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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

SEPTEMBER 1-4, 2026 • SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME, ITALY

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democratica**
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Fourth International Conference of the journal *Scuola Democratica*

Learning for Democracy / Democracy for Learning

SAPIENZA UNIVERSITY OF ROME, ITALY

SEPTEMBER 1-4, 2026

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

IN MEMORIAM

This conference is dedicated to the memory of children killed in contemporary wars.

It recalls the more than 20,000 children who have died in the Gaza Strip since 7 October 2023 and the 38 children killed in Israel during the terrorist attacks of that same day.

It also remembers children whose lives have been taken or shattered by violence in Iran, Lebanon, Ukraine, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, the Sahel, Somalia, and Myanmar, as well as those who died while attempting to cross the Mediterranean in search of safety from war, drought, and poverty.

According to UNICEF, approximately 473 million children today — one in six worldwide — live in areas affected by armed conflict. For them, there was no democracy, and there will be no education.

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FACTORS OF ACCESS TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO VULNERABLE AND INVOLUNTARY MIGRANTS: MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVE

Vidmantas Tūtlys (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania) · **Sigitas Daukilas** (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania) · **Francesco Vittori** (University of Verona, Italy) · **Angelica Progetti** (CNOS-FAP, Italy) · **Sergii Melnyk** (State Scientific Institution "Institute of Educational Analytics", Kyiv, Ukraine)

Vulnerable migrants

involuntary migrants

access to vocational education and training

Vocational education and training (VET) is traditionally considered as the educational pathway which empowers socially vulnerable people, especially youth by equipping them with skills, competences and qualifications, which open them access to employment, economic and social participation (Tūtlys et al, 2025). This is also valid for the integration of the involuntary migrants. The empowering effects of VET for the involuntary migrants include development of employability, fostering self-sufficiency, provision of the human and social capital needed for the sustainable employment in the destination countries (Cedefop, 2017). VET often serves as a gateway helping the involuntary migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to integrate in the labour market as skilled workers, self-employed persons, and other contributors to the economy and public welfare (Betts, 2021; Agier&Le Courant, 2022; Héran, 2023). The empowering impact of the VET for the involuntary migrants depends on the access to VET defined by the migration and asylum policy and legal regulation, as well as on the institutional models of VET provision in the destination countries (Bell Sebastián et al., 2025). For example, the collective skill formation systems of the German speaking countries with their highly-esteemed dual VET pathways face tensions and controversies between the political strategies and intentions to open access to the high-quality VET for involuntary migrants to foster their employment and integration, from the one side, and the resistance of the VET providers and stakeholders to the acceptance of migrants, because of their fear about the implications for public image and esteem of this educational pathway (Aerne & Bonoli, 2023a; 2023b). Accessibility of the VET to the involuntary migrants in the Southern European countries (Italy, Spain) is strongly enhanced by the rich ecosystems of VET provision, with a very important role played by the non-governmental VET providers working with socially vulnerable groups of learners. The political-institutional factors of accessibility are supplemented with the factors of the VET processes directly experienced by the learners: VET curriculum design, articulating of school-based and work-based learning opportunities, as well as assessment and recognition of the learning outcomes. This paper seeks to explore these factors by referring to the voices of vulnerable and involuntary migrants in Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Germany. Research targets the following questions: 1) What features of the VET curriculum design (competence-based design, modularity, propaedeutic approach to curriculum design, integration /separation of vocational and transversal skills in the VET curricula) foster accessibility of the VET for vulnerable and involuntary migrants? 2) What kind of organisational arrangements of school-based and work-based learning make the VET accessible for these migrants? 3) What defines accessibility of assessment of learning outcomes and competences for vulnerable and involuntary migrants? The paper provides the findings of the quantitative and qualitative surveys of the vulnerable and involuntary migrants in Italy and Lithuania, as well as the survey of the war refugees from Ukraine conducted in Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Germany conducted in 2025 in the framework of the Horizon Europe research project Skill Partnerships For Sustainable And Just Migration Patterns (Skills4Justice, <https://www.skills4justice.eu>).

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