

French universities faced with the challenge of integrating Middle-East refugees

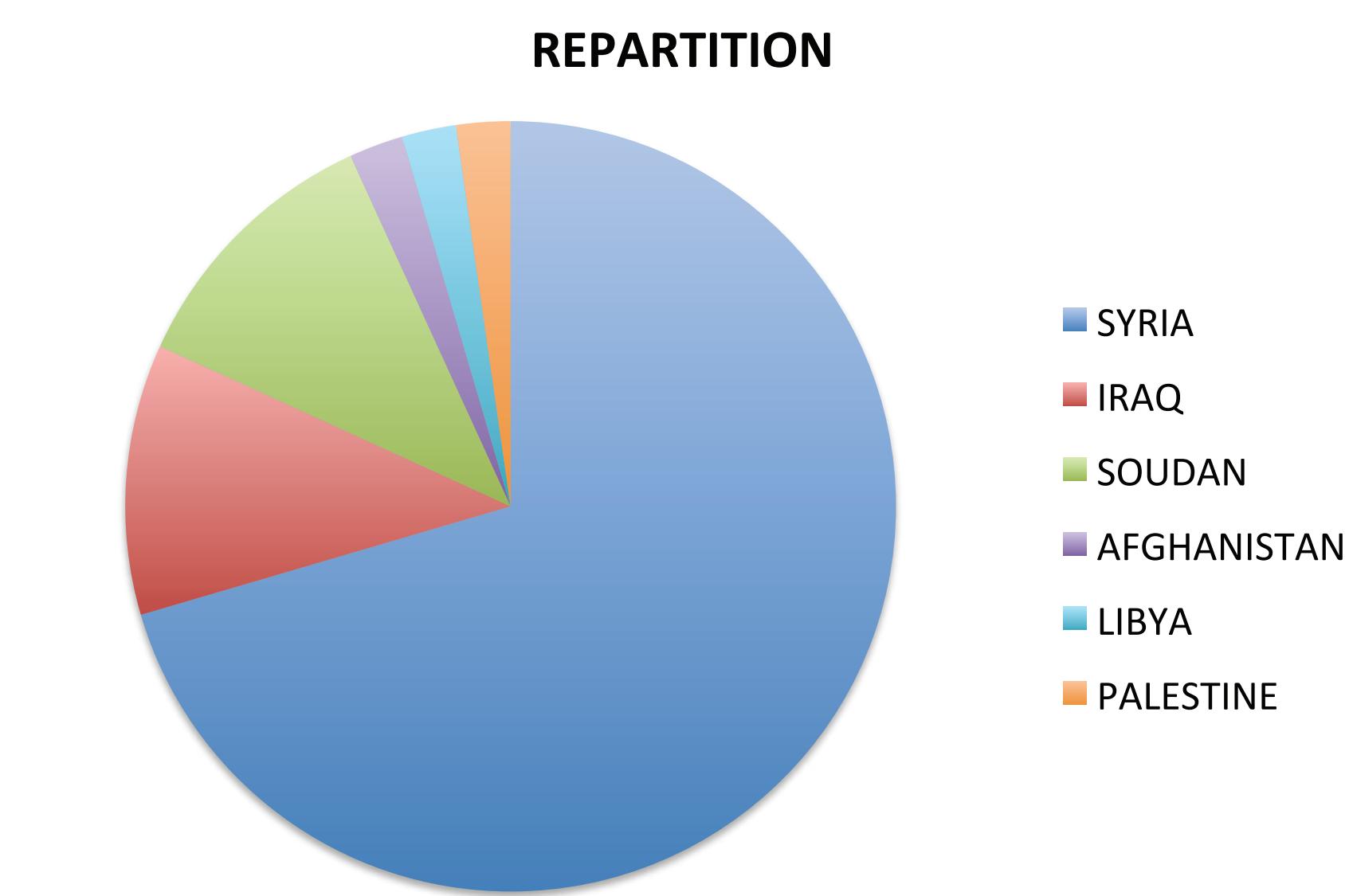
An assessment of the experience of the Université de Bourgogne (DIJON. France)

In view of the emergency of receiving migrants and of the humanitarian crisis dramatically affecting civilian populations in the Middle-East, the University of Burgundy has decided to address the problem and to receive and train refugees. A charge-free program was launched in September 2016 to integrate 44 people (Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Afghanistan). It aims at preparing them to re-start university studies or seek academic degrees. The main target is to match the specific needs of a range of learners with a training scheme which would take into account the different aspects of the issue, with stakes wider than language learning or strictly academic studies. This challenge which has been taken up by volunteer university personnel and volunteer participants exterior to the institution requires both the mission and the teaching practices of the university to be re-defined.

Needs analysis

The target population : 44 people have joined the program

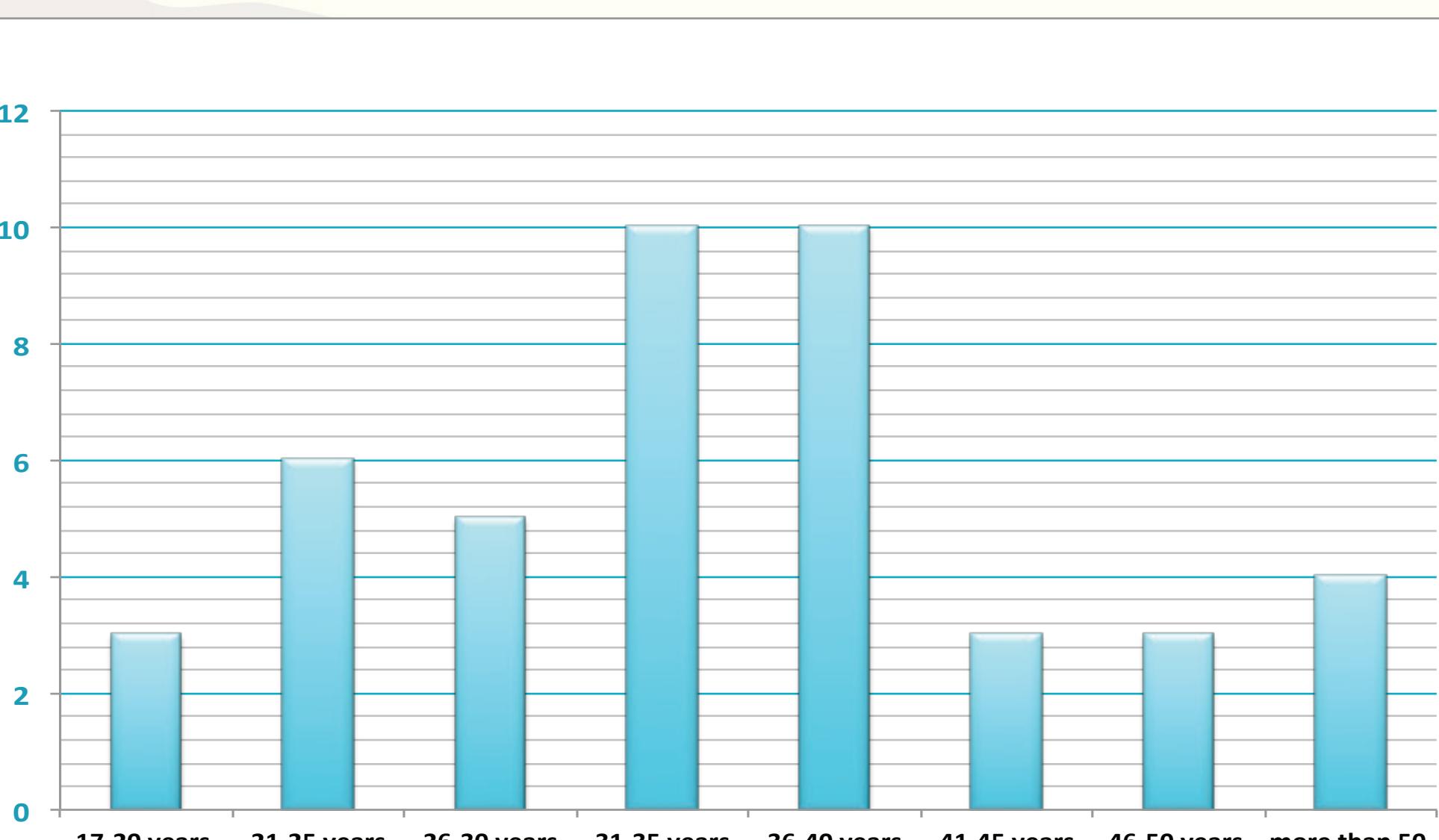
1 - Geographical origin :



Country	Number of People
Syria	35
Iraq	5
Sudan	3
Afghanistan	2
Libya	1
Palestine	1

2 - Distribution by gender : male: 26 /female: 18

3 - Distribution by age :



Age Group	Number of People
17-20 years	2
21-25 years	6
26-30 years	5
31-35 years	10
36-40 years	10
41-45 years	3
46-50 years	3
more than 50	4

Procedures used for conducting needs analysis

Interviews
Interviews conducted face-to-face (by Arabic speaker)
For an in-depth exploration of issues

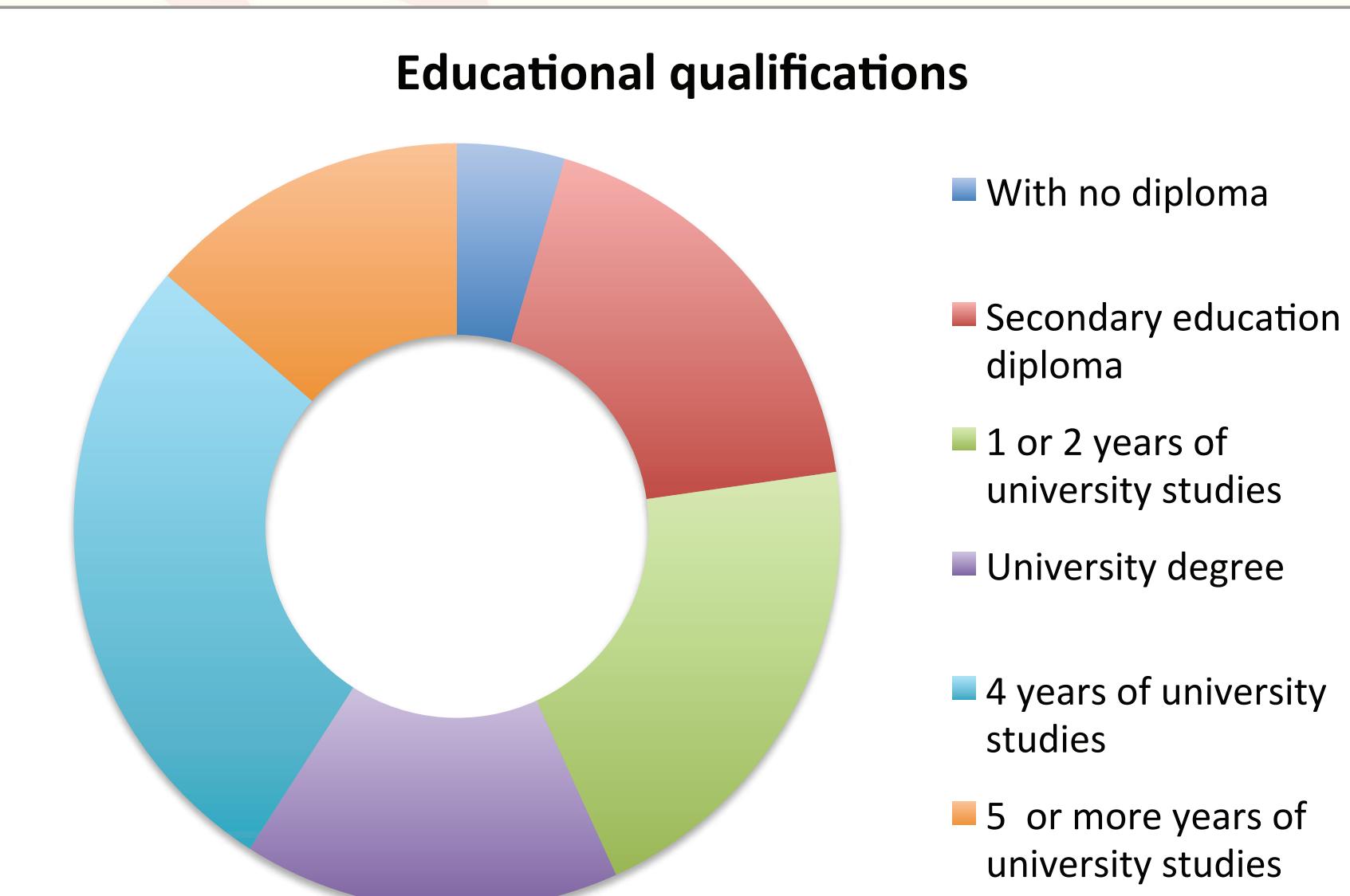
The class profiles documented :

History since leaving their home country
Many have left their home country many years before their arrival in France and have temporarily resided in host countries (Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, and Greece) notably in refugee camps.

Situation in France (status, lodging, family situation, etc.)
Separated young adults : 12 / Families : 32

Occupational activities / school and university curriculum in their countries of origin

Educational qualifications :



Qualification	Number of People
With no diploma	10
Secondary education diploma	10
1 or 2 years of university studies	10
University degree	10
4 years of university studies	10
5 or more years of university studies	10

Most of the young adults with secondary education diploma or engaged in university studies had to interrupt their studies because of a war situation.

High level educated population
Emergency to offer this public a teaching course taking into account the language, social and cultural needs which would enable them to integrate into the French society.

Diagnostic testing
Students have been tested for their abilities in different domains of language use.

Situation analysis

Project factors

Constitution of the project group
Individual initiative of a few members of the university community without any specific institutional support or involvement.

Project management team of four

- Head of international office
- 2 teachers (linguistics / didactics)
- 1 part-time lecturer in Arabic

Strength : Varied qualifications

Weakness :
Handling this additional amount of work on top of their institutional missions.
No effective experience in designing and planning curricula for FSL.

Resources available and budget

Strength :
Infrastructure of the Language Center of the UB : 2 classrooms / reception area equipped with 32 media computers / photocopier

Weakness :

- budget
- 2500 Euros to acquire teaching material.
- no budget to hire teachers

Learners factors

Strength :

- High motivation of the learners to learn French
- Most learners with high academic background
- Strong expectations for the program
- Amount of time the learners can be expected to put into the program

Weakness :

- Heterogeneous group regarding academic background / knowledge of English or not (mastery of graphics) / age / current level in French on entering the program

Needs analysis + situation analysis

- Emergency and high expectations in an intensive program from the learners
- Strong involvement of the managing and satisfactory material resources available
- Total lack of budget to hire teachers

The managing team decided the implementation of an intensive course of 180 hours per semester over 2 semesters totally taken on by volunteers

Course planning and syllabus design

Entry and exit level

A specially designed test was run to determine the level at which the program should start and the level learners may be expected to reach at the end of the course.

Level A1 Target level after 180 h level A2/B1

Level A2 Target level after 180 h level B1/B2

Choosing course content

Necessities

- French for daily life
- French for academic purposes which must prepare learners for university study
- French for professional purposes

Strength
The test has allowed to distribute the learners into two groups.

Weakness

- Due to lack of time and human resources, only proficiency levels for listening, reading, and to some extent writing, were tested. The global level was overestimated due to a lack of evaluation of speaking and writing skills. .
- Due to a lack of experience and time, no serious reflexion has been conducted on the syllabus.

Choice of instructional materials

The lack of teachers' experience and training made it impossible to create original teaching material.

It has been decided to work with commercial textbooks together with ancillaries: workbooks, CDs, and teachers' guides.

Strength : Text books provide structure and a systematically planned and developed syllabus for the program.

Weakness : Some of the content in the materials are unsuitable for the target population. They do not quite reflect the interests and needs of the students and hence should require adaptation.

Teaching organization

Work organization

- 3 hours a day / 5 days a week.
- 2 groups of 20 students
- 10 teachers by group working in pairs (one pair a day)

Work programming

- Weekly sequencing of teaching activities and objectives prepared by a more experienced teacher for each group.
- Daily activity report made by each tam on an online collaborative document.

Strength :

- Substantial hourly volume of teaching.

Weakness :

- Difficulty to coordinate consistent work progress.
- Difficulty to carry out consistent and systematical monitoring and evaluation.

Planning

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
April-June 2016	Interviews Free access to digital teaching material Individual tutoring by students from UB (conversation)			
June 2016				
July 2016	Diagnostic test			
September 2016				
Sept.-Dec. 2016	Planning/Recruiting of volunteers Teaching training for volunteers (9h)	Daily courses 9h-12h Individual or group tutoring		
December 2016				
January-April 2017		Summative evaluation Daily courses 9h-12h Individual or group tutoring Short professional internship Elaboration and guidance on individual projects. Short professional internship		
May-June 2017				Work in progress...

Effective teaching

The institution: project management team and teachers

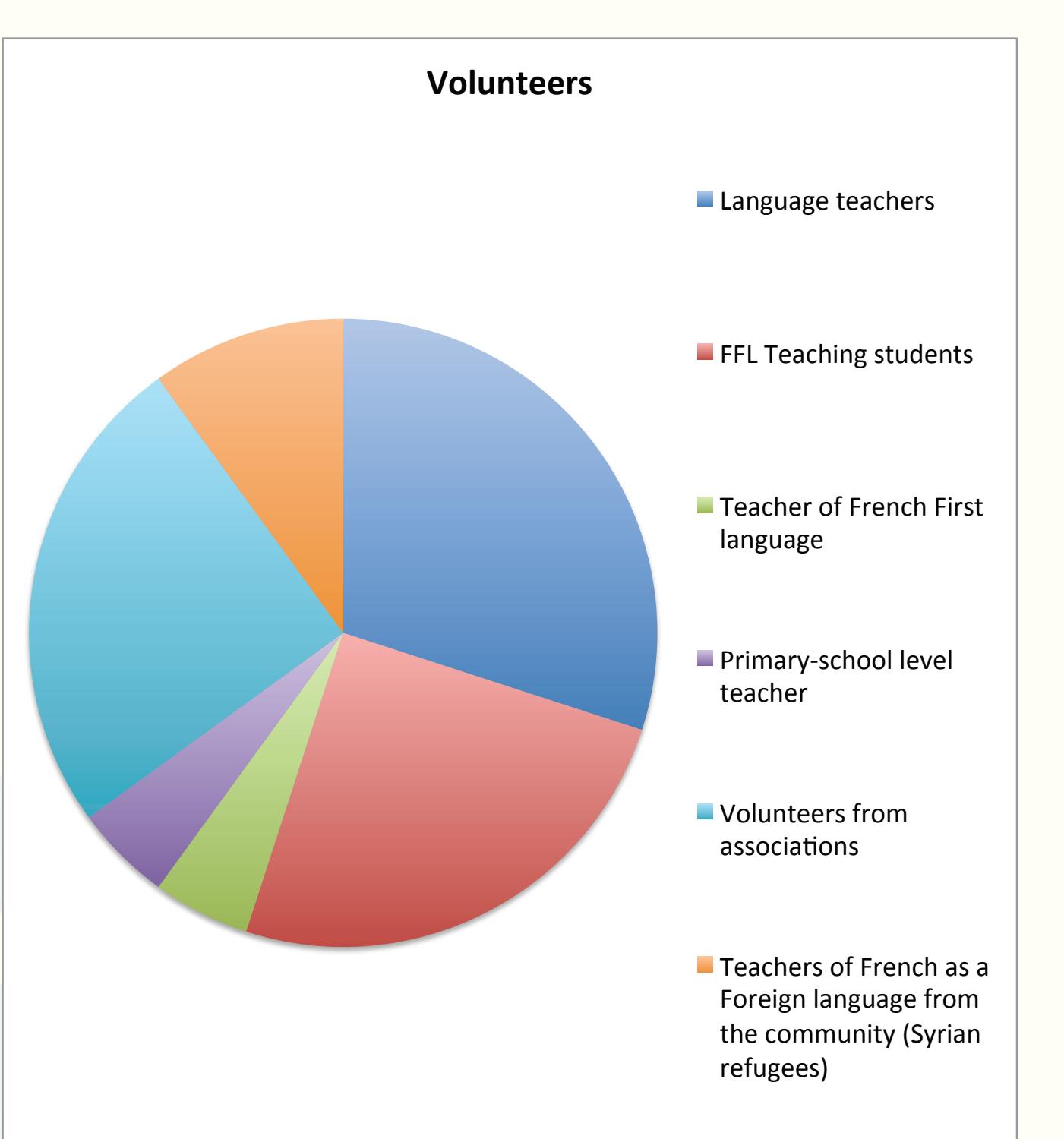
Strength :
High degree of staff involvement in developing goals and making decisions.
Motivated and cohesive teaching force with good team spirit.

Communication among teachers and between teachers and the project management team : meetings and briefings questionnaires for collecting feedback on all aspects of the program. Such a program entirely staffed by volunteering teachers attracts a high level of commitment

Weakness :
Two members of the management team decided to leave the project after one semester, due to the too heavy work it supposed.

The teachers

Volunteers' recruitment / background
20 volunteers were recruited



Category	Number of People
Language teachers	10
FFL Teaching students	5
Teacher of French First language	2
Primary-school level teacher	1
Volunteers from associations	2
Teachers of French as a Foreign language from the community (Syrian refugees)	2

Strength :

- 4 Arabic speakers : personal experience to understand their learners' difficulties.
- Participation of migrants : ethnic communities are involved.
- The teachers have various skills and expertise: in language teaching / in didactics as an academic subject / in working with migrants.

Weakness :

- Most of the teachers have little training and experience in FSL teaching.

Novice teachers

- are less able to select which information is salient when planning a lesson.
- lack knowledge on what to expect from pupils.
- tend to work from the textbook rather than in terms of pupil attainment levels.

Teachers from the community (Syria)

- Have a language teaching behavior that cannot be separated from pedagogic models inherited from the mother tongue culture in such attributes as institutional culture, attitudes to authority and knowledge.

Assessment and perspective

Due to the team's lack of experience, the language teaching was conducted in a less efficient manner.

- This was balanced by a strong level of involvement and very good relationships with the learners.
- It made this program a very precious exchange platform and consistently sustained the participants' motivation.
- So far, no learner has dropped out and all of them have passed their mid-course test.
- 2/3 of the learners have defined a project to pursue university studies in France or to integrate the working world in their field of qualification.
- All have achieved a higher degree of autonomy for their daily life and have managed to find prospect for their new life in a new country.

Today, the absence of institutional support jeopardizes future developments of the program despite this population's persistent needs.



