



Impact & Learning of MEIC

What Cyprus Gained from AMIL

Insights, Outcomes and the Road ahead

Nicosia, Cyprus

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Outline



01 Background

Policies & procedures in Cyprus

Research findings



02 Engaging & integrating TCNs



03 Sector capacity & cross-sector collaboration



04 Obstacles identified



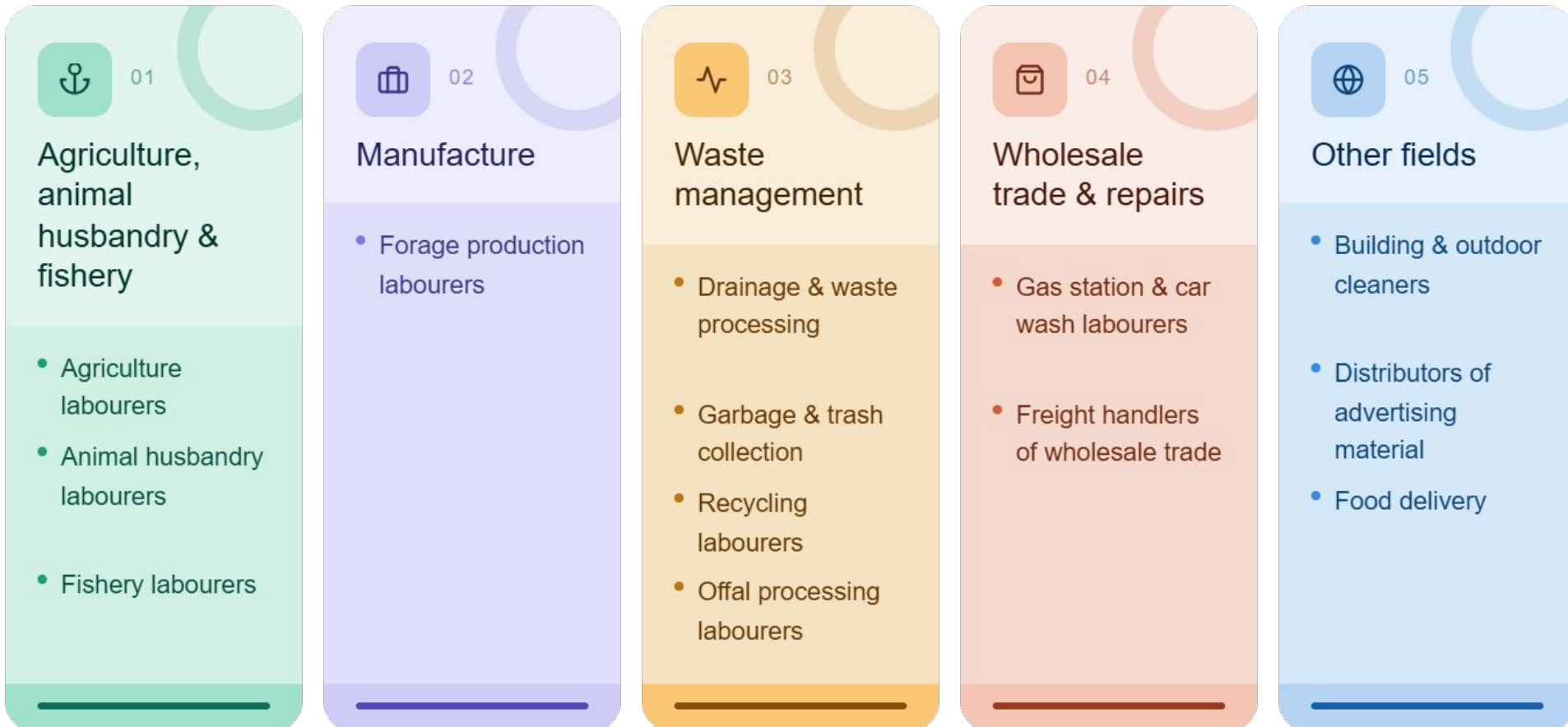
05 Current needs & recommendations

Status & given rights

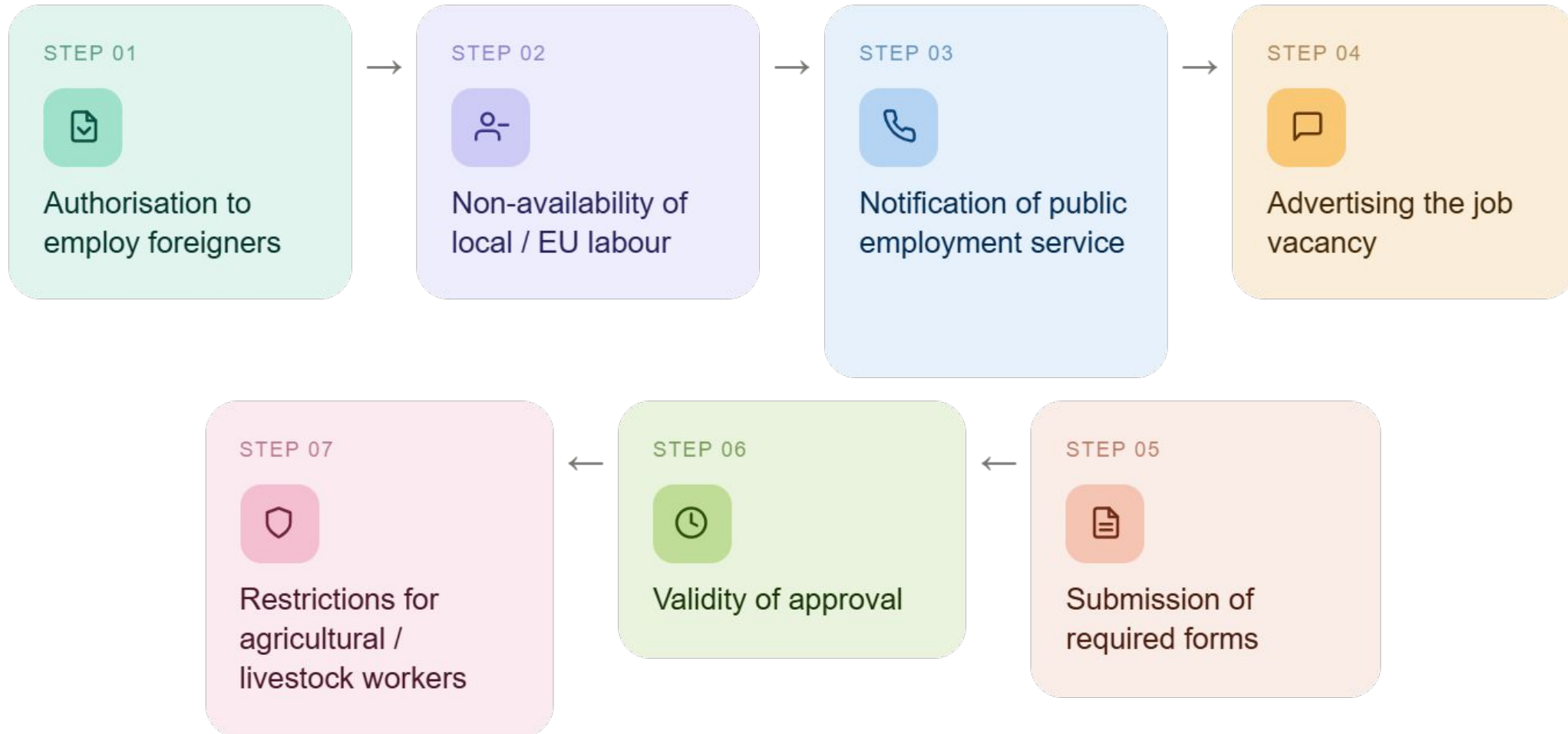


Asylum Seekers Employment Opportunities

Asylum seekers have access to the labour market nine (9) months following the date of submission of their application for international protection.



The Recruitment of Asylum Seekers



Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection & Refugees

Employment rights granted upon receiving official status in Cyprus



RIGHT
01

Immediate access to employment upon the date the status is granted — no waiting period



RIGHT 02

Same employment rights as Cypriot citizens — full labour market equality



RIGHT 03

No limitations concerning the sectors — free to work across all industries




RIGHT 04

No requirement for approval from the Department of Labour — streamlined access

Labour shortages by sector

Critical gaps across six key
industries in Cyprus


01



Healthcare &
social care

- Critical shortage


02



Construction &
related trades

- High demand


03



Tourism,
hospitality &
food services

- Seasonal &
structural gap


04



Information &
communication
technology

- Skills gap
accelerating


05



Transport,
logistics &
delivery

- Persistent
workforce gap

06



Trade & retail

- Growing demand

Procedural Gaps at State Level

Systemic barriers limiting effective migration governance and integration policy

GAP 01 — Coordination & Inter-ministerial Approach

- Multiple ministries handle migrant issues with minimal collaboration
- No unified cross-departmental framework or shared accountability

GAP 02 — Bureaucratic Administrative Model

- Slow, rigid, process-driven system with limited flexibility
- Low adaptability to evolving migration realities

GAP 03 — Weak Feedback Mechanisms

- Ineffective communication loops hinder responsive policymaking
- No systems for early adaptation to user needs or technology

GAP 04 — Insufficient Migratory Data & Planning

- No comprehensive data on migration patterns or immigrant profiles
- Missing employment, residence & education statistics
- No updated national integration plan in place

Survey Findings – TCN & Company Perspectives

TCN obstacles: language barriers, complex processes, lack of vacancies

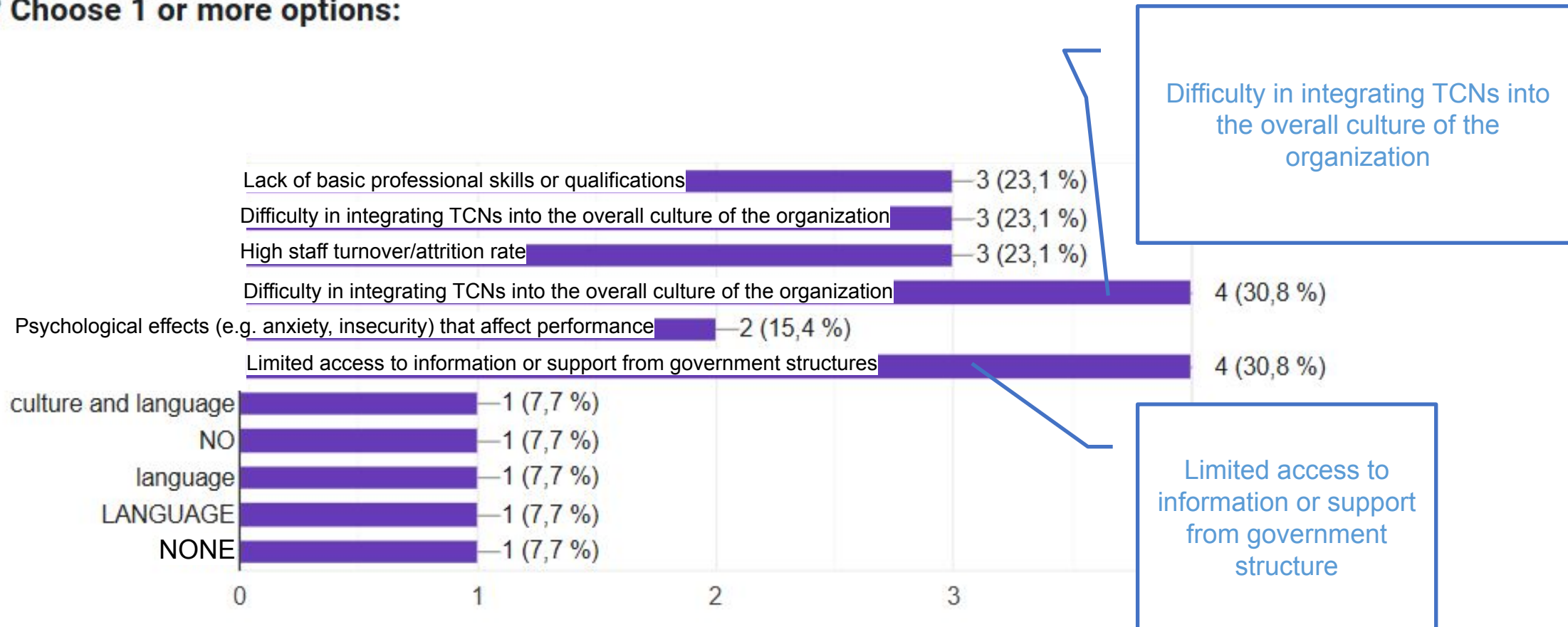
Company concerns: bureaucracy, legal confusion, cultural differences and language barrier

Common need: mentorship, training, legal clarity, strategies

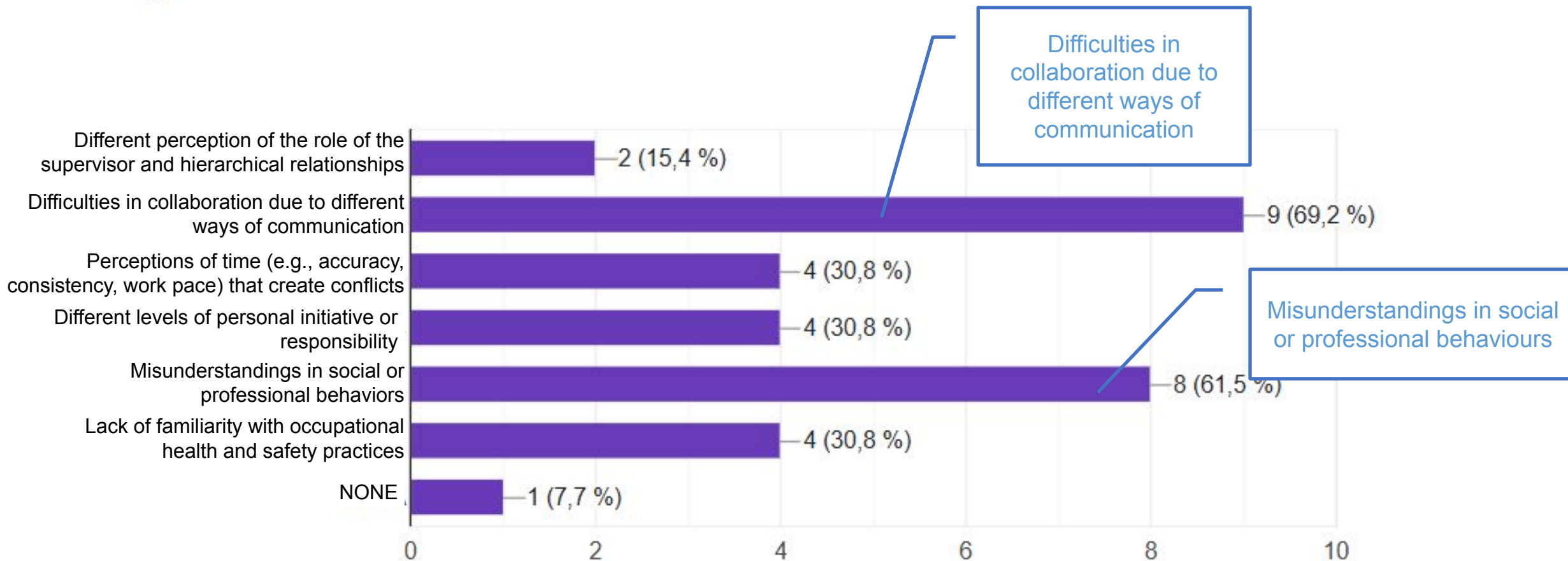
Employers request simpler hiring support and faster government response

Recommendations: strengthen communication and system navigation

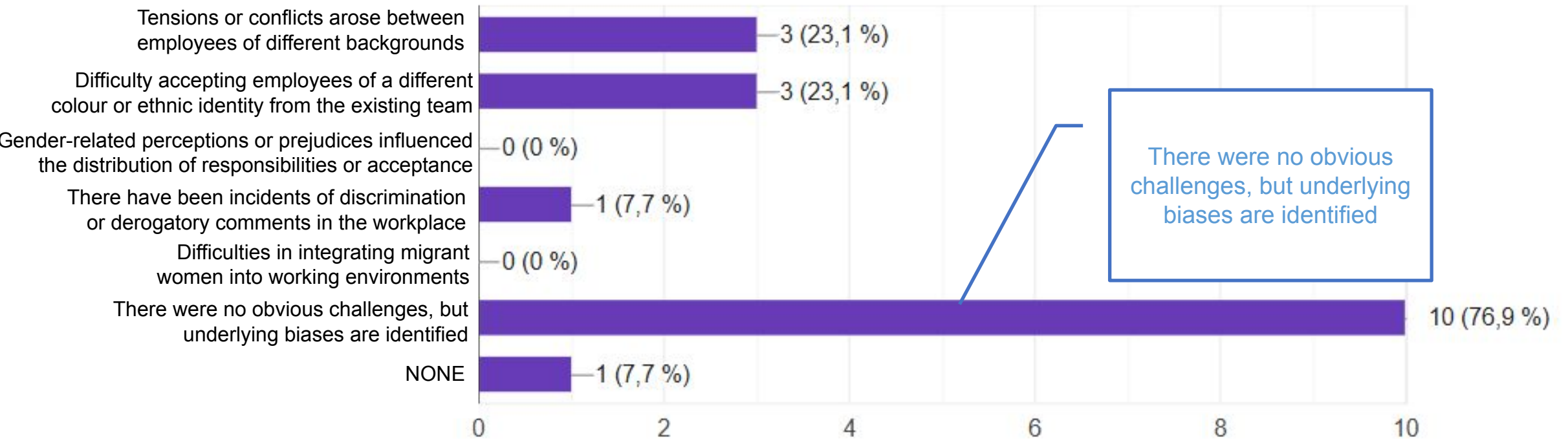
8. Are there any other difficulties that you have identified in working with TCNs that you consider important to include in training? Choose 1 or more options:



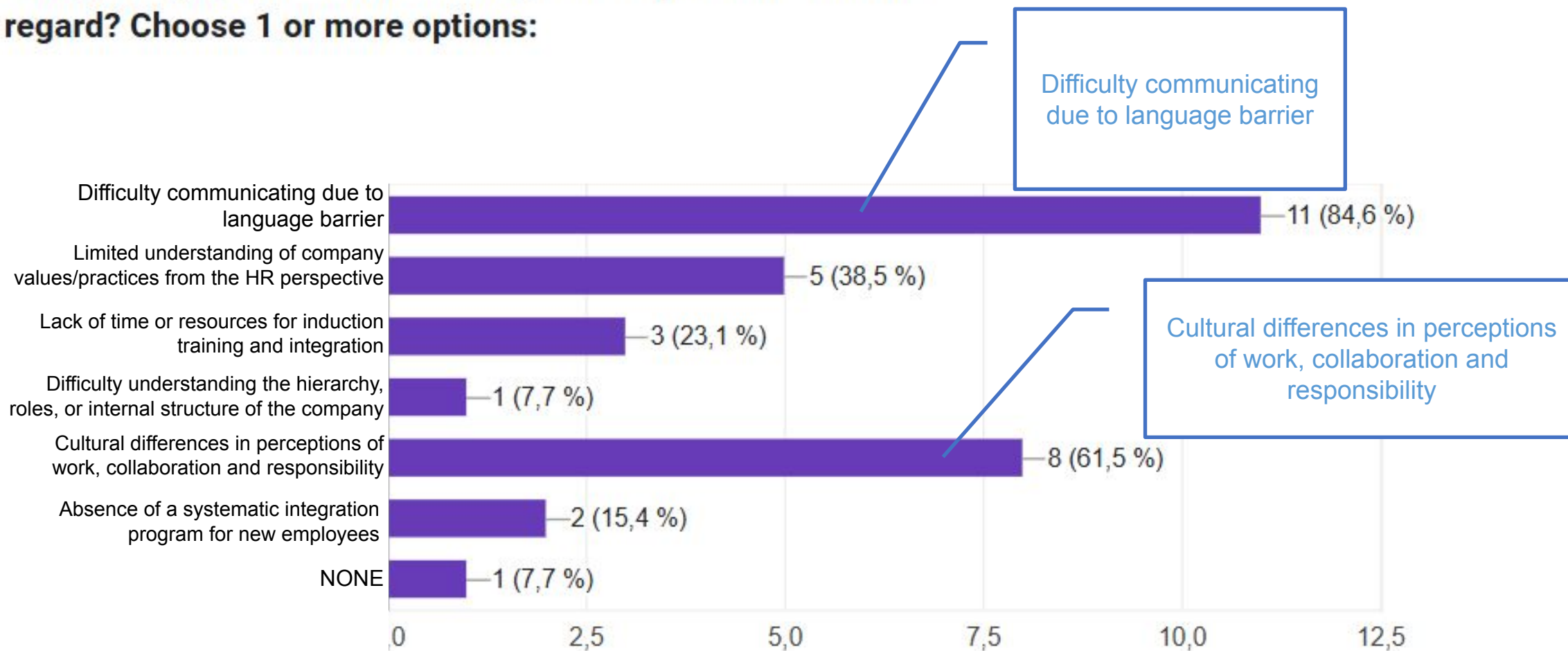
4. Have you noticed any cultural differences that create challenges in your daily work? If so, can you give some examples? Choose 1 or more options:



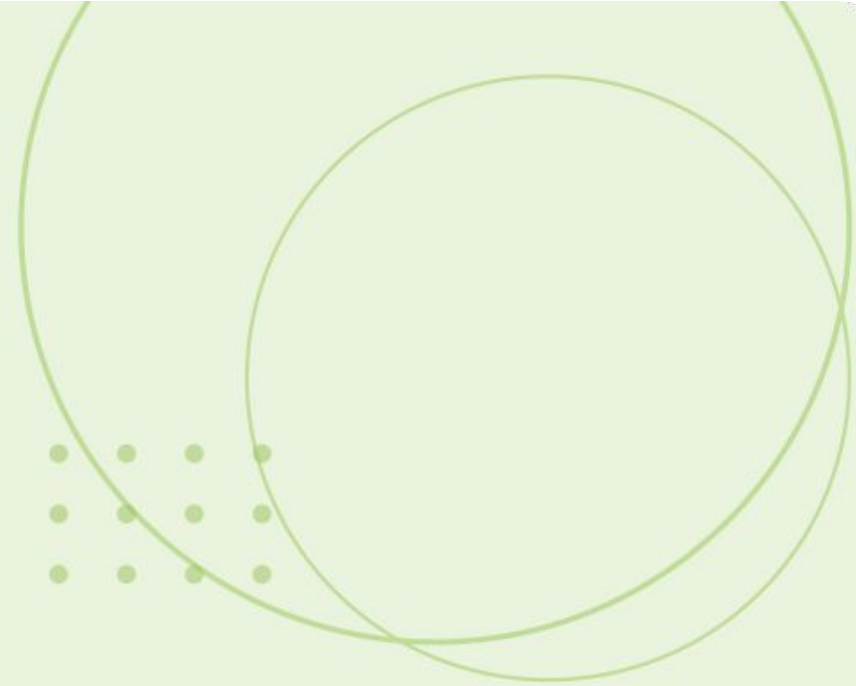
5. Have there been instances where there have been challenges due to racial differences (e.g. gender, colour, origin) in your work group? Choose 1 or more options:



3. How easy is it to transfer your company culture and values to foreign employees? What challenges have you faced in this regard? Choose 1 or more options:



Engaging & Integrating Third-Country Nationals



Graduate Pathway for TCN Integration

A structured four-phase journey from participant selection through to labor market placement

PHASES 01 & 02 — COMPLETED



PHASE 01

Selection

Finalised May 2025

Completed

Participant identification, screening and final cohort selection concluded ahead of schedule.

Beneficiaries confirmed and ready for onboarding.



PHASE 02

Activation

Through June 2025

Completed

Onboarding workshops delivered immediately following selection. Beneficiaries briefed on programme structure, expectations and training pathways.

Graduate Pathway for TCN Integration



PHASE 03

Upskilling & Reskilling

Ongoing

In training

Greek Language A1–A2 · 60 participants

CV & Soft Skills / Job Readiness · 40 participants

Technical Professions · 20 participants

Hospitality · 20 participants

Wellness · 20 participants



PHASE 04

Recruitment

Launching now

Launching now

Job and internship placements being secured in parallel with ongoing training. Targeting labour shortages in the tourism and services sectors.

Target: 50 confirmed placements

Focus: Tourism & labour shortage sectors

60

Greek language
enrolments

40

Job readiness
participants

60

Sector skills seats (3 ×
20)

50

Placement target

Key Causes of Training Dropout

TOP DROPOUT CAUSE

40%+

Unmet expectations or difficulty

Mismatch between expected and actual course content, or material that proves too challenging.

PERSONAL PRESSURES — ~18–19%

Family, health & caregiving issues

Force withdrawal from training

ECONOMIC PULL — IMMEDIATE

Job market demand

Overrides training commitment

01 — Family & Personal Issues

Caregiving responsibilities and health challenges that make regular attendance impossible

02 — Low or No Financial Support

Inadequate wages or stipends during training worsen poverty risk and force early exit

Structural & Logistical Barriers Facing Participants

PROGRAMME & STRUCTURAL

03



Poor programme–job
fit

Skills taught feel
irrelevant to career goals

04



Language barriers

Insufficient proficiency to
follow course content

05



Academic struggles

Overload and poor
performance lead to
withdrawal

MIGRATION & LOGISTICS

06



Migration challenges

Legal status and
relocation instability
disrupt attendance

07



Logistics barriers

Childcare and transport
gaps prevent consistent
participation

08



Job market pull

Immediate income needs
override training
commitment

Sector Capacity & Cross-Sector Collaboration



Capacity Building & Strategic Partnerships

31

Capacity Building on MEIC Methodology

Practitioners trained on the MEIC methodology to strengthen evidence-based approaches to migrant employment and integration.

15

Diversity Management Workshop

Companies participated in targeted workshops on inclusive workplace practices, cultural awareness and diversity management strategies.

33

Upskilling for Social & Labour Service Operators

Frontline service operators upskilled to better support TCN beneficiaries navigating social and labour market systems.

MoUs Signed & Territorial Cluster Group Sessions

8 Memoranda of Understanding formalised with key partners. 4 Territorial Cluster Group sessions held, covering: Labour Market Dynamics · Policy & Governance · Best Practices & Innovations · Future Directions

8

MoUs

4

Sessions

Territorial Cluster Working Group

Stakeholders Engaged

- 01 Hospitality sector
- 02 Tourist industry
- 03 Courier & cleaning services
- 04 VET institutions
- 05 Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- 06 Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation
- 07 Recruitment agencies

Group Sessions

Multi-stakeholder workshops for collective discussion and alignment

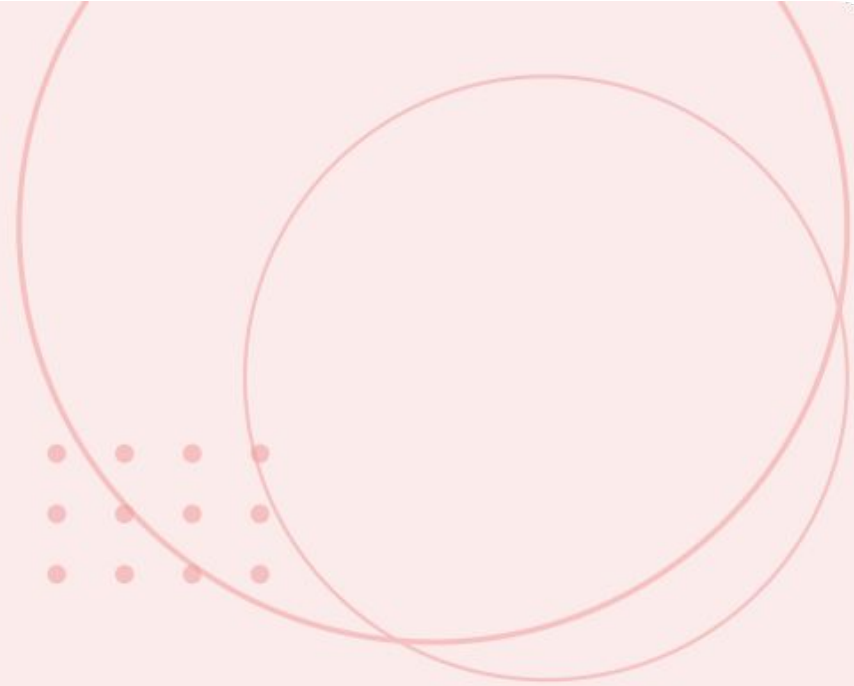
Bilateral Meetings

One-to-one sessions for in-depth scouting and targeted needs assessment

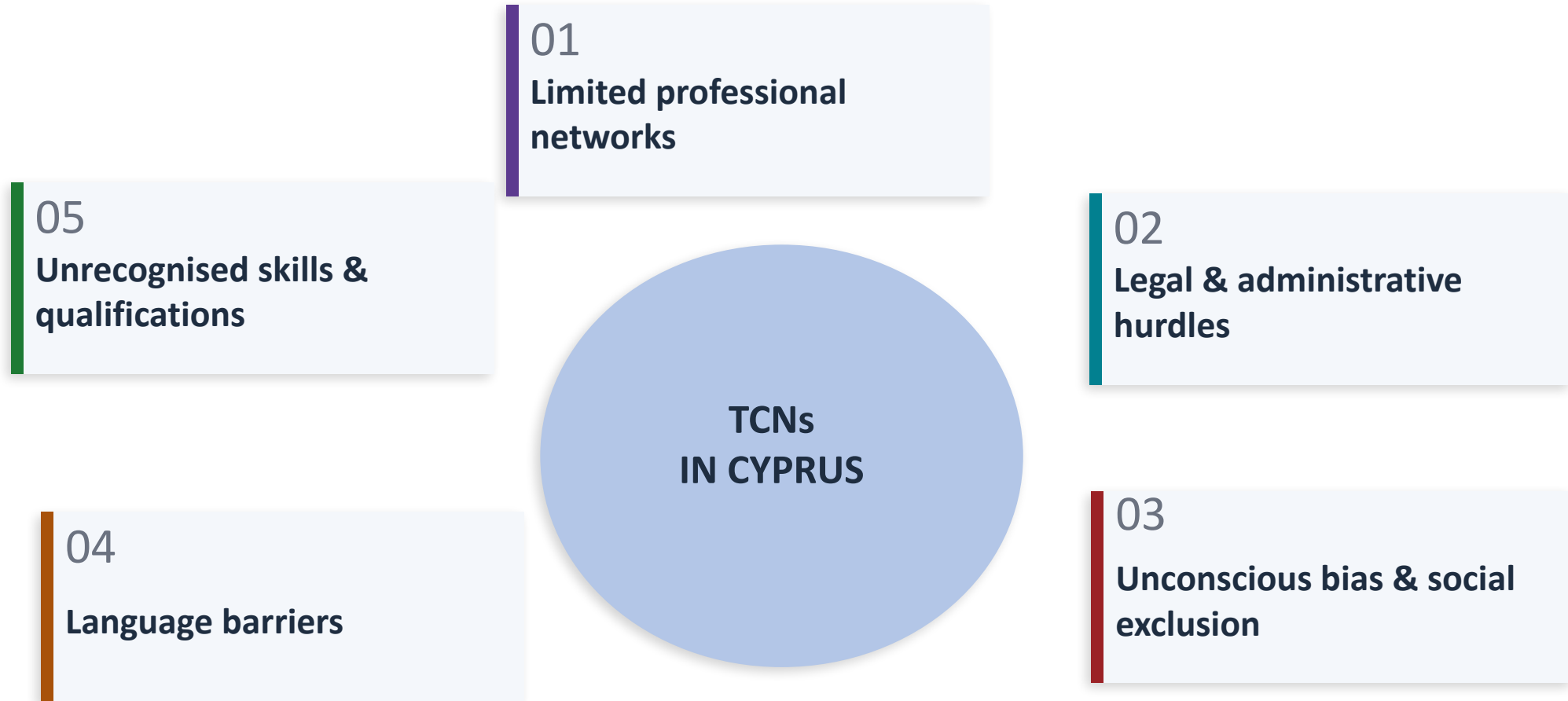
Online Discussions

Remote consultations for flexible, continuous stakeholder engagement

Obstacles Identified



Difficulties Faced by TCNs in Cyprus



Why the 9-Month Work Ban Lasts Much Longer in Practice

CAUSE 01 — LEGAL

Asylum Processing Delays

Legal target is 6 months — in practice 15 to 21 months, with appeals extending the wait even further.

15–21

months average processing time

CAUSE 02 — ADMINISTRATIVE

Administrative Barriers

System errors block rejected applicants for weeks or months. Approvals are fragmented across Migration, Labour and Social Insurance departments.

3 bodies

in fragmented approval process

CAUSE 03 — 2025 RULE

Physical Residence Card Requirement

New 2025 rule mandates physical residence cards for social insurance registration — creating onboarding chaos and further delays for new arrivals.

2025

new rule adding further barriers

Compounding delays push total exclusion from the labour market well beyond the legal threshold

Consequences of the Work Ban — Who Bears the Cost

FOR TCNS

Income Gaps & Social Exclusion

- Income gaps drive instability, debt and family separation
- Pushed into informal economy — exploitation in domestic & agriculture
- No time or capacity for upskilling or language learning
- Unemployment triggers mental strain and social isolation

FOR EMPLOYERS

Persistent Workforce Gaps

- Off-season shortages persist with no reliable talent pipeline
- Reluctant to invest in training due to permit uncertainty

SYSTEMIC LINK

Low-Skill Trap Perpetuated

- Post-9mo. asylum seekers funneled into low-skill roles
- Shortages in care & IT remain unaddressed despite available workforce

Seasonal contracts & employment gaps

How permit structures, legal limits and renewal delays create a cycle of instability



SEASONAL DOMINANCE

Tourism-led economy drives TCN hiring cycles

- Tourism accounts for 15% of GDP and 25% of jobs
- Agriculture & hospitality also peak-driven — permits tied to May–Oct season
- Off-peak months leave TCNs without income or legal status

15%

of GDP from tourism

25%

of all jobs

CORE DRIVER



CONTRACT LIMITS

Legal cap at 6–9 months, no auto-renewal

- Aliens & Immigration Law + EU Directive 2014/36/EU set the ceiling
- Permits are employer and sector-specific
- No automatic renewal — each cycle requires fresh applications

6–9

months max contract

LEGAL CONSTRAINT



RENEWAL PROCESS

Annual labour test adds 1–3 months of delay

- Employers must prove no Cypriot or EU workers are available
- Processed through both Migration and Labour Departments
- 1–3 month waits create annual employment gaps for TCNs

1–3

months renewal wait

PROCESS GAP

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

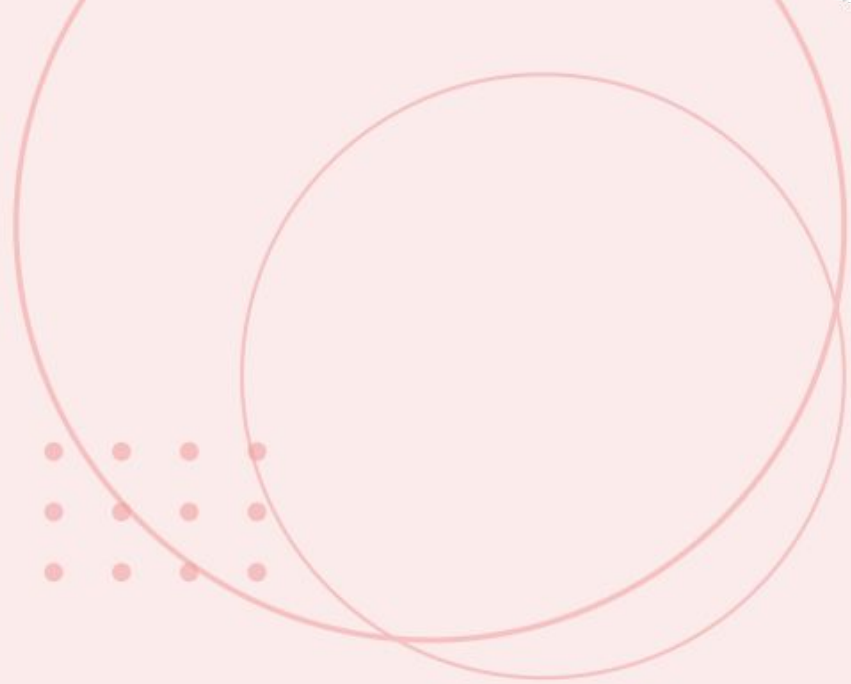
PERMIT SEASON



Active permits Gap / off-season

Peak season — May to October

Current Needs & Recommendations



Needs for Change

NEED 01

Enhancing Cultural Competence

Expand practitioners' and organisations' knowledge, resources and services to better address the needs of diverse racial and ethnic communities.

AWARENESS & CAPACITY

NEED 02

Implementing Conflict Resolution Strategies

Integrate effective conflict resolution techniques to manage cultural and interpersonal challenges within professional and institutional settings.

MEDIATION & DIALOGUE

NEED 03

Continuous Professional Training

Provide ongoing training for professionals working with migrants to improve service quality and support smoother, more sustainable integration outcomes.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Increasing Educational Opportunities

PILLAR 01

Local Authorities

Institutional actions to create accessible, structured and culturally sensitive support frameworks for TCN learners.

- Establish daily support and advisory mechanisms for TCN families
- Provide afternoon activities and homework support clubs
- Offer multilevel Greek and English language courses
- Introduce Cypriot culture and civilisation courses

INSTITUTIONAL ACTION

PILLAR 02

Beneficiaries

Community-led actions that leverage migrant knowledge and networks to strengthen inclusion and preserve cultural identity.

- Act as mediators between TCN families and schools
- Engage long-term migrant residents as mentors for new arrivals
- Organise native language lessons to preserve cultural identity

COMMUNITY ACTION

Increasing Educational & VET Opportunities

LEVEL 01 — MINISTERIAL

Ministerial Level

Systemic policy redesign for national integration

- Redesign Greek language education for migrants year-round
- Support adult education initiatives
- Mandatory language courses upon arrival
- Recognition of prior experiential learning
- VET policy scheme for migrants based on market needs and cultural sensitivity

LEVEL 02 — CIVIL SOCIETY

Voluntary Organisations

Community-driven support filling institutional gaps

- Establish advisory and assistance mechanisms
- Advocate for Greek language education for all migrants
- Support school enrolment for migrant children upon arrival
- Set up homework clubs in mixed groups with local children

LEVEL 03 — DEPARTMENTAL

Public Services

Operational tools, monitoring and frontline delivery

- Quality assurance & monitoring for migrant learning
- Develop a multilingual virtual information platform
- Train teachers in Greek as a second language
- Utilise refugee teachers and teaching assistants
- Monitor migrant registration and dropout rates
- Set up summer school induction courses



CODECA
Center for Social Cohesion, Development and Care



AMIL
Alliance multi-stakeholder for Migrants
Integration and Labour

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