



**Good Practice Guide
on the Integration of Refugees
in the European Union**

EDUCATION

Acknowledgements

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The six Good Practice Guides which make up this publication are as follows:

Good Practice Guide on Community and Cultural Integration for Refugees

Good Practice Guide on Housing for Refugees

Good Practice Guide on Health for Refugees

Good Practice Guide on Education for Refugees

Good Practice Guide on Vocational Training for Refugees

Good Practice Guide on Employment for Refugees



World University Service

Good Practice Guide on Education for Refugees in the European Union

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49 In this Guide “children” means up to the age of 14 and “educational provision for children” means nursery, primary and secondary education.

50 In this Guide “young people” means those aged 14-25 and “educational provision for young people” means special provision for accessing mainstream education or special schools for this specific age group

Introduction: integration of refugees through education

Background to the Theme - defining educational provision for refugees in Europe

“Education is the key to integration” – this is a statement from the Refugee Education Panel which took place in Dalfsen, July 1999. This is not only true for refugees and asylum seekers. Education furthers integration in every society and helps human beings to become more constructive and active members of society. To facilitate education, the basic needs for housing, health and nutrition first need to be satisfied. As a result of adequate provision for education and training, opportunities for entering the labour market and finding long-term employment will be substantially increased.

Education should not be a one-way process of teaching skills and rules to an “unknowing” person, with adaptation as its ultimate aim; education should be a two-way process during which both sides – teacher and student, host society and refugee community – can learn from each other. The knowledge brought by refugees should be used to enhance the diversity of the host society.

During the first year of research (1998), RETAS set out to identify as many organisations as possible providing educational services to refugees and asylum seekers in each of the 15 European Member States. A questionnaire was used to gather initial information. This research was then taken further through a series of study visits, carried out to gain more in-depth and first-hand information. At the same time, an extensive consultation process was initiated with experts from education service providers. The consultation process focused on three issues: language courses for adult refugees, refugee children and interculturalism and access to higher education for refugees (including the recognition of foreign qualifications). These topics were addressed at an expert meeting in London (June 1998) and at a conference held in Antwerp (November 1998) at which workshops on education for refugees took place. As a result of the discussions, it was decided to select the issues of language courses for adults and the integration of children and young people into school. Additionally, we proposed to carry out a detailed investigation into the work done by UNESCO and the Council of Europe on the recognition of diplomas for the purpose of further education.

Methodology

The information and recommendations provided in this guide were gathered using meetings with experts and refugees from each EU Member State. Learning from work carried out last year, we decided to organise smaller groups because they proved more effective and were easier to manage. In this way, participants were able to discuss the issues from a regional perspective. The first expert meeting was held in Madrid (April 99) and was attended by experts from France, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Spain; the second was in Amsterdam (May 99) and was attended by experts from Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden; and the third was in Berlin (June 99) and was attended by Austria, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg and the UK. RETAS received organisational support for these meetings from CEAR in Madrid, Vluchtelingen Werk in Amsterdam and the Red Cross in Berlin.

The meetings were structured into small working groups of experts from the public, private or voluntary sector. The groups discussed the issues of integration of children and young people into school, language courses for adults and access to further education. The aims of these groups were to hear a variety of opinions as to what constitutes good practice at national level; to examine to what extent such good practice is transferable between states; and to attempt to identify a potential regional pattern for future research and policy work.

At the final consultation meeting, a refugee panel was organised in Dalfsen in the Netherlands (1–2 July 1999). The education panel consisted of 18 refugees representing the 15 Member States. The aim of the panel was to facilitate the exchange of refugees' experiences and opinions on education issues, and to gather comments on the work that had already been carried out at the regional expert meetings. This final phase of consultation work ensured that the genuine experiences, needs and voices of refugees were heard and reflected in the guide. The education panel of refugees commented on the draft recommendations, emphasised areas in which they felt further improvements were required, and added their views, experiences and wishes.

This wide consultation process enhanced our fieldwork and enabled us to reveal more about national systems, which strategies work best for refugees in different environments, and which elements of good practice might be transferable between Member States. It also stimulated networking, the sharing of experiences and the exchange of good practice across sectors at a European level. We hope that this guide will provide useful information both for practitioners and for decision-makers, and that it will inspire and generate the development of future projects and policy concerned with education for refugees.

Content and structure

This guide has three parts. The first part focuses on educational provision for refugee children and young people in schools. The second part focuses on language courses for adults and access to further education. Both parts describe the provisions in different EU countries and good practice elements that were identified by the experts. For each element of good practice, one or more projects focused on that element have been selected and described. Due to shortage of space, these descriptions are brief, and more than one example is only given in cases where projects are of particularly high quality. Contact details for all projects are listed at the end of the guide. Comments from refugees have been included in order to highlight the need for a particular provision and the advantages or disadvantages of the projects. Comments were selected from the minutes of the working group on education of the Refugee Panel in Dalfsen and from a series of interviews with refugees from the UK on their experience of integration (carried out by RETAS during spring 1999 for the refugee perception research). The third part describes the processes and procedures required for the recognition of foreign qualifications for further education and employment. This section focuses on work carried out by UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

Section 1: Educational provision for refugee children and young people in the European Union

In the majority of European countries, refugee children and children of asylum seekers have the right to attend mainstream education. The exceptions to this are Denmark and Portugal where children of asylum seekers are not permitted to attend mainstream schools. Young refugees and asylum seekers are a diverse group that has a wide range of educational and social needs, but the following list aims to encompass some common experiences:

- an interrupted education in the country of origin;
- an overwhelming trauma in the country of origin (for a small number this may affect the ability to learn and rebuild their lives in the country of settlement);
- a decrease in standard of living or other major changes in their lives;
- not being cared for by parents or usual guardians;
- living with people who are not fully informed of their educational and social rights;
- receiving reduced or no welfare benefits;

- living in temporary accommodation (and as a result attending several schools);
- speaking little or none of the national language of the country of settlement;
- suffering from bullying or isolation in school;
- finding it difficult to gain access to further or higher education due to their immigration status or a lack of access to benefits⁵¹.

There is no doubt that these experiences require specialised provision. At present, very different approaches are taken by national and local education authorities, schools and other education providers in each European country. The feature that is similar across Europe is the service-providers – chiefly mainstream schools run by national and local education authorities. Very little provision is currently operated by non-governmental organisations or the private sector.

For purposes of comparison, some countries require special focus due to a particular or unique system. In Germany, for example, education is the responsibility of the local government of each federal state. Educational provision and entitlement is therefore different in each state, making Germany difficult to compare at a European level. More generally, there is a wide divide between the standard of educational provision currently in place for refugees. In southern Europe (Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal) educational provision for refugees is very poor. Consequently, in these states, the main priority must be raising awareness of the issues rather than comparing strategy. However, despite these discrepancies, experts from all over Europe worked together to define the five most significant topics in this field and, for each of these topics, they were able to identify elements of transferable good practice.

A. Assessment of educational Level

The reception and orientation of refugee children and young people is one of the most important stages of the process of integration into educational activity. It is vital, not only for the pupil, but also for her/his family or guardians, and to ensure that the education provider obtains accurate initial information about the pupil. Both the pupil and the guardian need to understand the new education system and the input that will be required or expected of them. The education provider needs to obtain as much information as possible about the pupil – her/his origin, language(s), educational background, health, immigration status and future plans – in order to place her/him according to her/his needs and abilities.

“A careful assessment of educational level is essential to the school career of every pupil. Traumas, prior education, gaps and interruptions in education, and the involvement of parents/guardians should all be

51 Adapted from ‘Helping Refugee Children in Schools’ a British Refugee Council leaflet, 1997

considered. In Denmark, children are placed in classes by age and not by level thus creating problems for refugee children. Assessment should be made, as in Sweden and Finland, by achievements and qualification.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Cellule d'accueil des primo-arrivants du Val de Marne, France

This project is managed by the Ministry for Education, but is run at a regional level in the outskirts of Paris. It has developed an holistic, wide-ranging approach that is targeted at young refugees that are new to France. The aim is to support the appropriate placement and integration of students in different educational institutions. The approach is tailor-made according to individual needs and projects, and includes the following elements.

- The assessment of the administrative, legal and family situation.
- The assessment of the educational level of the young person through the use of tests that are written in her/his first language (in some topics benchmark standards have been established for these tests). For example, a test in maths from primary-first level to secondary-last level was translated into 257 languages in order to test the pupils' abilities in their first language. A similar test has been developed for literacy, in order to assess pupils' skills in their first language. This test is currently available in 15 languages. The results of these tests were used to place pupils more accurately according to their capability in a less discriminatory manner.
- The discussion and planning of the personal and professional aims and objectives of the young person, both on an individual level and in collaboration with her/his parents. This process aims to link past experiences with the new reality facing the young person and her/his family.
- Working with the young person in order to draft an individual 'action plan' and liaising with all those who will be involved in its future implementation.

This project gathers a network of organisations from the public and voluntary sectors that will be able to facilitate the implementation of tailor-made action plans appropriate for the age group. The young person is seen to be the main actor and follow-up support is always provided. Action plans are developed during a series of activities: a welcome meeting; an assessment; and the presentation of options for further education, vocational training, or employment. A drop-in advice service is also available for one day each week. Approximately 300 young people have used this network since September 1997. The project aims to expand into other regions of France during 1999.

☺ Developing specific tools with which to assess pupils' prior achievements in order to draw a comparison with the requirements of the host country's curriculum are thought to be a useful and transferable initiative.

- ☺ These projects improve pupils' opportunities for successful integration and prevent them from being neglected by a system in which they are too old for compulsory education, but too young to access adult provision.
- ☹ Achieving the required level of cooperation and local networking between the variety of agencies involved from the public, private and voluntary sectors (which is the key to the success of such a project) could be a limiting factor.

Standardised Systems of Assessment

Service de Scolarisation des Enfants Etrangers, Ministry of Education, Luxembourg

This project, run by the Ministry, aims to improve the information about previous schooling of refugee children given to teachers, or obtained by them. An information form has been designed which contains questions about the child's previous education, acquired languages, and the languages known by the child's guardians. This form known as the "school passport", is translated from French into Albanian and Serbo-Croat and distributed to families to fill in as soon as they arrive in the country. The children are supposed to bring it to school the first day they arrive in class. The questions cover the following areas:

1. General information (name, date of birth, country of origin, mother tongue, date of arrival in Luxembourg, address, name of guardians);
2. Details of previous education (diplomas obtained, knowledge of Latin alphabet);
3. Languages spoken or written;
4. Languages spoken or written by the guardians (in order to facilitate communication and understanding with the school);
5. For children who have already studied at a school in Luxembourg, general information on subjects accomplished and name of teacher

- ☺ A standardised system of recording basic information from the first assessment onwards would be helpful for the school and for the child's teachers. This measure was considered to be easily implementable in Austria, Germany, Ireland and the UK.
- ☹ The system requires the backing of the state's Ministry of Education because it must be operated and standardised at national level.

"A document like a school passport could lead to competition, and to more discrimination rather than integration. I agree that a record of achievement and qualifications is useful in order to guarantee continuity throughout a school career. In some countries (such as the UK), refugee children are not easily identi-

fied in schools. This can be a disadvantage because schools receive extra funding to provide facilities for refugee children. A school passport might be useful for ensuring that schools are aware of refugee children as soon as they enrol.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Benchmarking the Assessment Procedure

The Centre for Language and Communication Studies (CLCS) at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

A research project to establish benchmarks for assessing language competence in the primary school sector. Irish primary school education is divided by age; Early Primary is for ages 6-7 and Late Primary is for ages 8-9.

Objectives

To establish a framework for language training

To establish a framework for assessing language proficiency

To establish associated educational guidelines

This project has 5 stages of development:

1. Process of consultation (school visits; collection of samples of writing and speech; consultation with school principals, English language support and special needs teachers; examining benchmarking projects in other countries);
2. Development of benchmarks (writing descriptors);
3. Development and testing assessment procedures (designing tests to complement the benchmarks, piloting the tests in schools)
4. Revision of benchmarks (making modifications based on the results of the pilot tests, adding concrete examples to the descriptors);
5. Dissemination of benchmarks (to primary schools and reception centres, developing and implementing training programmes for those using the benchmarks)

The project is currently at the end of stage one. Stage two will begin at the end of August 1999.

- ☺ Establishing standards that are approved at national level is seen by almost all experts as very important. In the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands a benchmarking system already exists.
- ☹ In some countries benchmarking might be difficult to implement because national education systems are quite inflexible and those making decisions are inexperienced and lack political will.

Inter-agency communication, support and liaison⁵²

Multi agency refugee alliance (MARA), London Borough of Merton, UK

In this outer-London local authority, statutory and voluntary agencies work together to respond to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers through improved inter-agency and cross-sector communication and liaison. The education department has set up a targeted project to meet the needs of refugee pupils, but the authority has also established a multi-agency refugee alliance, *“to encourage co-operation and collaboration between agencies providing services for refugees and to promote the development of refugee support groups”*⁵³. The alliance has led to numerous initiatives including the identification of a named contact person in each department of the local authority. A lead officer for refugee issues has been appointed within the local authority at assistant director level and a specialist refugee worker post has been created. The health authority has also been involved with staff training and development.

- ☺ This initiative provides a useful model to show how support agencies, statutory and voluntary, can co-operate in providing for the complex needs of the newly-arrived asylum seeker.
- ☺ Through the introduction of liaison at senior level, the local authority has been able to develop policy and to provide training from different departments in order to improve the skills and awareness of front-line staff.
- ☺ Although most countries realise that inter-agency collaboration is necessary to cater for the needs of refugees, it is far from being common practice; there is an urgent need for such initiatives to be developed in all European countries.

Refugee Team, North Westminster Community School London, UK

This very large central London secondary school (ca. 2000 students) has employed two workers to support inter-agency work with regard to the refugee and asylum-seeking students who make up 20-25% of the school roll. The students are predominantly taught within the mainstream classes, receiving language support from the English as an Additional Language (EAL) Department which works in partnership with curriculum teachers.

The Refugee Welfare Liaison Worker undertakes casework, responding to referrals from school staff as well as self-referrals. An holistic approach is taken to identify need, assisting students and their families

⁵² See Community and Culture Guide, Section .2,C.

⁵³ Cable, C. 1997, 'Supporting Refugee Children: Working Across Departments', Multicultural Teaching, Vol. 16, No. 1

to gain access to appropriate support from voluntary and statutory sectors. The work is currently dominated by seeking access to educational grants and to appropriate housing and to Social Services. Referrals are also received from external organisations, which are then fed back into the school systems. The post supports the pastoral and special needs departments of the school and also feeds into the work of the Refugee-Student Adviser below.

The Refugee-Student Adviser liaises with external supporting organisations at management level and with funders working towards the improvement of provision for this client group. Evidence of need is drawn from the casework of the welfare worker. The development of the partnership has seen, for example, the provision of a targeted IT, English & Career course for the male guardians of the students, a pilot summer project for the students in the school and the formal accreditation for the work of the school's student interpreter group. As a part-time member of the EAL Department, the Refugee Student Adviser is also able to support the school in responding to the needs of these students, working through both curriculum and pastoral departments.

☺ This is a very good example of the initiative of a school to liaise with different support organisations in order to cater for the needs of their refugee students. Its work is based on knowledge about the different needs of the students and it can establish partnerships and collaboration in a very effective way.

“Teachers should recognise refugee children need more than just English support. Refugee children can be affected by gaps in education, poor language skills and lack of educational support services.” (Refugee from the UK, the Refugee Interviews)



Signposts to Good Practice⁵⁴

- Assessment of educational levels should consider all language competencies in order to get a full picture of the language and cognitive abilities
- Standardised systems of assessment should be developed and implemented nation-wide in order to create a consistent process; a properly co-ordinated approach is especially important for pupils who are frequently being re-housed and therefore changing schools.
- National education authorities should focus on the issue of benchmarking and, in order to ensure that standards are achieved, they should develop benchmarks for the assessment procedure.
- Experts from southern European countries felt that their Ministries of Education should take urgent action to establish a co-ordinated approach to assessment, and that this was necessary for govern-

54 See also Appendix 2: ECRE Position on Integration of Refugees, para 90

ments to keep their commitments to refugee children and young people in terms of providing them with the appropriate education to which they are entitled.

- In view of the variety of special needs that refugee children and young people may have, it is essential that interagency communication is established and supported (between health services, educational welfare services, youth services, language services, special educational needs support services and career services); this liaison should be initiated and maintained by the local authorities as well as the schools themselves.

B. Intercultural Approach to Education

An intercultural approach to education for refugee children can be understood as using an in-depth knowledge of their original culture in order to gain a more complete grasp of their needs and behaviour, and to arrive at an appropriate form of teaching and education. This knowledge must not convey a superficial picture of 'culture' (e.g. just learning about ethnic food, clothes or dancing), but must be a more sophisticated understanding which will then affect every aspect of the curriculum. This approach will raise the awareness among educationalists of issues such as the psychological effects of the refugee's 'flight' and any consequences for particular children. Important elements of this approach are listed below:

Tuition in the language of the host country in all mainstream classes, using mixed ability teaching

“Refugee pupils should be placed according to their level and not their age whenever possible. In most European countries, the latter is more common. To improve integration, children should be taught in mainstream classes, and only exceptionally should they be separated into different groups.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Haags Centrum Onderwijsbegeleiding, the Netherlands

The HCO is a training service for practising teachers in the region of Den Haag in the Netherlands. Here, refugee children are taught Dutch and literacy in reception classes in five regular elementary schools. The specialist classes take place in the mornings and the pupils then attend mainstream classes during the afternoons. The mainstream classes focus more heavily on more practical activities such as maths, sport, art and crafts. The Municipality finances the reception classes by funding the extra part-time teacher.

The teacher uses a fairly rigid curriculum that was developed in Rotterdam and is called the “Prisma Project”. This course covers oral language skills and runs for 40 weeks. It is tightly structured, prescribing

exactly what topics should be taught each day. There are a variety of textbooks and materials to accompany it. The course is divided into eight thematic modules (such as 'school', 'the body' or 'nature') which are designed to cover the necessary grammar and vocabulary. The selection of words taught in each module is determined both by the frequency they are used in Dutch and by their appeal to children. Each module can be covered at four different levels thus allowing the teacher to provide lessons to beginners and to more advanced pupils at the same time. Whilst the teacher is working with pupils at one level, pupils from different levels are set work to do by themselves. For this purpose, the HCO has developed a specific supplementary self-study programme that repeats work that the child has already covered. Since the introduction of these classes, results have shown that children taught in reception classes have performed noticeably better than those remaining in mainstream classes. Children also tend to feel more comfortable in reception classes because their needs and uncertainties are anticipated by the teacher.

- ☺ This project provides newly-arrived refugee children with a good start in learning the national language without separating them from their peer group. Experts were extremely interested in this approach and recognised that, due to the simple structure of the course, it would translate well into other languages.
- ☹ The main obstacle to implementation was seen to be the lack of resources currently available for the translation, adaptation and dissemination of the project.

“The use of mixed ability teaching in all areas of the curriculum might cause problems for complete beginners or illiterate children.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Provision of minority language⁵⁵ tuition

Pre-School Bilingual Teaching (Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg)

This is a Europe-wide Comenius project which is run by a bilingual nursery located in the “Integrationshaus” (house for migrants and refugees providing social and educational services) based in Vienna, Austria, in collaboration with a primary school in Vienna, the Institute of General and Applied Linguistics of the University of Vienna, the Immigrant Workers Support Service ASTI-CDAIC in Luxembourg, the Teacher Training Institute of Luxembourg, a primary school in Belgium called “Sainte Marie-Fraternité”, and the University of Mons-Hainaut in Belgium.

55 By “minority language” we mean the mother tongue of the refugee children

The project aims to encourage and develop multilingual and multicultural competence at pre-school level.

Two factors have been identified as obstacles to the use of minority languages in primary schools. Firstly, parents, particularly those from minority groups, want their children to be competent in the national language before they start school; secondly, there are prejudices about language acquisition (such as the belief that the use of the mother tongue will result in less competence in the national language; that national children will be at a disadvantage if they start to learn minority languages; and that it is too demanding for children to learn more than one language at this age level).

This project runs from September 1998 to August 2000. During the first year, the use of additional languages with different social status was implemented in all partner institutions. The following criteria were considered as reference points:

- children are free to communicate in either language;
- each teacher speaks only one language;
- the different languages are viewed as equal, none is seen as being of lesser value;
- there is no attempt to modify the language input according to an alleged 'grammatical progression' (i.e. avoiding certain language structures)

In Vienna, this experiment was accompanied by a series of ten seminars for participating staff and parents. The seminars examined theoretical issues around language acquisition, in parallel with direct examples and observations drawn from everyday experience and practice. Resulting recommendations for improvements or alterations in methodology and/or activities could then be directly implemented in the classroom. The children also receive two hours of 'spontaneous' English acquisition and the kindergarten assistants are learning French.

- ☺ This project is considered to represent good practice because it is being carried out for and with a multicultural target group.
- ☺ The programme aims to re-evaluate the possibilities of using language acquisition for the furthering of cognitive development and social communication – both essential skills for refugee children.
- ☺ The highly positive results of this project will be disseminated to public institutions throughout Austria, which currently do not provide satisfactory overall measures for the integration of refugee children.
- ☺ The tuition of minority languages and the recognition of bilingual teaching are also seen as an advantage for the broader education of national pupils.

- ☹ Implementation of this project requires a large quantity of resources and enthusiastic political support. This may cause difficulties for general implementation in other states.

Revision of existing teaching materials and the development of new ones

Raising awareness of exile and about refugees in elementary and secondary schools, Italian Refugee Council (CIR), Italy

This project includes activities with pupils in schools as well as teacher training sessions. Activities were designed to encourage pupils and teachers to acquire knowledge and develop empathy towards refugees. The project pays particular attention to individual personalities of people in exile.

Methodology

During the first part of the project the concept of exile is used in order to define the legal and social framework (background information) of living conditions of asylum seekers and refugees in Italy: status, family, accommodation, work, physical and mental health, etc. During the second part, activities aim to explore concepts of exile and to encourage teachers and students to develop empathy towards people in exile. The main activity in this part of the project is a workshop on reading and telling stories. Films and documentaries are considered as supplementary aids for these workshops. Refugees from different countries are involved as educationalists throughout the project, whilst bearing in mind it is of great importance to avoid “voyeurism” which encourages superficiality and sensationalist emotion rather than an analytical and critical approach to complex issues. This means involving refugees in a manner that goes further than telling their personal story and experiences. As educationalists, their role is to guide the teachers and students towards a better understanding of exile.

The following models exemplify the different approaches used:

Model I (for elementary school teachers and pupils) Workshop: “Story Telling and Reading” The central theme of the workshop is the “Journey”, which was chosen because it leads gently to a discussion on “Separation”, examining ideas of exile as a forced journey.

Model II (for pupils aged 10–19 and secondary school teachers) Workshops: “Right to Asylum” and “Refugee Identity”

Model III (for pupils aged 10–19 and secondary school teachers) Workshop: “Country of Origin; Country of Asylum”

Model IV (for pupils aged 10–19 and secondary school teachers) Workshop: “Exile in Literature”

- ☺ This project examines the theory of exile and introduces the issues to teachers and pupils. This approach and the workshops could easily be used (with some adaptations) as educational material in other countries.
- ☺ The activities were introduced in over 20 schools in Italy and are still in demand.
- ☺ The activities also involve refugees in a very careful and well-considered manner. (See also **Refugee Involvement in Education**)
- ☹ It was difficult to keep this project running despite the initial high motivation of the teachers involved. This difficulty demonstrates why such activities should be incorporated into the national curriculum.

Improving the Educational Experiences of Refugee Children, British Refugee Council (BRC), UK

The BRC has developed a lot of educational material for children and teachers. This material is especially helpful in schools in which there are many refugee children, as it helps to create feelings of solidarity. Especially interesting is the production and distribution of a refugee family literacy workbook, which has been produced and distributed via the school to refugee families.

- ☺ This project develops very useful material aiming to involve children, teachers and parents in the process of literacy.
- ☺ The idea itself would be easy to implement in other countries.



***Signposts to Good Practice*⁵⁶**

- The tuition of the language of the host country in all mainstream classes (including maths and science) is seen as crucial for the integration of refugee pupils in their classes. This includes the use of mixed ability teaching.
- The implementation of mainstream provision of minority language tuition should be considered as an important integration activity.
- Withdrawal of refugee children for special tuition should be done carefully and with regard to their special needs.
- The careful revision of existing teaching materials and methodologies and the development of new materials and methodologies which take into account cultural difference and raise awareness about exile amongst pupils and teachers is important for furthering integration of refugees in schools.

56 See also Appendix 2: ECRE Position on Integration of Refugees in Europe, para 89

C. Teacher training

Raising awareness amongst teachers and other educationalists about issues facing refugee children is recognised in all countries to be essential to the successful provision of education for this client group. The teacher is a crucial mediator between the refugee family and the host society. She/he will have the greatest contact with the pupil and can make all the difference to the progress of that pupil.

In reality, there is a serious lack of projects in Europe devoted to improving teachers' awareness of issues facing refugee pupils. This is considered to be a particularly alarming problem in Italy, Spain and Greece where raising awareness about reasons for 'flight' is a high priority. Experts believe that teacher training should aim to improve knowledge and understanding about the development of identity of refugee pupils and the effect on their education and learning.

Production of intercultural teaching materials for teachers and pupils

MEET Project, Cospe (Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti), Italy

A MEET project funded by the Socrates-Comenius programme of the EU, this initiative provides intercultural education for Chinese migrant children in the region of Toscana. It is envisioned that in the future this project will be expanded to include Albanian refugee children. The aim is to prepare both pupils and teachers for studying and teaching in a genuinely intercultural environment.

Aims for pupils:

- to overcome an ethnocentric environment and to be thoroughly equipped with intercultural knowledge and sensitivity;
- to value and esteem the languages and cultures of immigrant communities by promoting an intercultural approach in all schools, with or without immigrant children;
- to learn Italian as a second language in order to stimulate bilingualism or plurilingualism; bilingual workshops are organised at every level, from nursery to secondary schools.

Aims for teachers:

- to receive professional training in intercultural teaching and to be provided with supporting materials
- to address the issues of migration and to have a greater understanding of Chinese culture, regional dialects, family and community roles, and education systems;
- to improve communication with Chinese migrant pupils and their families

A bilingual questionnaire was compiled for this initiative which will be translated and adapted for other communities.

- ☺ This successful project can easily be adapted for refugee communities. In southern European states, such as Italy and Greece, intercultural education programmes, with a particular focus on teacher training, are managed by the Ministries of Education.
- ☺ It is essential to understand the differences between the needs of migrants and those of refugees. Special programmes should also be developed to raise awareness amongst teachers of refugee children's needs, specifically to avoid bullying.

Special Training for Refugee Teachers

Project Fenix, Local Community of Landskrona, Sweden

This project is run in collaboration with the local employment office, the social welfare committee, the local child and school committee, the local education authority, the local trade union for teachers and the University of Malmö (teacher training department).

Background:

Refugees with a professional background as teachers in their home countries have serious problems getting their qualifications recognised in Sweden. Even if their qualifications are recognised, refugees often lack sufficient knowledge of Swedish and English in order to apply for jobs. This project developed from the successful employment of a Somali teacher in a municipality whose schools were experiencing difficulties with Somali pupils. The strategy was highly successful and emphasised the need for more ethnic minority teachers. The project reacts to the following situation in the region:

- general lack of teachers
- high percentage of foreign students in all mainstream schools
- large classes where teachers are not able to give sufficient attention to pupils

A special training course has now been developed for refugee teachers and will train 20 students (mainly from Kosovo) between July 1999 and June 2000.

The training consists of four modules taken over approximately one year. It begins with the assessment of the applicants. With the successful candidates an individual Swedish and English language training will be developed conducted by local education department of Landskrona. The third module gives training

about the functioning of the Swedish educational system. In the fourth module students are then allocated among five schools in the region and are to be considered as active members of the teaching teams. After the course has been completed successfully, the students receive a local teaching diploma with the option to continue studying at the teacher training department of the Malmö University in order to receive a nationally recognised teaching diploma.

- ☺ This project is interesting because it evolved from the direct and positive experience of employing a Somali teacher.
- ☺ It provides a good example of successful collaboration between the employment and education sector.
- ☺ The project serves a dual purpose of assisting refugees into employment and supplying the need for more ethnic minority teachers.
- ☹ There was major concern about the recognition of teachers' diplomas from their countries of origin.

Awareness raising about reasons for “flight”

“ Un Voyage pas comme les autres”, CIRE, Belgium

The moving exhibition called “**un Voyage pas comme les autres**” (a journey like no other) was created by CIRE (Coordination et Initiatives pour Refugies et Etrangers) in 1996 to be presented in Brussels. The exhibition was funded partly by the European Commission: DGVIII, DGV, DGXXII and some other national public funders.

The aim of this exhibition is to recreate the journey of a refugee from the time he/she leaves his/her country of origin to the time he/she applies for asylum in Europe and through the recognition process. The idea is to make visitors experience the flight, face the barriers and feel the stress any refugee faces in reality, through this 2 hours role-play game.

At the beginning each visitor chooses a story (selected from asylum seekers' real stories) and endorses the character throughout the exhibition, without knowing where this would lead to: detention centre, refugee camp, flight via sea, air or ground and being granted full status, humanitarian status or being rejected. Actors have been specially trained to play immigration officers, policemen etc. The exhibition went to Rome in 1997-98, Paris in 1998-99 and is currently in Germany (Frankfort, Bonn). Many other countries have showed an interest in setting it up, particularly in the UK, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxembourg.

- ☺ The exhibition was also visited by schools during week days and this helped to raise awareness and start the discussion about refugees with both teachers and pupils.
- ☹ The cost is rather high: just to rent the exhibition from CIRE: 50.000 EURO
- ☹ It needs national or regional co-ordination to set it up, to ensure the selection and proper training of all actors and the marketing and publicity of the event.

Signposts to Good Practice

- Important ways in which to raise awareness of refugee issues amongst teachers include augmenting current teacher training courses run at universities and education institutes with a specific module focused on refugee children, and the integration of refugee issues into in-service training provided for teachers.
- It is recommended that more emphasis is placed on the production of useful teaching materials for the integration of refugee children in schools.
- In order to use the skills of refugees and their special knowledge of refugee issues, it is recommended that refugees are provided with improved access to teacher training courses and that specific training for refugee teachers is developed.
- Special effort should be made to raise awareness of refugee issues amongst pupils of the host country in order to achieve greater acceptance of refugees and asylum seekers in society and to combat xenophobia and racism.

D. Special provision for young people

Refugees from the age of 14 to 25 need special support and provision. They are approaching the end of their school careers, but often have no school qualifications. Sometimes they are refused places in mainstream higher education, and are therefore driven into vocational training that is not always appropriate or desired. Even worse, they are forced to stay at home with nothing to do because they are too old for compulsory education (over 16), but too young for adult language provision (over 18). This group has the capacity and potential to achieve high levels of motivation. However, if neglected, motivation levels can fall to the other extreme.

Individual and careful assessment carried out
with the active and responsible involvement of the pupil

This school is one of 40 schools/projects in Denmark that offer special facilities for refugees aged between

14 and 20 who have experienced an interrupted education. The mainstream education system is not appropriate for this group because they are too old for reception classes at mainstream schools (the maximum age for compulsory schooling is 16), and adult language provision is for those aged over 18. The school provides tuition for three years in Danish language, maths, English, sport and IT. Leisure activities play an important role including excursions to important institutions in public life and a summer camp every year.

Meetings with parents are crucial to the project and counselling is available throughout the three-year period. Counselling is oriented towards further education and vocational training as well as more personal questions. Recently, the staff have developed a new assessment procedure in order to ensure that each individual pupil receives an appropriate education. This new procedure also inspired by the French project (see above) tries to take in to consideration that the student should be seen as a whole person. It is necessary to assess not only the skills and abilities regarding the curriculum but also broader “life skills”, the family background, the housing situation etc. This requires qualifications in social work, and both social and pedagogical expertise on the part of teachers in the project.

Holistic education

Flucht nach vorn, Sozial Pädagogisches Institute Berlin, Germany

This project is run by Sozial Pädagogisches Institut Berlin, an NGO related to the Arbeiterwohlfahrt, one of the larger charities in Germany. It is funded by the Berlin Senate for School Affairs, Youth and Sport, and by the European Commission. The project provides courses for unaccompanied refugees aged 16-25 (over the age for compulsory education) who have no school qualifications. The project aims to support these young refugees in obtaining school qualifications. Tuition is offered at five levels, beginning with learning to read and write in German and continuing with German as a foreign language, maths, English, IT training and guitar lessons.

The innovative nature of this project is that, in addition to the curricular activities, it provides counselling facilities and an educational leisure programme. The leisure activities are specifically designed to help the pupils establish a group identity and to learn about the leisure pursuits of the host country - thus increasing integration.

Each pupil is continuously assessed under a tutoring scheme so that progress can be monitored, and the correct level of education is provided for the pupil's changing needs.

- ☺ This project successfully delivers a holistic education to young refugees.
- ☺ The focus on group identity, integration, counselling needs and continuous assessment were recognised as being the essential elements in education provision for this age group.
- ☺ Particularly highly recommended were the tailor-made courses for illiterate or partly literate young refugees who require different levels of support. Even targeted educational activities for this group have failed to cater effectively for these needs.
- ☺ Wide dissemination of this project is therefore highly recommended.



Signposts to Good Practice⁵⁷

- The potential for the pupil to be involved in her/his own educational choices and to take on responsibility for her/his development should be actively encouraged; this approach should be implemented from the initial assessment onwards and should be consistent across all educational activities.
- It is seen as essential to establish an individual and carefully carried-out assessment of each pupil that takes full consideration of all her/his achievements in her/his home country and also considers any future plans she/he may have.
- Holistic education should be developed that is linked to further education, vocational training and/or employment possibilities.

E. Refugee community involvement in education⁵⁸

The involvement of parents/guardians in the education of their children is generally seen as extremely important for successful schooling in Europe. It is often difficult for guardians of refugee children to participate easily in their education due to lack of knowledge of the national language; lack of knowledge about the host educational system; a different understanding of schooling; and the amount of time that is often taken up by trying to find employment and surviving in a new country. For this reason, special steps must be taken to ensure that refugee guardians are fully enabled to participate in parental activities of mainstream schools.

Successful integration into society is often dependent on integration into a refugee community. The refugee community also plays an important role in teaching minority languages and culture to refugee pupils. At present, this form of education takes place entirely separately from mainstream schools. Closer communication and involvement between refugees communities and schools would be an advantage both for refugee pupils and for non-refugee pupils.

⁵⁷ See also Appendix 2: ECRE Position on the Integration of Refugees, para: 92

⁵⁸ See also Community and Culture Guide, Section 2,B

“I take my children to my community on Saturday to learn our language. These classes are very useful. I don’t want my children to forget their own language.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Language classes for parents/guardians during school hours

St. Mark’s Junior School Dublin, Ireland

In collaboration with the TALLAGHT-partnership this school has run a 10 week language course for non-native English speaking parents and their children. The course consisted of separate tuition of a parents’ and children’s group including half an hour of joint teaching for parents and their children together. 15 parents participated initially. The course was run in 1998 as a pilot project. The school now employs a resource teacher who intends to look in to running the course again.

- ☺ This is an excellent project that gives the opportunity for parents to learn the national language, meet the teachers, become familiar with the school environment and keep informed of any messages the class teachers may send them.
- ☺ It also gives the parents a participatory role in their children’s education.
- ☺ It would be easy to implement in every country.
- ☹ There was a high drop out rate amongst parental participants. The reason for this is seen in the fact that it only took place once a week. For further planning a course run for 2 weeks every day or for 6 weeks on 3 days a weeks seems to be more appropriate for this client group.

“I am happy that I can speak a little English and solve my problems. I used to have a lot of problems when I was asked to attend meetings at my children’s school. I couldn’t understand very well.” (Refugee woman from the UK, the Refugee Interviews)

Involving refugees as cultural mediators in schools

It is important to consider the way in which refugees are involved in education. They should be involved further than telling their personal stories to avoid “voyeurism” which encourages superficiality and sensationalist emotion rather than an analytical and critical approach to complex issues.

Education and Integration for Adolescent Unaccompanied Refugees, OASE Pankow, Berlin, Germany

This successful project, funded by the EU Budget Line B3-4113, was run by OASE, an NGO in Berlin-

Pankow. In collaboration with clients of the OASE advice service, a directory was compiled containing questions, themes and activities focused on issues facing refugees and foreigners living in Germany. Teachers from mainstream schools can then select one or more themes or activities, and a young refugee from OASE will visit the school to deliver the activity together with the teacher.

During this project, a publication was produced which gathered together experiences and stories of flight, and the hopes and ambitions of the young refugees who were participating in the project. The publication was aimed at pupils from mainstream schools in Germany. Although the project officially ended in March 1999, there continues to be great demand for the publication. Each story is supplemented with a concise report on the writer's country of origin, which covers geography, culture and political system as well as violations of human rights. The pupils are encouraged to continue recording and gathering stories and information of this kind from people they know or meet.

- ☺ This project has had great success in raising awareness about issues of flight in mainstream schools in Berlin. It improved integration for both refugee pupils and non-refugee pupils.
- ☺ Transferability to other countries of elements of the project, (particularly the publication) would be possible
- ☹ The method of involving young refugees in this project was controversial. Although their participation in mainstream schools was seen as very valuable, there were doubts as to how easy it would be to motivate young refugees to get involved, and whether it was problematic to use people as living examples.

tercultural mediators as technical assistants within the context of the reception of refugees from former Yugoslavia, Service de Scolarisation des Enfants Etrangers, Ministry of Education, Luxembourg

In this project intercultural mediators from the countries of origin of the asylum seekers are recruited for a determined period to give answers to questions about school reception. The intercultural mediators work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, the "Commissariat du Gouvernement aux Etrangers" (Governmental Commissioner for Foreigners), the schools and the local authorities.

The mediators role is to mediate between school and family. Schools can ask them for assistance if necessary. The role of the mediators is:

- To ease the first contact with the school
- To help draw up the school assessment and inform about the schooling system in the country of origin
- To inform parents about the education system in Luxembourg and related activities

- To translate practical information to parents or teachers, during the school reception or during a medical or psychological supervision.

In June 1999 a one-week training was delivered by the Immigrant Workers Support (ASTI) to 16 people coming from Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Albania. The training focused on familiarisation with different institutions, especially the schooling system in Luxembourg.

In order to define the number of mediators needed by the schools, the Ministry of Education has initiated a first evaluation between June and October 1999.



*Signposts to Good Practice*⁵⁹

- An easy method by which to establish a successful collaboration between schools and refugee children and their guardians is the opening of school buildings for community schools to use after school hours and at weekends.
- Establishing language classes for parents/guardians that are held at school premises (during school hours, after school or/and during the holidays) has two benefits: while learning the language of the host country, the parent/guardian can also benefit from the establishment of better communication with the teacher. Schools can function like “one-stop-shops” ensuring that parents/guardians can visit for a number of reasons, also making language courses more accessible to them.
- Refugees should have the opportunity to act as cultural mediators. This method can be used successfully in order to raise awareness of the issue of refugees in schools and to support teachers in the classroom.

Section 2: Language courses for adult refugees

Language is a vehicle for integration; if a refugee can speak and understand the language of the host country, opportunities for integration are dramatically increased. Learning the national language is therefore a top priority and should be made available at a very early stage of the integration process. There are currently wide differences in the educational provision available to refugees in the different Member States, and these varying levels of quality affect refugees’ opportunities for learning the national language and accessing further education, training and employment.

⁵⁹ See also Appendix 2, ECRE Position on the Integration of refugees in Europe, para: 91

A. Language courses funded by governments

The quality and accessibility of language courses available to adult refugees differs widely across Europe. In southern Europe (Italy, Greece, Portugal, Spain), courses are mainly provided by the non-governmental sector. Courses are offered on an ad hoc basis and are aimed at all newcomers, including refugees and asylum seekers. Refugees sometimes have access to mainstream provision. In northern Europe (the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Finland), language courses are part of integration programmes devised by national governments and run mainly by local authorities, with the support of the NGO sector. These courses are only available to newcomers who have been granted leave to remain, therefore asylum seekers are not eligible although they will have access to language classes in reception centres.

“The long asylum procedure delays education enormously; in what can often be a three year waiting period, refugees could have learned the language properly.”

“In Finland, Finnish tuition starts already in reception centres.” (Refugee Education Panel)

The Newcomer Integration Act, National Legislation, the Netherlands

The government has drawn up an integration plan to support all newcomers in building new lives. The ‘Wet inburgering nieuwkomers’ (Newcomer Integration Act) became law on 30 September 1998. The official publicity leaflet stresses to refugees and other newcomers the importance of integration, *“Building a life in the Netherlands demands adequate command of the Dutch language and a knowledge of Dutch society. Nearly every form of education or employment requires this knowledge. It is also important for your daily existence. During the integration programme you will receive lessons in Dutch. You will also learn about Dutch society and the labour market. After completing this programme, you will be able to find your way around much more easily, both in terms of finding a job or accessing further education.”*

To qualify for the programme refugees must:

- have been granted full refugee status or leave to remain for humanitarian reasons and no longer live in a reception centre;
- have a residence permit for family reunion or family formation;
- have a place of birth outside the Netherlands.

The programme is compulsory to all those above the age of 16 who have arrived in the Netherlands for the first time on a (more or less) permanent basis. Under the new law, every newcomer is obliged to apply for an Integration Inquiry (carried out by municipalities) within six weeks of registering in a municipality

or having received a positive decision on an asylum claim or a residence permit application.

Summary of Integration Process

Registration with Citizen Affairs or issue of residence permit
Sending an application/exemption form to the municipality
Integration Inquiry (which could lead to an exemption)
Integration Programme
Issue of certificate, end of integration obligations

Integration Programme Contents

- Dutch language lessons
- Information about the Netherlands and social integration
- Possibilities for working in the Netherlands and vocational integration
- Social tuition for encouraging wide acquaintance with the community
- Individual follow-up with an adviser and referral for further study/careers advice

- ☺ This is a nation-wide integration programme for all newcomers which demonstrates the Dutch government's commitment to support the integration process.
- ☺ It is an innovative approach based on a contractual relationship between the newcomer and the municipality.
- ☺ Implementation is straightforward in any system in which refugees have access to social benefits and there is a national integration package in place to address issues of language and culture for refugees.
- ☹ The drawback of this programme is that the average total of 600 hours is not enough.
- ☹ Although, it is too early to evaluate the outcome of the programme, there are already some communication problems between the municipalities and the contracted language schools and, as a result, fewer hours of tuition are delivered, often 400 rather than 600.
- ☹ Another major problem is that, for many years, such programmes were entirely focused on teaching Dutch and, as a consequence, providers are inexperienced in offering orientation courses and vocational training.
- ☹ Childcare is provided unevenly according to the individual municipality's provision. The programme is compulsory, and those who refuse to participate are subject to fines (small amount deducted from their social security payments).

The Refugee Language Support Unit, Ireland

The RLSU was established in March 1999, under the aegis of Trinity College Dublin to co-ordinate the provision of English language training to all refugees throughout the country. It is the first time such

a nation-wide body has been set up, with the task of overseeing all provisions regarding language tuition for adults and children, including setting up programmes for up to 1000 Kosovan refugees throughout the country.

☺ Although it is difficult to assess the effective results and the good practice of such an initiative at such an early stage, it is already positive that this unit has been set up.

Signposts to Good Practice

- Free access to language courses should be made available on the arrival of the asylum seeker. A guaranteed minimum number of hours should be determined, co-ordinated and funded by the government to ensure that all refugees are proficient up to a certain level.

B. Training of teachers to meet refugees' needs

In most European countries, special training courses are available for teaching foreigners, but very rarely are these courses designed to cater for the special needs of refugees or other traumatised students. For the majority of teaching offered to refugees, the teacher's previous experience can be the most positive element. Whether teachers are volunteers or paid staff is not relevant for this discussion, as long as they are professionally trained, consistent and motivated. In the UK, Sweden and Luxembourg, refugees are often trained and recruited as language teachers for adults or as managers of refugee projects

“I wanted to learn English, but I didn't have the courage to go to college. I used to stay at home. I am now happy that I can go out and study. There was a community centre near my house. I went two days a week to learn English. I wanted to have a teacher from my own country in order to know my language. My teacher who was English was kind. That time I could not speak a word of English, I wanted my teacher to teach me from scratch.” (A refugee from the UK, the Refugee Interviews)

Cimade, a national training scheme for teaching French to refugees, France

Cimade is an NGO that co-ordinates language training for 29 Refugee Housing Centres in France that are run by France Terre d'Asile. Cimade has been contracted for a three-year period by the government's Migration and Population Department (Direction des Populations et des Migrations and Fonds d'Action Sociale) to co-ordinate and train 60 teachers of French as a second language, and to offer them ongoing support. The training addresses a variety of different refugee groups and

their needs through the following initiatives:

- in-house advice and educational support on specific issues, for staff training, or for rethinking the role of training within the centre as a whole (in-house support takes place between one and three times per year);
- seminars and exchange of teaching experiences (once a year in Paris);
- thematic workshops covering issues such as focused support for beginners or the use of video for mixed ability classes (a few times each year in Paris).

The organisation has built up a resource centre which houses up-to-date training packs, videos, tapes, CD Roms and a variety of other teaching materials. The centre is currently producing a manual of evaluation methods. Cimade has also published a series of booklets presenting the culture, history, geography and language of some of the countries or regions from which refugees have fled (Afghanistan, Albania, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Kurdistan and Former Yugoslavia). Every year an evaluation and assessment of clients' profiles and achievements is carried out, in order to improve the training provision and respond to needs.

- ☺ This project displays collaboration between an NGO and a government department in order to raise standards of language teaching for refugees through specifically designed training courses, support and advice for teachers.
- ☺ The material produced is transferable to other EU countries to share information about the country of origin its culture and language.
- ☹ The training is only available to language teachers who are working at the Refugee Housing Centres. It is not available to teachers at the asylum seekers' reception centres or any other language provisions for refugees.
- ☹ None of the trainers are refugees themselves, (this is a general comment that applies to most projects in France).
- ☹ Most governmental projects focus on vocational training for the purpose of employment; not enough initiatives are also targeting refugees who are not looking for a job, such as older persons and women with children, who could still benefit from tailor-made courses.

Dobro Dosli, et après Caritas Foundation in Luxembourg

This project aims to improve the integration of refugees from Former Yugoslavia in Luxembourg. One element of the project is the provision of German language classes for women. (German is one of the three national languages in Luxembourg.) The teacher is herself from Former Yugoslavia and teaches a class

to 29 women twice each week. This approach encourages the women to become more independent and take a more active role in local life. The project is managed by an Algerian refugee.

- ☺ Positive results were reached very quickly by the women participating in these courses. The classes have added value because women are very often the educational medium in the family and therefore knowledge is spread to children and other family members.
- ☺ Many of the language courses offered are delivered by teachers who are refugees; this is seen to be a positive approach that is particularly useful at the beginning of the integration process, before mainstream courses are accessed.
- ☹ Courses are only available to a limited number of women.
- ☹ There are no equivalent courses available to men, despite the demand.
- ☹ This is a short-term pilot project.
- ☹ There is a debate about the advantages and disadvantages of employing teachers who are refugees

“... indigenous teachers are sometimes the best as language teachers because of their accent ...”

“At the beginning of the learning process, it is better to have groups of refugees alone with a trained teacher.”

“Teachers should know at least three languages to be able to communicate with refugees who are multilingual.” (Refugee Education Panel)



Signposts, to Good Practice

- Specially designed, high-quality training courses should be available to all teachers who teach refugees and asylum seekers. Provision of such training should be co-ordinated at national level.
- Teacher training or re-qualification should be made available to refugees.
- Teachers should develop good working relationships with refugee communities and mother tongue language teaching should also be available in refugee community premises.

C. Simultaneous learning of language and culture

In order to enhance language classes, teachers should work with those providing information about culture and society, and psychologists or counsellors. This is a strategy that is most commonly practised in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and Denmark, where government integration programmes are designed to include these elements. In the more piecemeal courses offered by NGOs in Portugal, Spain, Greece, Belgium and Luxembourg, some effort is being made by language teachers to include discussion and exchange of information about culture and society.

“... education is the bridge over the gap between individuals and society; its role is to promote tolerance in two directions...” integration is a two-way process and the host community should also make an effort to learn about refugees’ cultures.

“... because of the non-acceptance of refugees in Italy, the host society needs to be educated ... Integration means also to be accepted by the host community”. (Refugee Education Panel)

Turun Ammatillinen Aikuiskoulutuskeskus: TURKU Vocational Educational Centre for Adults, Finland

Language and integration programmes are funded by the Labour offices at a local level, following national guidelines. At this centre, teachers providing language classes and teachers providing classes in culture and society work together in a team to ensure that lessons are productively integrated. Finnish traditions are always combined with language teaching in order to support the integration process. Finnish is a very difficult language and courses are tailor-made to meet specific needs, e.g. the different learning abilities of different students. Teachers teaching about the language are different from those teaching about culture and society and organising cultural activities. Handicraft, craft, cooking and visits to different places are included in the curriculum.

- ☺ Learning about language and learning about culture and society are both addressed in governmental programmes; co-ordination across subjects is of benefit to students.
- ☹ Refugees settled in Finland have raised the issue that Finnish society is very closed towards refugees’ own cultures.

Mitten Project of Komvux/Komvav in Botkyrka, Sweden

The Labour Market Administration and the Office of Public Schools collaborate in the running of this project, which aims to combine language study (part of the standard ‘Swedish for Immigrants’ national programme) with practical skills such as textile work. The target group is women who have acquired basic Swedish, but who face barriers in their language development and lack vocational training that would provide access to the job market. The textile classes are focused on embroidery with an emphasis on traditional Swedish techniques, such as embroidery on woollen materials.

Students were asked to create new patterns based on those of their own cultures (which encouraged an exchange of cultural information, for example, white used to decorate clothes can often be associated with death in Chinese culture). The production of mittens was a deliberate choice combining the cold

climate of Sweden with symbolic patterns from other cultures. This cross-fertilisation of cultures is part of a creative attempt to enrich both cultures. Working imaginatively in a group with forms and colours stimulates the process of language learning and communication. The 'Mitten Project' culminated in an exhibition at the Swedish Handicraft Society at which the products were sold.

- ☺ This provided a specially designed project for women which addressed both language learning and new skills as well as encouraging cultural exchange. The possibility of transfer to another national context was considered to be particularly appropriate to the Netherlands.
- ☹ This is a short-term project, due to uncertain funding.
- ☹ Women should not only be confined to craft, knitting and sewing activities as they have many other professional skills and could seek less stereo-typed roles in the labour market.



Signpost to Good Practice

- Speaking a language is not enough to integrate fully into a new society; cultural and social orientation is an asset for successful integration, and should be part of all integration programmes for refugees. Integration is a two-way process and the host country should also promote understanding of and familiarity with the cultures of refugees.

D. Simultaneous language learning and vocational training⁶⁰

Learning new skills whilst learning the national language can increase motivation and technical skills as well. For refugees who have a higher qualification, vocational training courses linked to language courses are more fruitful and efficient than only language courses, provided the students are not complete beginners.

“The key to integration is learning the language. The situation in Greece is very difficult in terms of language learning; because of the lack of a social security system, refugees have to work often illegally. There remains little time and energy for them to learn the language and they stay without the knowledge of the language for many years. The lack of language provision in the mainstream educational system drives people into vocational training.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Language courses and Integration project, The Portuguese Refugee Council, Portugal

This pilot project was funded for a two-year period by the Sub-Programma INTEGRAR (ESF and Ministry

60 See Vocational Training Guide, Section 1

of Labour and Solidarity) The Portuguese Refugee Council is running parallel computer and language-culture evening classes for refugees. Most of the students are working during the day and they can alternate between language and computer classes. A specially designed self-teaching computer course allows students not always fluent in Portuguese to make progress and gain skills in computer science. Both courses are very much inter-linked and complementary; and students may have to use the computer to prepare some activities or assignments for the language-culture course.

- ☺ Increased interest in learning the language when students get involved in diversified activities and gain different skills.
- ☺ The only language-IT course in Portugal available for refugees and asylum seekers only.
- ☹ Attendance on a voluntary basis, might decline after a few months. Refugees have to work to make a living in Portugal, and have difficulties in attending the evening classes regularly and concentrating on learning a new language.
- ☹ There are funding constraints (short-term pilot project), more courses and more teachers would be needed to meet the needs.

Centros de Educación de Personas Adultas, Spain

These centres were originally designed for Spanish nationals, but more recently they have started accepting immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Spanish tuition for all non-nationals is a priority and the courses are offered free to everybody. Identity documents and proof of status are no longer required to enrol on this course. However, students who do not provide proof of status would not be awarded any certificate on completion of the course. Students can enrol at any stage and may access other courses such as computer science or marketing; they may stay as long as they wish.

- ☺ Free and flexible access to language courses in combination with other subjects, open to all without any status barriers.
- ☹ No overall assessment of progress or provision of career guidance which is generally required by refugees, and no follow-up.



Signpost to Good Practice

- Refugees should be entitled to access mainstream vocational training as soon as they have reached a certain level of competence in the national language.

E. Individual needs assessments and personalised action planning⁶¹

Most integration programmes in northern European countries assess needs and offer career guidance before, during and after the programme. The Dutch system provides an average of 600 hours of language classes and social and cultural orientation, and, usually, vocational training leading to potential employment is also offered. In Finland, a similar programme is run, but without any time limit - a refugee is provided with free language classes and free training at any time. In Denmark, the Integration Act, which came into effect on 1 January 1999, will affect every refugee or migrant who arrived prior to that date and is a recipient of social security. The programme will continue for a three-year period, with 30 hours of teaching each week. The Act states that language classes combined with social and cultural orientation should be provided, and language centres have been contracted by the local authorities to run the classes. A plan is drawn up for each individual which considers her/his previous education, qualifications, experience, and ambitions for the future, such as whether she/he would like to go to concentrate on academic or vocational study. The plan is reassessed at regular intervals.

University of North London, Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit, UK

AP(E)L stands for Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning. This combines APL (Assessment of Prior Learning) which covers any learning done at school, college, university or other educational institution, for which the refugee may hold no certificate and APEL (Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning) which covers any experiential learning resulting from experience, such as during employment, hobbies, or looking after a family.

This process recognises life-long learning for the purpose of giving credits, exemptions, or recognition of a person's achievements regardless of when, where or how the learning took place. The finished product is a personal portfolio which can be used as evidence accounting for past learning which is backed up by documentary evidence wherever possible. The portfolio also contains ideas and ambitions for the future - it is a reflection of the individual's life.

An important feature of AP(E)L is that credits, exemptions or recognition can be given for skills (technical, IT, management, design etc.), knowledge, understanding (the ability to analyse, evaluate, interpret information etc.), and achievements (projects, exhibitions, prizes and publications).

The process is particularly valuable for refugees who have had a wide variety of experiences, and have learn-

61 See also Vocational Training Guide, Section 2,C

ing and knowledge that can be demonstrated, but for which they might not be in possession of any certificates. It is also useful when starting a new life to assess the possibilities carefully and to be able to make informed choices as a result. They can assess their skill and experiences; gain exemptions (for example gain entry to the second or third year of a course rather than having to start from the beginning and in some cases direct entry to postgraduate study depending on the experience); decide what form of education they wish to access; identify training needs; produce a portfolio which can be shown to employers; and improve personal development.

AP(E)L in the UK has been successfully used by refugees, some received exemptions and equivalence to further their education at the higher education level or access employment. Those who complete the programme successfully will get a certificate of Professional Development from the University of North London. There is a consortium of Universities in South East England working on APEL, called the 'Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

- ☺ This initiative provides opportunities for refugees who do not hold copies of their certificates, or whose certificates are not recognised in the host country.
- ☺ Several countries (such as Germany and Austria) already operate a similar procedure for their nationals which could easily be adapted to the specific needs of refugees. The process must be properly recognised by educational and training institutions.
- ☹ The APEL progress is not standardised at national level; as a result, it might not be accepted by some Universities for exemption purposes.

“I came to World University Service for help. I had a meeting with an adviser, she encouraged me. I did not have confidence. She told me to do master degree. I took her advice. She told me that before I do that course I could do APEL course at Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit at University of North London. The adviser there helped me a lot and gave me a reference to attend the university. Because that time I did not have my degree from Baghdad University. It was very hard to get it from there. It was difficult for me to do post-graduate because I did not have my documents. She encouraged me to contact my family and ask them to send the documents. I applied for postgraduate studies at different universities. I got admission at South Bank University.” (*Refugee from the UK, the Refugee Interviews*)

Signpost to Good Practice

- Individual assessment and specialised career guidance before, during and after completion of courses should be made available to refugees. Such assessment should take into consideration issues such as health, family situation and personal plans.

F. Specialised projects catering for particular needs at different stages

Some refugee projects are designed to meet the needs of a specific group of refugees, either of a particular gender or nationality or by age (retired refugees at the Brondby Centre) or those who are survivors of trauma. Every individual carries a baggage of experience, knowledge, trauma and dreams, all of which are constantly evolving. Provision for refugees should be able to match all these elements in order to meet needs as and when they occur.

There is a direct link between health and the ability to learn. In some cases, especially for older refugees who may have lost their social status when they left their home country, studying provides satisfaction and can be seen as a way of healing trauma, and therefore providing a bridge for integration. This fact is taken into consideration by some NGOs that provide educational grants in France and Belgium.

“Regarding older refugees above 50 years’ old, who do not have to work, it is impossible to ask them to attend regular language courses only, but rather have them involved in cultural programmes where they will also learn the language and slowly adapt to their new environment.” (Refugee Education Panel)

ZORA Project at the Brondby Language Centre, Denmark

A small group of Bosnian refugees did not fully benefit from an integration programme and, due to lack of confidence and motivation did not reach a basic level of Danish. In cooperation with the Department of Social Services of the Integration Office, a pilot project was set up to meet the needs of this group.

The main aims were to provide the participants with a better quality of life; improved self esteem; increased opportunities for integration; and to support them in regaining confidence and independence. In terms of language tuition, the goals were to strengthen their oral and written skills; increase and activate their vocabulary; stimulate the desire to use Danish outside the classroom; increase their familiarity with the host culture and society; support them in adjusting to Danish norms in the workplace and to develop an individual sense of responsibility.

The course was designed to reflect the wishes, interests and needs of the specific client group. It includes time for relaxation and arts activities.

A team of five full-time staff is working together to support the difficult integration process of four men and seven women aged between 40 and 51.

- ☺ Approach tackling special needs, particularly of psychological health, in order to support language learning with older people.
- ☹ Expensive, short-term pilot project.

Signpost to Good Practice

- Special provision should be made available to address isolated cases and meet the needs of smaller groups.

G. Childcare, travel expenses and flexible courses

Particularly in those countries in which refugees are not entitled to social benefits, it is essential that attendance of classes is facilitated and encouraged. This entails paying for travel expenses and either providing in-house childcare, or paying a childcare allowance. Courses should also be organised to be flexible in order to accommodate the students.

In southern European countries, refugees have to work to earn a living and have very little time or energy left to attend language classes, except during the evenings. In Spain, some courses run by NGOs give all students a travel pass they then can use afterwards for commuting around the city.

The International Organisation for Migrants, Greece

In co-operation with the Greek Red Cross, the IOM is implementing a project funded by budget line: B3-4113 entitled: 'Multi-activity Centre of Social Support and Integration of Refugees'. The courses are tailor-made to meet the needs of the group. Teaching hours per course range from 80 to 130 depending on the availability of the students, all classes are multi-ethnic, and all students are consulted about the feasibility of the course and the best arrangements for timing classes most conveniently. Classes are small, no more than 15 students, and the curriculum is divided into units that are developed to provide appropriate life-skills for each group. Language classes always include cultural orientation in order to develop skills for successful integration and to increase employment possibilities. Courses are made available throughout the year and can be established according to clients' needs. For example, a class was set up for women to be able to discuss women's issues with more confidence. Childcare (including snacks) is provided during the day at the Multi-activity Centre managed by the Greek Red Cross. As a general policy, all family members are allowed to attend classes at IOM to ensure that lack of childcare is not a deterrent for evening classes. Most men attend evening classes as they have to work during the day to make a living.

- ☺ The flexibility of courses, in terms of length, timing, and contents is excellent for matching the clients' exact needs. Small groups facilitate this flexibility.
- ☺ Childcare and travel expenses are refunded. Snacks are available during evening classes at the Multi-Activity Centre run by the Red Cross.
- ☺ Professional teachers are employed who are trained to work with migrants and refugees.
- ☹ There is a time limit on the length of courses (maximum 130 hours) and there is no real follow-up after courses have ended. There is some difficulty in recruiting female students.

“There are language or IT courses in refugee community organisations that I would like to attend, but it is impossible. Because I have three children who are under five and no community can provide childcare for all three. One of them said that they can help me with one of them, the other said for two of them. What about the third one, who is going to look after him? It is a big barrier.” (*Refugee woman from the UK, the Refuge Interviews*)



Signpost to Good Practice

è All language classes should include provisions for childcare and travel costs, to improve class attendance by all refugees.

H. Improving motivation for course attendance

In most European countries, where courses are not compulsory (such as Spain, Portugal, Greece, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg, the UK, Ireland and Belgium), they are mainly organised by the voluntary or the training sector and retaining students is difficult. The main problem is inspiring the initial motivation to attend a language class, and overcoming uncertainty about status and financial insecurity. When basic needs have still not been resolved, such as housing, food and status, it is obviously very difficult to concentrate on learning the language and investing time and energy in the integration process. Incentives could include refunding travel costs, childcare support, provision of food or snacks and, above all, assurance that the course is directly relevant to the refugee's needs. The place where the courses are held is also important, refugees might be more likely to attend courses where they can also socialise and exchange cultural information, such as in a community centre or a university.

FAS (Foras Aiseanna Saothair) National Training and Employment Authority, Ireland

A pre-vocational English language training course which aims to provide participants with the necessary

language support to enter and successfully complete training leading to mainstream courses and employment in an Irish environment. The syllabus has been developed to meet the participants' needs and intends to bridge English classes and the world of work with appropriate courses (e.g. in IT).

The trainees play a vital role in identifying their own objectives, controlling the pace of the programme, taking responsibility for their work, using the course to develop strategies required for seeking employment, evaluating the programme, building their own strategies for independent learning, and taking responsibility for their own integration in to the workforce.

Each student drafts and signs a **'learner's contract'** which is agreed with the teacher and which clearly sets out the student's aims and intentions. (See Employment Guide, Section 6, C and Vocational Training Guide, Section 2;B)

- ☺ The tailor-made syllabus is of direct relevance to each individual student, the teaching process is flexible, and the learner's contracts are a good method by which to achieve success. These contracts are easy to implement and are regarded as an excellent way to retain students in a class. Nearly half the trainees on this course found full-time employment.
- ☹ Some students lose part of their benefits by attending this course (secondary social welfare benefits).

It is also worth noting that retention and motivation are also issues in countries in which language classes are compulsory, despite the fact that refugees who fail to attend could face small penalties. Refugees are often asked to attend full-time courses when they are not psychologically ready.

Cultural Incentives

A refugee from Denmark raised the issue that incentives should be given to provide refugees with opportunities to do things that they would not normally be able to do, such as go on holiday or spend the weekend in the countryside. (Refugee Education Panel)

INKA: Instroom Nieuwkomers Amsterdam, the Netherlands

INKA is a department of the city council which co-ordinates the newcomers integration programmes in several districts of Amsterdam, including the communication between refugees and the Amsterdam branch of the Dutch Refugee Council. The department organises free cultural visits for all language class participants to places such as the Amsterdam Historical Museum, the zoo and the town hall. They also

offer free trips to the cinema and theatre and on a canal boat tours, free subscription to the library, and three-months' free subscription to a national newspaper. New incentives will include a free bike, visits to other national museums and creative projects will be invited to talk at the classes.

- ☺ Provides a good way to make refugees feel welcome and to increase their interest and motivation for the integration classes. No one has ever been penalised in Amsterdam for failing to complete the classes.
- ☹ Some refugees will not want to ride bikes because it is not part of their culture.
- ☹ Such a positive response to refugees could be seen as discriminatory against the poorest or most vulnerable groups of the national population who also require a large amount of support and encouragement. For this reason, the project could not be implemented in Finland or Sweden because it would be considered politically incorrect.

Collaboration with local businesses to secure jobs and work placements⁶² for refugees as incentives

In the northern European countries, the most appealing incentive to attend language courses is to be provided with a job after completing the course. Initiatives were taken by some language schools in Denmark and training centres in Spain to approach local employers and try to secure positions for refugees who successfully completed the course.

Collaboration with universities

IFK-Deutschkurse Salzburg und Collegium Austriacum, Austria

A three-week summer language course at Salzburg University has been organised for two groups of Kosovar refugees. The aim is to provide them with a practical basic knowledge of German. The strategy involves working with parents and children to create a so-called 'learner community' (lerngemeinschaft). Previous experience has led practitioners to believe that if parents and children learn language together, this can have very positive and sometimes healing results for the family. Language learning can become a new element of family life and can help the family through the mourning process experienced after trauma. Language learning is viewed as the first step towards accepting responsibility for a new life in exile.

Two qualified teachers deliver 20 lessons each week as part of a tailor-made course. Teaching takes place

⁶² See also Vocational training Guide, Section 2,A and Employment Guide, Section 2,C

in the beautiful baroque buildings of Salzburg University. It was a deliberate decision to organise the classes in the old city centre, far away from where the refugees are housed, because it was considered important for refugees to leave their houses and to attend classes at schools and universities that are also used by Austrian students. The aim is to achieve integration by teaching refugees the basic language that they will need for everyday life; demonstrating Austrian hospitality; and involving the local community.

- ☺ Cooperation has proved successful between universities and language schools; teaching takes place in a beautiful and peaceful environment; family classes are used to support a process of recovery and the local community are involved as much as possible. All these elements were considered to be transferable.
- ☹ Short-term course, benefiting only a few clients.

Money as an incentive?

In France, refugees who take part in full-time training courses are paid an allowance, which is higher than the basic social benefit to which they are entitled. A similar strategy is applied in Finland. It is assumed that this will motivate refugees to attend classes. Although this was recognised as having a real effect in southern Europe where refugees are not entitled to any benefits, it was not considered to be a very effective incentive by northern European experts or by refugees themselves.

A refugee in France explained that financial incentives are paid to all refugee students and he believes that this is a positive measure. (Refugee Education Panel)

Accredited language certificates

IFSA language courses in Kiel, Germany

IFSA has been offering German classes for migrants and refugees for over 20 years, covering basic German courses, vocational language courses and jobsearch courses. After completing the course, all students can take an exam recognised by the federal Department for Education at national level (Sprach Verband Mainz).

- ☺ Provides nationally accredited courses.
- ☹ It is uncertain whether the courses actually ease the access to further education, vocational training or employment.



Signpost to Good Practice

- Incentives could be provided for refugees attending language courses. Financial incentives are far more effective in countries where refugees are not entitled to social benefits.

I. Career guidance and access to further education⁶³

Career guidance

All refugees may face an array of barriers to integration - language difficulties, illiteracy, loss of social status etc. Refugee women face further barriers such as family responsibilities, lack of suitable or affordable childcare facilities, and a low level of advice provision catering for their special needs. To facilitate refugees' access to further and higher education or mainstream education, there are ways in which to overcome the most obvious barriers that can include mis-information and time wasting; high fees; and non-recognition of previous diplomas.

Refugee Outreach Advice Project, the UK

This project is run jointly by three UK advice agencies: the Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service (RETAS-WUS), Asylum Aid and the Central London Advice Service. Its aim is to assist refugees who have difficulties in accessing advice services, particularly women and those with disabilities.

Outreach advice work is delivered outside the office base. This can take place in refugee community organisations, colleges, hostels or private homes. Advice can be provided on an individual or group basis. During this two-year project, 200 individuals received advice at home; 600 group sessions were organised; and 60 service providers were trained on refugee issues around education and training, immigration, welfare benefits and housing rights. Publicity materials were compiled in four languages (Arabic, Turkish, French and Spanish). The advice covers also refugees' access to mainstream education and training.

- ☺ Professional individual advice is provided to isolated refugees who will then have a greater chance of accessing the education and training system.
- ☺ This strategy could easily be transferred to an organisation with a flexible team of advisers. It is recommended for empowering refugee communities and community centres.

63 See Vocational training Guide, Section 2,C

☹️ There is a lack of continuous funding to develop such services further.

“I strongly believe that, wherever possible, refugees should have the opportunity to be educated and trained within the mainstream sector. In this way, they have more chance of being seen as a person first and a refugee second. The system imposes severe limitations on refugees’ access to educational opportunities. I therefore think that a strong case may be made for giving refugees an ‘amnesty’ in terms of fulfilling certain rights related in particular to access to benefits and further education.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Grant and loan schemes

There are limited options available to refugees who wish to study at higher education levels in the host country. They must either apply for study grants or for special student’s loans. In most northern European countries however, refugees are exempt from university fees or can access concessionary fees. Despite this fact, study fees continue to pose a major barrier preventing refugees from accessing higher education.

“Most Further Education colleges do not offer a concession to those in receipt of low pay, whether they fulfil the residency requirement or not. There is an excellent tradition in the UK of people returning to study and continuing to study at any age, and there are many diverse opportunities at further and higher education. I therefore think it shameful to deny intelligent, uneducated people the educational opportunities deserved by all in a society which promotes Life-long Learning, particularly when the provision is quite clearly there.” (Refugee Education Panel)

Refugee Service of the Protestant Social Centre, Belgium

This Brussels-based NGO offers loans with 0% interest for refugees who wish to access higher education. The aim is to support the integration process for those who are too old to apply for mainstream grants schemes or to those who do not meet the strict criteria. Providing interest-free loans is a way to give the refugee responsibility for his/her education, and career support is also offered to those who take up loans. It is a cheap way for NGOs to offer a long-term service to a few candidates each year, rather than giving out one-off grants.

☺️ The initiative fills the gaps in the mainstream system and allows the refugee to be a responsible actor in her/his own education process.

☹️ Very few loans are provided each year and the high demand is not met.

“I funded myself. I did not have a family here and I did not know any charities. I am still suffering. I owe people £800. I paid the first year, but they are very tricky people, they did not tell me that they would increase the fee for the second year.”

“I paid for the first year. At the beginning it was difficult for me. There was a gap between my first degree and now. The first year was really difficult, it was a different system. I did not know how to use the library. It was complicated. With my terrible English, I could not use the computer for references. I didn’t have a computer at home. I spent one and a half years working on my postgraduate masters’ degree - Computer System and Networking Engineering - with no computer at home. My class fellows were surprised how I managed to pass without having a computer at home. All my class fellows did a one year computer access course before they joined the university. I entered the university straight away. I tried a lot. I suffered. I could not have the chance to practice at the university because of my travel expense.” (Refugee Education Panel)



Signposts to Good Practice

- Career guidance should be free, available and accessible to all (including women and disabled refugees) and should address the needs of the student in a holistic manner.
- Refugees should have access to study loans with low or no interest rates or to statutory grants from various sources: public, private or voluntary organisations. Information should be made widely available to them.

Section 3: Recognition of foreign diplomas for refugees

The recognition of the qualifications held by refugees is a crucial step in the process of settlement and integration into the host society. Recognition is required both for furthering their education and for getting a job. Many refugees in Europe come from cities and have good levels of education; a substantial number hold academic and professional diplomas and have had considerable work experience. However, research has identified lack of recognition of their foreign qualifications as one of the key barriers they will face. Lack of recognition can be due to the following:

- lack of necessary documentation held by refugees;
- lack of appropriate provisions in the host country for assessing and recognising foreign (and refugee)

qualifications;

- lack of appropriate financial resources required for recognition procedures;
- even when recognition is not required, or when there has been a formal recognition process, refugees still might find that their diplomas do not receive 'de facto' recognition by employers or education providers.

Most experts in the three regional expert meetings stressed their serious concerns with regard to the lack of recognition being given to previous qualifications, both for the purposes of education or training and for the purpose of getting a job. Most practitioners share a common feeling of frustration and powerlessness over the decision-making process on their clients' case. They are limited to supporting clients' applications and forwarding files to the national recognition body or to a university.

A. Basic elements of good practice

Danish Refugee Council, Denmark

The Danish Refugee Council, supported by the EU Budget line B3-4113, carried out a project on the recognition of refugee qualifications which involved the production of four handbooks offering descriptions of the education systems in Iran, Iraq, Somalia and ex-Yugoslavia, as well as a handbook on 'Assessment and Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications in the European Community', written by Finn Kjeller Johansen. The latter provides an overview of current assessment and recognition procedures in all EU Member States and in Norway. These books were published in December 1998.

☹ Only four national education systems have been described so far.

"I studied Engineering back home and when I came here I wanted to work as an engineer. I knew that my qualification can not be recognised here but there was a possibility to get exemption if I write my portfolio. Later I found out that there is an organisation called NARIC⁶⁴ who could assist me for the recognition of my qualification. I wanted to send that, but unfortunately then I found out even if I had an exemption, because I didn't have my status I would not be able to go to university and do further education because they would not accept me as a home student. And even if I had my humanitarian status (Exceptional Leave to Remain), I would not have had 3 years residency in this country and I would be assessed as an Overseas student. Therefore I became very disappointed and did not send my diploma to NARIC. I think by the time you get your status you will not have as much interest as you had at the be-

64 National Assessment and recognition Information Centres

ginning. Waiting for almost 3 or 4 years in order to be able to be considered as a home student is a long time” (Refugee in the UK, the Refugee Interviews)



Signposts to Good Practice⁶⁵

- Recognition of qualifications both for education and employment should be a right.
- Procedures for recognition should be simple, transparent and effective, and carried out in accordance with international conventions and standards. They should lead to a recognition statement that is authoritative and accepted by employers and education providers.
- Educational recognition should give access to an appropriate entry point in education.
- Recognition for employment should allow access to all aspects of the job with the exception of areas of work related to national security which governments reserve for their own nationals - in this regard, refugees should be given the same treatment that is given to the most favoured foreigners.
- In cases of partial recognition, when a qualification does not reach the appropriate standards of the host society for that particular qualification, provision for remedial action (such as adaptation or bridging courses or supervised re-training) should be made available to refugees.
- Advice and guidance with regard to recognition of qualifications should be available.
- Funding for the process of recognition should be made available.
- Provision that normally require some kind of intervention from the refugee’s native government or institutions (such as the ‘legalisation’ of diplomas) should be waived.
- In the absence of papers, refugees should be given the opportunity to ‘reconstruct’ their qualifications through alternative means such as photocopies, student ID cards, sworn statements and other testimonials.

B. The Lisbon convention

In 1997, the ‘Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region’, sponsored by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, was launched in Lisbon. The Lisbon Convention contains three key provisions:

- Each Party shall recognise the qualifications issued by other Parties meeting entry requirements to Higher education, unless there are substantial differences concerning those requirements between the countries;
- Each Party shall recognise periods of study completed within the framework of a higher education programme in another Party;
- Each Party shall recognise the higher education qualifications conferred in another Party, unless there

⁶⁵ See also Appendix 2: ECRE Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, paras: 72-74

are substantial differences concerning the qualifications between the countries. Furthermore, the Lisbon Convention is remarkable for making an explicit reference to refugees.

Article VI reads:

“Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education systems and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for accessing higher education, further higher education programmes or employment activities, even in cases where the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence”

This article refers to a common occurrence. Refugees often are forced to leave their belongings, including certificates and diplomas, behind. The article commits the Parties to facilitate the assessment and recognition of these papers when there is a lack of documentary evidence.

The implementation of the Convention has been entrusted to the ‘European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC)’, which work closely with European NARICs (National Assessment and Recognition Information Centres).

☹️ **To date, not one EU country has ratified the Lisbon Convention.**

C. Special provision for refugees from Kosovo

Joint statement in favour of Kosovan refugees taken at the sixth Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC networks in Vilnius, 13–16 June 1999

Following the recent crises in the Balkans, the 1999 Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC networks discussed issues concerning the recognition of qualifications held by refugees from Kosovo and Serbia and made a statement appealing to the Parties and signatories to the Lisbon Convention to apply its principles and show flexibility with regard to the recognition of undocumented qualifications as well as the parallel and often non-formal Albanian language education system which had been in operation in Kosovo for some years.

WUS-UK was invited to provide expertise in the general discussion of refugee qualification.

Working Party on the Recognition of Refugee Qualifications

Encouraged by the ENIC-NARIC networks' statement, the Council of Europe is organising a training seminar on the general issues related to the assessment of refugee qualifications, and, in particular, on the higher educational system in Kosovo and Serbia.

This training seminar will be held in Autumn 1999, and it is expected that it may be repeated later or adapted to other contexts. The training seminar is being set up by a few NARICs (including those from Belgium, The Netherlands, Finland, and Slovenia) and WUS-UK. It will be funded and hosted by the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.

The initiatives outlined above constitute examples of good practice that have brought together various expert agencies (such as ENIC-NARIC networks and refugee agencies). Working together these agencies have managed to obtain funding and sponsorship from the Council of Europe, an international intergovernmental organisation.

Education: WUS



World University Service

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