome them.

The EQPR has demonstrated significant growth and adaptability since its inception, positioning itself as a relevant and responsive tool for addressing the ever-changing challenges faced by refugees and host societies in the course of the years. The initiative proved to be scalable, providing a model that can be expanded across Europe and beyond, thus benefiting more displaced students, scholars, and professionals. Finally, the EQPR has inspired broader discussions about inclusive qualification recognition frameworks and contributed to long-term policy influence in education and employment sectors.

The success and reliability of the EQPR significantly depends on the role of trained evaluators. These professionals ensure that the qualifications of refugees are assessed rigorously, fairly, and consistently.

Over 100 evaluators from the ENIC and NARIC networks have been trained already in the EQPR methodology, marking a substantial step in strengthening the system's capacity to address diverse cases. This training is not just a one-time process, it is part of a robust and ongoing capacity-building programme designed to ensure consistency in assessments, professional use of the digital tools and platforms, while fostering international collaboration, and enhancing preparedness for future challenges. Trained evaluators are the backbone of the EQPR initiative, ensuring that it remains a reliable and adaptable tool for recognition of refugees' qualifications.

“With over 100 trained evaluators and 24 active partner countries to date, the EQPR has become a scalable and trusted model for inclusive qualification recognition, fostering fairness, collaboration, and long-term policy impact.”

## The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the EQPR is not just a tool for long-term integration but also a resource for immediate crisis response, by enabling skilled refugee health professionals to contribute to healthcare systems in their host countries. By assessing the qualifications of refugees in frontline fields like healthcare, the EQPR showed how it could be leveraged in future emergencies. The pandemic necessitated remote operations in almost all sectors, including the EQPR initiative. Interviews and evaluations that were traditionally conducted in-

person transitioned to online platforms, maintaining the programme's accessibility and efficiency. Refugees were able to complete their interviews and assessments safely, without the need for travel or physical presence, ensuring that the assessments of their qualifications continued without interruption. Full digitalisation of the application and assessment process, which came into place in 2020, allowed better continuity and efficiency of the assessment and processing time.

## The war in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine, since its start in February 2022, has led to the displacement of millions of people, including skilled professionals, students, and academics. Recognising the urgency of the situation, the EQPR was rapidly adapted to address the specific challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees. The EQPR initiative increased its capacity to process a higher volume of applications from the Ukrainian refugees, ensuring that the system could handle the surge in demand. Ukrainian doctors, nurses, and teachers,

even with fully documented qualifications, profited from participating in the EQPR initiative and have successfully used the EQPR to enter their professions in their host countries, addressing critical shortages. Furthermore, the EQPR demonstrated its utility for the employers in the host countries, allowing them to understand the equivalence of the Ukrainian qualifications and the value they bring to the workplace, while making it easier for Ukrainians to find employment in their professional fields.

**By addressing these urgent needs, the EQPR has become a vital tool for the integration of refugees, supporting not just individuals but also the societies that welcome them. The EQPR's adaptability is one of its key strengths, allowing for effective response to the complexities of refugees' experiences and the challenges of a rapidly changing world. By balancing flexibility with standardisation, EQPR serves as a vital tool in empowering refugees and supporting host countries, ensuring relevance and timely impact.**

# LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

While the ultimate ideal is a world free of conflicts and crises, where initiatives like the EQPR are no longer necessary, current experiences underscore the importance of readiness and adaptability.

The EQPR has proven its value by helping refugees rebuild their lives through education and employment opportunities. It demonstrates the power of collaboration, innovation, and compassion. Given the evolving challenges of global displacement and integration, as well as the lessons learned, further development of the EQPR, by promoting preparedness and expanding expertise, enhancing its portability and including new elements like Language Support for Migrants (LSM) are essential to maximise its impact. By aligning with broader policy efforts and innovation, we can ensure that the EQPR remains a vital tool for fostering resilience, dignity, and integration for refugees across Europe.



# VOICES OF

The stories of refugees holding the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) are powerful testimonies of resilience, determination, and the immense potential within those who were forced to flee their homes. They not only highlight the extraordinary efforts of individuals rebuilding their lives but also serve as an inspiration for other refugees, offering hope and guidance on their own paths to integration and achievement.

Each narrative reveals a unique journey of overcoming adversity, whether through continuing education, resuming professional careers, or discovering new ways to contribute to host societies. From healthcare professionals offering critical services to communities, to young students pursuing their dreams of higher education, these individuals showcase the profound impact of recognition, trust, and support. The EQPR plays a pivotal role in this transformation from adversity to success. For the over 1000 EQPR

holders, the EQPR is more than just a document – it is a bridge to new opportunities in higher education, employment, and beyond. For those who hold it, the EQPR is a tool of empowerment and a symbol of trust in their potential. For host societies, the EQPR symbolises solidarity, inclusivity, and mutual respect. It serves as a reminder that fostering the talents and ambitions of all individuals, regardless of their background, ultimately benefits everyone and shapes a better future for all.

# RESILIENCE



↳ **Dr Iryna Zinkovych**  
DENTIST AT A PRIVATE CLINIC  
Palermo, Italy

↳ **Dr Inna Molnar**  
ORTHOPEDIC DOCTOR  
Frosinone, Italy

↳ **Mykola Tsymbolinets**  
NURSE  
Italy

↳ **Dr Majed Alazzawi**  
DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY  
University Hospital of Besançon, France

↳ **Dr. Anastasiia Romanchuk**  
PEDIATRICIAN  
Italy

↳ **Hassan Atim Motawakil**  
ECONOMICS STUDENT  
Bordeaux, France

↳ **Mina Sharifi**  
IT AND COMPUTER SCIENCE STUDENT  
Turin, Italy

# Dr Iryna Zinkovych

DENTIST · PALERMO, ITALY

“ To other professionals facing similar challenges, I offer this advice: do not give up. The path may be difficult, but initiatives like the EQPR provide crucial support, opening doors and offering hope. ”

Thanks to the EQPR, Dr Iryna Zinkovych secured a position as a dentist at a private clinic in Palermo, Italy, where she has been practicing for two years. While the EQPR has opened doors to employment, she continues to advocate for its recognition in Italy's formal medical authorisation system.

## Helping skilled professionals to rebuild their lives and careers after displacement



**B**orn and raised in Donetsk, Ukraine, I built a thriving career in dentistry, combining my passion for medicine with academic mentorship. However, the turbulence of war reshaped my life, forcing me to leave behind my home, my career, and the familiarity of the world I had known.

I graduated from Donetsk State Medical University named after M. Gorky in 2002 as a doctor of dental medicine. My career quickly flourished, and, by 2004, I was teaching at the university's Department of Propedeutic Dentistry. Over the years, I rose from the position of assistant professor to associate professor, dedicated to educating future dentists and advancing the field. Life in Donetsk was fulfilling, professionally and personally. My work at the university was a source of pride, and my contributions to academic research and student mentorship defined my career.

In 2015, the ongoing military conflict shattered this stability, forcing me to leave my hometown in search of safety. I moved to the United Arab Emirates where I joined one of the city's leading dental clinics as a general dentist. The experience was both professionally enriching and personally rewarding, as I adapted to a new culture and healthcare system while continuing to provide high-quality dental care.

In 2021, I moved back to Ukraine, where I resumed my academic career at the Department of Pediatric Dentistry at the National University of Health Care named after P.L. Shupyk. For a brief moment, it felt like I was reclaiming the life I had left behind.

In February 2022, faced with the dangers of war and the responsibility to protect my two children, I made the difficult decision to leave Ukraine. This time, my journey led me to Palermo, Italy, where I began the

process of rebuilding yet again. Italy welcomed me with its warmth and opportunities, but navigating a new system of professional recognition posed significant challenges. As a dentist eager to return to my field, I was looking for the information about professional authorisation process for the dentists.

Through one of the social media groups supporting Ukrainian medical professionals in Italy, I discovered the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR), an initiative aimed at helping displaced professionals to validate their qualifications. The application process was straightforward, and all the documents could be easily submitted online. After the documents were submitted, I was invited to the online interview and was afterwards issued the EQPR. While I was informed that the EQPR does not replace formal qualification recognition by the Italian health authorities, it still opened the doors for employment in a private dental clinic in Palermo, where I have been working for two years. I am thankful for this opportunity to rebuild my career and regain a sense of purpose in a new country.

Looking to the future, I hope that governments and institutions worldwide will continue to develop mechanisms that recognise the skills and qualifications of displaced professionals. I remain hopeful that, in time, the governments will include the EQPR as part of its official authorisation process, easing the path for many displaced healthcare professionals like myself.

# Dr Majed Alazzawi

DOCTOR OF DENTAL SURGERY · BESANÇON, FRANCE

“

To my fellow EQPR holders I would say: never lose hope, trust in yourself and remember that persistence always pays off. The EQPR is there as a proof of your qualifications and potential. To the new refugees in Europe with academic backgrounds my message is clear: apply for the EQPR, as it is more than a document – it is a bridge to opportunities and a testament to your resilience.

Dr Majed Alazzawi encourages institutions, universities, and potential employers across Europe to recognise the value of the EQPR and give its holders a chance to demonstrate their abilities to integrate into academic and professional spheres. Doing so will not only help refugees rebuild their lives but also enrich the communities they join.

## Starting a new life chapter with the EQPR



It was in June 2019 when I attended a seminar on protecting unaccompanied minors as the President of the Bright Inventors Association. The event, organised by the Council of Europe, brought together leaders and experts to address pressing humanitarian issues. During the seminar, I met Dr. Michael Remmert, then the Head of Education Policy Division at the Council of Europe (CoE). Dr. Remmert introduced me to the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) and encouraged me to apply, providing me with the necessary contact details. That conversation, indeed, marked the beginning of a new chapter in my life.

When I arrived in France from Syria, I faced a challenge familiar to many refugees: my Syrian diplomas held limited acceptance in Europe. As a Doctor of Dental Surgery, I was prepared for a long assessment and authorisation process, and I knew I needed to start this process as quickly as possible. I considered different opportunities – both admission to further studies and any job opportunities related to my field of study. It was not easy to start with, and I hoped the EQPR would pave the way for admission into European universities and hospitals. Specifically, I aimed to use it to support my application to the French Regional Health Agencies and the French National Syndicate of Dental Surgeons, with the ultimate goal of obtaining equivalence for my Syrian qualifications.

Being invited to the CoE headquarters at the Agora building for my EQPR interview was both an honor and a moment of deep reflection. The experts asked

me about my studies, professional experience, and volunteer work in Syria. They also inquired about the challenges I faced on my journey to France. Answering their questions with confidence gave me a renewed sense of self-assurance.

After receiving the EQPR, I wasted no time putting it to use. I presented it to the University of Strasbourg and sent copies to various hospitals in France, along with my CV. I hoped it would serve as a helpful factor in securing an internship, traineeship, or even a job. The results exceeded my expectations. I was accepted to study at the Faculty of Dental Surgery in Strasbourg, where I pursued advanced education in periodontics and oral implantology. I also had the opportunity to complete an observation internship at the Civil Hospital of Strasbourg.

But the EQPR's impact didn't stop there. I received multiple job offers from hospitals in Orléans, Metz, Mulhouse, Amiens, Dijon, and Besançon. Ultimately, I chose to join the Center of Education & Dental Treatment (CESD) at the University Hospital of Besançon, where I have been working as a dentist since September 2024. My journey with the EQPR is a story of hope and determination, and I am grateful for the opportunities it has given me to continue my professional life and serve others.



I come from Nertiti, a small town in the heart of Sudan. I left Sudan in 2020, first to Chad, then to Libya, Niger, Algeria, Morocco, Spain, and now, since February 2023, I live in a village of Sisteron in France. For the past year, I have focused on mastering the French language as this will give me a crucial foundation for my next step, as I am preparing to seek admission to higher education.

I heard about the EQPR from my friend studying at the University of Bordeaux. He shared his experience with me and encouraged me to apply. I received my EQPR certificate in France in August 2024. The experience itself was enriching, offering not only an assessment of my qualifications but also a sense of empowerment. I wholeheartedly recommend the EQPR to anyone striving to rebuild their academic or professional path. The EQPR gives an excellent incentive to move forward and plan your future in the new country.

Last year, I missed the registration period while focusing on improving my French. Now, with the enhanced language skills, I am ready to apply and present my EQPR to the admission office.

“

What is my future? No doubts, university studies, hopefully in the field of Economics. To my peers and anyone holding qualifications from abroad, I highly recommend to explore the EQPR initiative.

Being a part of the EQPR process and having direct contact with the people knowledgeable both about the education system in your home country, and integration and admission process in your new country, offers unparalleled support and opens doors to possibilities that might otherwise seem out of reach. Their assistance goes beyond borders, providing opportunities that may not even exist in your home country.

# Hassan Atim Motawakil

ECONOMICS STUDENT · BORDEAUX, FRANCE

As one of the youngest and most recent holders of the EQPR, Hassan Atim Motawakil, originally from Sudan, feels confident that his aspirations for higher education studies in France are within reach, one step after another. But first, he has to master his French.

# Dr Inna Molnar

ORTHOPEDIC DOCTOR · FROSINONE, ITALY

“The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) gave me hope and a way to rebuild my career, but it is only one part of a larger journey. Never stop learning”, says Dr Inna Molnar. For her, staying engaged in education — whether through language courses, professional development, or clinical practice — has been key to overcoming obstacles and building a new life in Italy.

## Starting over in Italy

“

In any situation, I encourage you to stay proactive, patient, and committed to your goals. Even in the most difficult circumstances, opportunities exist for those willing to pursue them.



**M**y life changed forever in February 2022 when the war in Ukraine began. By April, I found myself in Frosinone, a town in Italy's Lazio region, with my family. Leaving behind everything we knew and loved was heartbreaking, but we were determined to start over and build a new life. Medicine has always been my passion. I graduated from Uzhhorod National University with a Diploma of Specialist in General Medicine. Later, I specialised in orthopedics and traumatology at P.L. Shupyk National Medical Academy of Postgraduate Education, earning my certificate in 2008.

My professional journey began in Kyiv, where I first worked as an orthopedist and traumatologist in a polyclinic and later joined the Institute of Traumatology and Orthopedics of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, where I focused on pediatric orthopedics. For the last six years before the war in Ukraine, I worked at the Center for Sports Traumatology and Rehabilitation Medicine at the Ukraine National University for Physical Education and Sport. I treated both adults and children, helping them recover from injuries and rebuild their lives.

When we arrived in Italy, everything felt unfamiliar, and I knew very little Italian. To overcome this, learning Italian language became one of the priorities. Despite the difficulties, I was determined to continue my career. Through an employment

assistance programme for the Ukrainian doctors, I was able to find a job as an orthopedic doctor at a regional hospital, first with the short contracts, which I had to renew every 6 months.

It was entirely by chance, when I first heard about the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR). While processing my documents at the police station, I learned about this initiative and its potential to help displaced professionals. Intrigued by the convenience of submitting everything online, I decided to apply. At the time, I believed the war in my country would soon end, and I might not even need this certificate. Little did I know how critical it would become in shaping my future. While the process of recognising my educational documents and authorisation to practice in the Italian health sector is still ongoing, the EQPR provided a direct pathway to continue my professional career, allowing my employers to get the information they need about my qualifications.

Reflecting on my experience, I can say that while incredibly helpful, the EQPR is not equivalent to the formal recognition of diplomas or authorisation to practice in the health sector. That's why it is essential for healthcare professionals like me, to pursue parallel pathways for credential recognition and authorisation, according to the Italian rules and regulations.



↳ Castello del Valentino, Architecture University in Turin

# Mina Sharifi

STUDENT FROM AFGHANISTAN · TURIN, ITALY

Living as a refugee comes with unique challenges, from cultural and linguistic barriers to navigating education and employment. Mina Sharifi, a student from Afghanistan is deeply grateful for the programmes like the EQPR, which simplify this journey and empower individuals to continue pursuing their ambitions. She hopes that more countries and institutions will adopt the EQPR, supporting individuals in building better lives for themselves and contributing positively to society.

Education has always been a big part of my life. After finishing high school, I passed Afghanistan's national university entrance exam and was thrilled to be accepted into the University of Herat to study IT and computer science. It was an exciting time, full of possibility and hope.

While I was in high school, I worked as an English teacher for children, a job I truly loved. Teaching was my way of giving back to the community, and it taught me the value of empowering others through knowledge.

But everything changed in 2021. At just 20 years old, I had to leave my home country due to the political situation. Leaving behind my family, my friends, and the future I had planned in Afghanistan was one of the hardest things I've ever done.

I arrived in Turin, Italy, with hope but also uncertainty. I didn't know the language or the culture, but I was determined to start over and continue my education. One of my biggest challenges was proving my educational background. I had my high school

transcript, but I didn't have my final certificate from high school due to the issues back home. That's when the International Office at the University of Turin introduced me to the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR).

In March 2022, I participated in the online EQPR interview and received the document. It wasn't just a document - it was a key that opened doors I thought might remain closed for me forever.

“

The EQPR approved my qualifications and allowed me to enroll in the university!

I am enjoying my student life in Turin and I am excited about what the future holds. My goal is to work in IT and use the skills I've gained to make a positive impact. I know the journey won't always be easy, but I'm ready to face whatever comes next.

# Mykola Tsymbolinets

NURSE · ITALY

Mykola Tsymbolinets' participation in the EQPR was driven by two main goals: to facilitate the process of finding a job in Italy and to open the possibility of continuing further studies in the future.

“

The experience with the programme proved to be very positive. From the start, the EQPR team's support was outstanding. They responded quickly to my questions during the preparation for the interview, providing clear, friendly, and professional guidance every step of the way.

I am a nurse with a qualification from Ukraine, where I studied at Uzhgorod Medical College, earning a Junior Specialist's diploma. I've been staying in Italy for some time, however, when the war in Ukraine escalated, I faced an unexpected obstacle: I could no longer access my educational documents or other credentials necessary to have my qualifications recognised in Italy.

It was during this time that I came across the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) initiative. I discovered it online and was immediately drawn to its promise of providing a pathway for people like me to use their qualifications in a new country. After reading several articles about the programme, I decided to apply, hoping it would be the key to unlocking opportunities in my adopted home.

The decision to participate in the EQPR was driven by two main goals: to facilitate the process of finding work in Italy and to open the possibility of continuing my studies in the future. The experience with the programme proved to be very positive. From the



start, the EQPR team's support was outstanding. They responded quickly to my questions during the preparation for the interview, providing clear, friendly, and professional guidance every step of the way.

Receiving my EQPR made an immediate impact. I presented it to both my current employer and the Italian Nurse Association, and it was accepted as a valuable asset. The EQPR has been instrumental in helping me securing the job and has also reignited my hope of pursuing further education to advance my career in healthcare.

To anyone considering participating in the EQPR initiative, I would offer this advice: don't hesitate. Even if your documentation is incomplete or the process seems daunting, you will find a supportive and understanding team ready to assist you. Their dedication ensures that no matter your situation, you're never alone in this journey. For anyone thinking about taking this step, I wholeheartedly encourage you to embrace the opportunity.

## Bridging the gap and unlocking the new chapter



**W**hen I first arrived in Italy, the uncertainty of my future weighed heavily on my shoulders. I had left behind my life as a pediatrician in Ukraine, and despite my professional training and ongoing PhD studies, I felt lost in a new country, with a language I didn't yet speak and a healthcare system that was foreign to me.

For someone like me, who had dedicated years of my life to medicine and was now seeking to continue my work, the EQPR helped bridging the gap and unlocking the next chapter of my life, making the process of finding a job and continuing my professional development more efficient. EQPR is invaluable in helping me navigate the complex bureaucratic landscape of a new country. Without it, I would have struggled to communicate my experience and education effectively to the potential employers.

“

The EQPR helped bridging the gap and unlocking the next chapter of my life, making the process of finding a job and continuing my professional development more efficient.

Also, instead of being trapped in a cycle of uncertainty, I was able to focus on improving my Italian language skills, which would be necessary for my work in the medical sector, thanks to the advice from the credential evaluators.

As I continue to learn Italian, I am determined to find a job in the medical field. With the EQPR as an essential certificate, which helped me to regain confidence and sense of purpose, I am heading towards a future where I can once again serve others, as I did before.

# Dr. Anastasiia Romanchuk

PEDIATRICIAN · ITALY

Dr. Anastasiia Romanchuk dreams of one day serving children in Italy, bringing her skills and compassion to the medical sector. With the EQPR, she is confident that this dream is within reach. As she works toward mastering the Italian language and navigating the intricacies of a new healthcare system, she is encouraged by the knowledge that her qualifications have been valued.

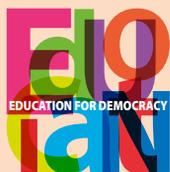
# Portraits of Refugees

## – Rebuilding lives through the EQPR

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) offers refugees the possibility to have their qualifications recognised – even when official documents are unavailable or incomplete due to displacement, political circumstances, or other challenges. Developed by the Council of Europe, the EQPR helps refugees access higher education, employment, and training across Europe.

To date, over 1000 EQPRs have been issued. This brochure showcases inspiring stories of eight EQPR holders who chose to share their journeys and who are rebuilding their futures with dignity and purpose. Each story reflects the power of recognition, hope, resilience, and the collective responsibility to support inclusion in our host societies.

Many stories are still untold, and we look forward to bringing more voices to light in the future.



 [@CoE\\_Education](https://twitter.com/CoE_Education)  
[www.coe.int/education](http://www.coe.int/education)

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE