



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

EMPLOYMENT

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



British Refugee Council

Good Practice Guide on Employment for Refugees in the European Union

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Introduction:

Integration of refugees through employment

Methodology

The British Refugee Council [BRC] is one of the lead agencies participating in the ECRE Task Force on Integration of Refugees. The general objective has been to develop and strengthen the capacity of, and cooperation between, NGOs and other actors working in the Member States in the field of integration of refugees, particularly through employment. Within the broad framework of the project's design the mission of the BRC as lead agency on employment (working particularly closely with lead agencies on Education⁷⁹ and Vocational Training⁸⁰ has been (i) to examine specifically the problems relating to high unemployment levels among refugees, barriers to access and advice, discrimination and eligibility issues, and issues relating to employers, trade unions and self-employment (ii) to look at the methods of practice, whether short-term projects or ongoing work, and to develop strengths through networking, through dissemination of good practice and innovative models for integration (iii) to make appropriate and timely recommendations so that the economic benefits that refugees can bring may be activated more positively. The methodology included the following outline of principal meetings, activities and processes that produced the documents referred to below.

Refugee employment: meetings, activities and events

This Good Practice Guide is the result of our many actions between November 1997 and the end of November 1999. The following activities, meetings and events have all contributed directly or indirectly to the work presented in this Good Practice Guide.

- Questionnaires on refugee employment prepared, completed and analysed, Feb.-October 1998 (see “Refugees and Employment: an Analysis of the ECRE Task Force on Integration Survey on Refugee Employment”)
- Questionnaires on national situations: (see “Refugees and Employment in Europe: Background Information on National Situations” in the context of: 1: Permission to work; 2: Levels of unemployment; 3: Ethnic monitoring; 4: Procedures for getting jobs & access to advice; 5: Attitudes of employers and trade unions; 6: Integration through employment / work experience & economic integration; 7: Policy development / anti discrimination / equal opportunities / freedom of movement)

⁷⁹ See Education Guide

⁸⁰ See Vocational Training Guide

- Employment and Vocational Training Experts meeting in Paris, (see report on “Seminar on Vocational Training and Employment of Refugees in Europe”, jointly with FTDA: Paris: May 1998)
- Participation in Education experts meeting London, June 1998
- Conference in Antwerp, (see “Report on the ECRE Task Force Conference on the Integration of Refugees” Antwerp: November 1998)
- Seminar on Refugee Self-employment, in Copenhagen, (see “Report on Seminar on Refugee Self-employment” Copenhagen: May 1999)
- Refugee Employment Panel, Dalfsen, the Netherlands, (see “Refugee Perceptions on Employment”: report from the Refugee Employment Panel (Dalfsen, July 1999)
- “Refugee perceptions” interviews April-July 1999 (publication due November 1999)
- Employment Experts meeting, held in Dublin, (see Report on “employment experts meeting”: Dublin: October 1999)

International Instruments

A number of international instruments and EU level initiatives have already been referred to in earlier reports mentioned above⁸¹ or in the “*ECRE Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe.*” (Annex 2). Where appropriate they are referred to in the text. Among those international instruments relating to employment, which we should note as ideal models in the search for good practice, are those relating to the right to work, to self-employment, the role and responsibility of Trade Unions, freedom of movement, and non-discrimination.

In the EU context the adoption of the Employment Guidelines for 2000⁸² with the accompanying draft recommendations from the Commission on individual Member States’ performance following the implementation of the 1999 guidelines through the National Action Plans highlights the context into which refugees looking for work find themselves, and also the context in which some of these models of practice should be judged.

Problem Analysis

Key players

These include *government agencies and public employment services*; some different models of approaches are discussed in Section 2 and a key question is how much refugees should be treated similarly

81 “Refugees & Employment: an Analysis of the Survey on Refugee Employment”

82 “Joint Employment Report for 1999”: European Commission

to others, or as a special group; also how much of the way refugees are treated simply reflects a national tradition; and how much room there is for transnational exchange of practice to have any effect.

non-governmental organisations [NGOs] including national or local organisations dealing only with refugees, those dealing with them together with other immigrants and ethnic minorities, and refugee-based organisations including community organisations; a key question is how much they should be advocating or supporting special measures. NGOs however are themselves employers, and do not always have such a good record in employing refugees. (see Sections 5,6)

employers: clearly they have a clear role to play, and there are differences in how employers see the problem and how refugees see the problem: this needs to be addressed. But not all employers are in the private sector and there are opportunities for refugee employment in the voluntary or public sectors, in both of which there are still attitudes to change.(Sections 3,5)

trade unions: they play a varying role and there would seem to be room for more good work to be done on refugee employment issues through this route. This could be in furtherance of public and work-place awareness to include the recognition that certain issues are specific to refugees, work in the field of anti discrimination and work with employers, or campaigning both on human rights but also on refugee specific issues such as permission to work for asylum seekers.(see Sections 1,3)

Details of some of our findings during 1998-9

This summary of our key policy recommendations arising from Year 1 of the work of the ECRE Task Force on Integration indicates some current issues, and in this document we are trying to show how several of these issues are being addressed, though not necessarily entirely resolved, by projects and initiatives described hereafter.

General recommendations (addressed in Sections 1-6 below)

- the asylum seeking period must be recognised as a key part of the process of integration of refugees, as it can represent for individuals a key period in the development of their educational, vocational training and employment prospects.(Section 1)
- asylum seekers should be allowed to work after a six-month waiting period (Section 1)
- EU-wide measures must define the entitlements of refugees and those with subsidiary forms of protection, with a view to facilitating their integration through employment, rather than creating barriers to integration and an additional cause of discrimination.(Section 2)
- discrimination specifically against refugees must be considered as an important factor within propos-

als regarding EU legislation to combat discrimination as a result of racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism. (Section 5)

- acceptable methods must be devised to enable ethnic monitoring and the monitoring of specific refugee situations to be carried out in order to be able to justify and implement appropriate special measures in favour of refugees. (Section 5)
- the positive contributions refugees make in the economic, social and cultural life of Europe must be recognised, and efforts must be made to involve the wider society in the process of refugee integration, including especially, in the sphere of employment: successful refugees must be visible as role models. (Section 3)
- employers and unions need to be sensitised about refugees and become more directly involved in refugee issues. (Section 3)
- refugees must be recognised as a particular group with special needs and distinct requirements within the Employment Guidelines as they become implemented through National Action Plans, and within the Structural Funds as they are reformed. (Sections 2, 6)
- special funding may be required at national and EU level to enable refugees to have a “bridge” into mainstream funding. (Section 5,6)
- support and financial encouragement must be given for refugee enterprises and for individuals working in that sphere (Section 4)
- refugees must be permitted to have freedom of movement in order to work, and to have equality of treatment in parity, as appropriate, with EU nationals and third country nationals
- the value of refugee NGOs and self-help organisations must be recognised at an EU level, both as employers, training providers, potential partners in economic regeneration, and as advocates for sensitive and equitable development of policies (Sections 2, 4, 6)
- good practice among refugee “projects” must be valued, recognised, disseminated and, where appropriate, replicated. (Sections 1-6)

Identifying good practice

The identification, recognition and dissemination of good practice in employment is an integral part of our activities. Through the above contacts, analysis of questionnaires, visits and exchange of information through a variety of means we have attempted to identify good practice that may be worth developing elsewhere. We include ongoing work, special initiatives or short-term projects, sometimes even national contexts or policies, if we feel that they have something to offer to others as a model or example that can be replicated, or that can influence for the better the way things are done in another country. A number of activities, projects, initiatives, campaigns, and ideas still to be fully developed have also been identi-

fied. Any of these may have come through our partner organisations, pilot projects, responses to questionnaires, visits, recommendations from other sources, or our own judgement or experience. Inevitably some good practices will have been omitted, some misconstrued. Some of our comments may imply criticism by omission, or may seem to include criticism that is based more on questions about the potential for transferability of a “project” rather than questions about its intrinsic value or quality. Many good practices in “integration”, of course, do not involve employment in isolation, and where relevant we cross-refer to the findings under those other themes followed by our partners. We have looked at good practice in the following areas that reflect some of the key issues already raised and the threads that we have been following in our work on integration through employment over a two year period. These threads have in turn been influenced by the sort of work we have come across and the views expressed by representatives of refugee organisations or other NGOs, or by refugees themselves. The text includes some details of individual initiatives, some comments on the situations we find, and offers some pointers or signposts for the future.

Commentary: in summary, the key points that we have tried to look at in specific projects that have been identified have included, where relevant: (i) the origins of the project (ii) its main aims and activities (iii) information about the funding and organisation of the project (iv) effectiveness and cost-effectiveness (v) why this is good practice (vi) indications of any multiplier effect (vii) comments on any effective social and economic integration aspects (viii) any innovative elements (ix) any potential for transnational transferability (x) the scale if any of refugee or NGO involvement in planning, management or implementation (xi) potential problems (xii) contact details.

Section 1: Removing barriers to eligibility for work

Permission to work for asylum seekers & refugees

Background- some perceptions on this issue:

A refugee in the Refugee Employment Panel, Dalfsen: “*refugee integration begins with the asylum process, where root problems need to be addressed if successful settlement is to take place.*”

A British judge (Lord Justice Owen) in a judicial review in the UK in 1997, when this policy was first under threat, strongly criticised...” *a policy which allows me to give an asylum seeker money when he begs but*

makes me guilty of a criminal offence if I require him to do some work for the money...

A refugee in Ireland, speaking at the launch of a campaign on asylum seekers' rights (The Asylum Rights Alliance, see below): "*Right to Work and Ready to Work* "... "*Give us that opportunity*".

In a public opinion survey carried out by MORI in the UK in November 1998 "*69% of respondents believed that asylum seekers should be permitted to support themselves while they wait to hear if they are granted asylum.*"

The issue: In two countries [Belgium until July 1999, and Luxembourg] refugees with status did not have unconditional access to permission to work; in others permission to work for asylum seekers is either forbidden, or restricted (time limited), or restricted to a specific employer (the employer must ask for permission), or restricted to a specific employment sector, or is subject to preference having been given to nationals or EU citizens.

- The following countries give no permission to work for asylum seekers: Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal.
- The following give restricted (or conditional) permission: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Spain, Ireland, Austria,

Recent good practice:

The 1999 Kosovar Albanians, with a considerable public profile and sympathy were usually, in most EU countries, given up to 12 months leave to remain, including in the following countries.

- Immediate permission to work: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Sweden, UK
- restricted permission: Netherlands only after 12 months, Denmark, Finland & Spain not automatic but only if they have contract with a specific employer

☺ Approximately 59,000 people came to EU15 under the emergency evacuation programmes; many of these received permission to work immediately. Particularly in Ireland, Kosovar refugees have been successful in getting jobs.

Good practice relating to asylum seekers is evident in

(i) The United Kingdom where permission to work for asylum seekers (though not their dependants) after a 6 months waiting period has been granted as a concession, not as a right, since 1986, though this is sometimes under threat in the UK. Permission also gives access to government training programmes, self-employment, and to unpaid work or volunteering.

(ii) Sweden where permission is normally granted if a decision has not been made after 4 months; if a working asylum seeker is still in a reception centre s/he would have to contribute to costs. This policy has been in operation since 1992 following the government's change of mind in response to public opinion indicating a view that able bodied asylum seekers should work rather than receive benefits.

A. Campaigning for rights of those with refugee status^{83 84}

1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees [Wage earning employment: Article 17.1]. *...States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country...2.. restrictive measures imposed on aliens...for the protection of the national labour market shall not be applied to refugees...3. ...States shall give sympathetic consideration to assimilating the rights of all refugees with regard to wage earning employment to those of nationals...*

There have been long campaigns in the two EU countries where even refugees with status were not granted automatic permission to work. In Belgium this campaign was successful on 1st July 1999, now leaving only Luxembourg with work restrictions on those with refugee status.

Refugees and the right to work: a successful campaign: c/o OCIV, Brussels, Belgium

A successful campaign led by SWITCH (a project within OCIV) that works specifically on employment issues; initially working with individuals, they now do more group work and concentrate on working to change the public structures within the system. For example, a campaign has finally been successful after pressure from this project, with considerable support from the “temporary employment agencies” which exist in every town or city throughout Belgium, to clarify the right of refugees to work. Other allies have been retired business mentors, and former politicians. Since 1st July 1999 legislation [K.B. in BS van 26 06 1999] has finally confirmed that, throughout Belgium, those with refugee status will be given an unconditional right to work without having to request a permit. In most cases until that point complex procedures were needed for those with refugee status in Belgium to get permission to work [Permit A or B], which also included the need to pay tax stamps and to provide a medical certificate as well as get confirmation from the local commune office.

- ☺ Successful campaign; permission now automatic for refugee status, reward for long struggle
- ☺ Employment agencies' and refugees' interests coincided

83 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 & the 1967 Protocol; articles 17,18,19 re right to work

84 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) re right to wage earning employment, self employment, labour legislation & social security

On the other hand, in *Luxembourg*, refugees with status still normally need to request permission to work. This, when granted, may not necessarily be an indefinite “permission to work” and so may need to be renewed; it can be for restricted sectors or areas; it could be for a specific employer only. So, for those with refugee status, although it may be given fairly automatically, it could be permission “A” (for one year and one employer,) or “B” (for 3 years and any employer in a specific sector), or “C” (indefinite and for all activities); for those with “humanitarian status” it is only granted exceptionally, with special conditions for the employer. The Luxembourg government claims that these procedures amount to a ‘de facto’ automatic permission, but that they need to do it this way so they can know how many refugees are employed. The policy is designed to equate refugees with other immigrants, and has been challenged in NGO campaigns, as contrary to the spirit of the 1951 UN Convention (see above). Luxembourg is now unique in not giving automatic permission to refugees. CARITAS among other NGOs are active in campaigning on this issue.

B. Campaigning for rights, of asylum seekers.

Models of practice: there are a number of active campaigns on the issue of permission to work for asylum seekers. These are usually long-term campaigns where strong alliances are important, but where changes, often only small ones, can be effected by consistent campaigning.

Asylum Rights Alliance-Ireland, a campaign for asylum seekers and the right to work, c/o Irish Refugee Council, Ireland

A strong campaign (Asylum Rights Alliance with over 100 members) to persuade the Irish government to give permission to work to asylum seekers after 6 months wait has received wide support including from the Deputy Prime Minister, a Former Prime Minister, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the National Organisation of the Unemployed [INOU], UNHCR as well as many religious organisations and the Irish Refugee Council. Public meetings, press coverage and evidence of skills shortages in the labour market which many refugees with status have been able to fill have added strength to this campaign. Campaigning in Ireland has demonstrated both the economic and moral arguments in a country where there was until July 1999 no grant of permission to work for asylum-seekers. This high profile campaign, though it has recently made small gains, is not fully successful yet. Since July 1999 changes to regulations have been introduced concerning (i) parents of asylum seekers’ who have children born in Ireland, and (i) those persons who have been in Ireland for more than 12 months and who entered the country before 26 July 1999. Such people are now entitled to seek employment. The employer must apply for a work permit before the person can take up employment.

“Given the acknowledged labour shortage in certain sectors of the economy allowing asylum seekers to work can no longer be seen as a threat to Irish workers” (Irish Refugee Council 5/3/99)

“The government’s policy of no work for asylum seekers is ‘ill-conceived’ and ‘incomprehensible’... “the excuse that permitting asylum seekers to work might exacerbate hostility to them from the unemployed is reminiscent of the 1930s excuse of excluding Jewish refugees because it might encourage anti-Semitism” (Garret Fitzgerald, Former Irish Prime Minister)

“Bureaucratically enforced dependency is sowing the seeds of a virulent racism” and “forces people to rely on social security or engage in black economy work” (INO)

“The Irish Congress of Trades Unions promotes social inclusion within Irish society. This includes those who have come to live here through whatever circumstances.”

- ☺ Demonstration of strong alliance of NGO, private sector, unions and politicians
- ☺ Economic and humanitarian arguments coincide
- ☺ Campaigning techniques transferable to other countries having limitations on work for asylum seekers
- ☹ Still no progress on the right of asylum seekers to have access to government training schemes
- ☹ Strong campaign with some small concessions but not yet fully successful in Ireland

Asylum seekers’ and the right to work in the Netherlands: c/o Dutch Refugee Council, the Netherlands

A Dutch NGO campaign (led by the Dutch Refugee Council) for access by asylum seekers to normal employment rights and opportunities. In this campaign there has been strong support from the FNV (Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions), who have argued on humanitarian grounds for this change. In the Netherlands there is only a limited permission to work for asylum seekers in seasonal work particularly in the fruit-picking and horticulture sector where there are severe labour shortages at particular times of the year. For this reason the Netherlands government has listened to the employers and extended this concession to include asylum seekers. The 12-week maximum limit relates not to the seasons so much as to the fact that after that period there would be automatic access to Unemployment Benefit rights, which the government does not wish asylum seekers to have access to. The existing concession therefore solely reflects employers’ needs in a particular sector, and is not at all a concession intentionally to assist asylum seekers. However, there is currently (September 1999) much debate on the issue of asylum seekers’ right to work more generally in light both of employers’ increasing need for

labour in improved economic circumstances, but particularly since the Dutch government (Minister of Social Affairs & Employment) has stated his position clearly: “In my opinion we should consider whether it would not be desirable to [have] a much further extension (of the accessibility of asylum seekers to the labour market)”.

- 😊 Firm alliance between Dutch NGOs and Trade Unions
- 😊 Campaigning techniques transferable
- 😞 Not much ‘humanitarian’ sympathy among Dutch employers and government, but economic considerations may yet prevail.
- 😞 No progress on the issue of the rights of asylum seekers to have access to vocational training
- 😞 Strong campaign, but not yet successful in the Netherlands



*SIGNPOSTS TO GOOD PRACTICE*⁸⁵

- Those with refugee status should have unconditional access to permission to work under the 1951 UN Convention.
- Given the current length of asylum determination procedures together with governments’ commitment to make speedier decisions it is seen as essential that governments should make a commitment to give permission to work to asylum seekers who have not had a decision after a reasonable period, and to others with subsidiary forms of protection.
- It is generally agreed that six months is a “reasonable period” after which asylum seekers need to begin a process of integration.
- Dependants of asylum seekers (spouse and children over 16) should be included in the right to work or have access to training
- After this six month period the right of asylum seekers to access government funded training programmes should also be guaranteed
- Alliances need to be created (with employers’ organisations, trade unions, public, media) to press for changes where these are still needed
- Long-term inactivity for those able and willing to work can cause long-term damage to the unemployed: this is an EU-wide problem, but governments are adding to the problem

Section 2: Helping individual refugees to overcome barriers and find jobs

85 See also Appendix 2: “ECRE Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, paras. 60-63

Background:

“Governments...need to implement policies that bring people together and enable refugees and the host community to interact as equal partners.”

“Integration in the labour market is also about appropriate and sustainable employment, not just working full stop.” (Refugee Employment Panel)

1. **The role of NGOs in the field of refugee employment: how refugees get jobs.** The ECRE Task Force survey of findings from the analysis of questionnaires showed that the most important role for NGOs working in the field of employment was in the field of giving careers advice, training for job search skills, advice about job vacancies, negotiations with employers for jobs and work-placements, and generally changing employers’ attitudes.

2. see table in Section 3 for perceptions about **barriers faced by refugees.**

3. **National contexts:** the ECRE Task Force survey of national contexts identified both the official channels and the more informal routes by which refugees seek work (*“Refugees and Employment in Europe: Background Information on National Situations”*). Some of the more informal methods of getting work have been described in the refugee perceptions interviews that were completed in 1999. More formal methods include both the government or local authority Employment Offices, NGOs including refugee organisations offering support, and a number of innovative variations of these procedures, some of which are described below. These all reflect the host communities’ national characteristics and traditions, many of which are not instantly transferable, but elements of which may be adapted if they can be seen to be useful and to have positive outcomes. The following are a few examples of some of the best ways to help individual refugees to get jobs through a variety of models of practice that (i) reflect different national traditions but (ii) have some capacity for transferability while (iii) demonstrating the need for interaction between host community, public service and refugee-centred operations. The *“Refugee Perceptions on Employment”* report from the employment panel at Dalfsen also looked at a number of such models, some that treated *refugees as a special case* (via projects or approaches based either within the host community, within refugee community organisations, or within the public employment service in alliance with NGOs); and looked also at *“mainstream / integration”* models purely within the public employment service that treated refugees as equals to, not differently from, other nationals who were looking for employment opportunities. Discussion ranged over the pros and cons of such models⁸⁶, and the prob-

86 See “Refugee Perceptions on Employment”: Report from the Refugee Employment Panel, BRC 1999

lems, and possible solutions. Strong views were put forward that “*refugee input and self-reliance in any programme would have to be the main aim*”, and the overall view was that while the *mainstream / integration* model should be the ideal one, as that hardly ever existed the other approaches (or combinations of them) would still be more appropriate as a bridge into the mainstream. It is in this context that the following models, and the comments on them, should be considered. Each of these actually do merge most of the elements. However they may have different emphases that reflect in many ways the national context and traditions, but this does not have to be to the exclusion of room for change or modification in light of experience from elsewhere.

A. Different ways of interacting with the public employment services

An NGO-based approach interacting closely with the public employment service

Business advisers: a mentoring scheme using the skills and contacts of Dutch former business men - EMPLOOI, the Netherlands.

An EMPLOOI “advisers” project working closely with the Dutch Public Employment Service’s “Job Centres”: EMPLOOI has developed a network of nearly 80 “mentors” (called advisers) who are former business people, ex-managers and former directors of companies. Most are recently retired, average age +/- 60, and they work on a voluntary basis for at least 2 days per week. Their aim is to help refugees who are ready for work to find suitable paid jobs; the project is nation-wide and currently (1999) mentors are based in 63 municipal employment offices. They give custom-made advice to individuals and frequently sustain their interest by keeping in touch with client and employer “after sales”, as well as negotiating with individual employers on their behalf. The project is mutually beneficial. All advisers work in their own way but collaborate closely with the employment office while discussing the tasks they perform with each refugee individually. They carry out an intensive interview with each refugee, may visit employers with them, go to interviews, help with letters of application, assist with dealing with welfare benefit offices for those refugees wishing to do an internship etc. The Public Employment Service meanwhile works in close alliance with these advisers seeing them as external partners who are able to help them to meet new targets for the employment of minorities in the context of new legislation to stimulate labour participation amongst minorities and to support the integration of newcomers.

“For every refugee who understands his or her job and who is motivated, an EMPLOOI adviser can find a job, although it takes a lot of time and effort to convince employers” (EMPLOOI adviser, Venlo)

“I am very satisfied ...through (Emplooi’s) good contacts in the business world I could find a job relatively quickly. On my own it would have taken considerably more time to find the nice administrative job I currently have”. (Refugee client of EMPLOOI)

- 😊 Firm alliance between NGO, private sector individuals, & Public Employment Service making a bridge into the mainstream
- 😊 Good individual results
- 😊 Synergy between this initiative and government initiatives to promote placement of ethnic minorities
- 😊 Cost effective and transferable: already considerable transnational interest
- 😞 Not much refugee involvement in implementation; refer to comments later re recruitment of advisers

Alliances between NGOs and the public employment services

There are other, different examples, in France and Germany, of alliances between NGOs and the public employment services; and of mainstream approaches in Sweden and Italy with approaches to employment through the local municipal employment offices.

“ANPE réfugiés”: Government Employment Service staff working in a refugee agency, France Terre d’Asile [FTDA], France

For many years, under an agreement between FTDA & l’Agence National pour l’Emploi [ANPE]. FTDA has been in partnership with the national ANPE agency. This agreement has been established through the signing of a “convention” establishing the creation of a branch of ANPE in the offices of FTDA, with a professional adviser responsible for the reception and professional orientation of refugees in the Paris region. This branch known under the name of “ANPE réfugiés” used to work in collaboration with the network of ANPE offices only in the Paris region. After functioning in this way for years it has recently been developed beyond the Paris region alone through an agreement signed with the national network of ANPE offices. So all parties can speak the same “language” the careers advisers in the refugee hostels have been trained by ANPE trainers on how to use the tools available to facilitate the access by refugees to the job offers and vocational training available via ANPE. Without having been fully evaluated it is clear that this agreement has contributed to the guidance and professional integration of refugees throughout France. There are political advantages which cannot be ignored, and an improvement in the professionalisation of the advisers in the refugee hostels as well.

- 😊 Good links between NGO and public service
- 😊 Transferable at national level and transnationally

- ☺ Good training and “professionalisation” potential for NGO staff
- ☹ Risk of lack of independence for NGOs
- ☹ Too early to evaluate at a national level yet

“Profession-Job-Future”: Public Employment Service contract with an NGO: Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) Hamburg, Germany

AWO is one of a number of major NGOs that play a large part in the implementation of the German welfare system. AWO in Hamburg has developed a partnership with the Social Benefit Office [Socialamt] so that refugees (and asylum seekers who are allowed to work) and who receive their welfare benefit money on condition that they are actively looking for work are referred to the AWO office “employment advisers”. Here they are interviewed sensitively by people experienced in dealing with refugees, rather than in the public employment office / Job centre / Social Benefit Office which has neither the time nor expertise to deal with them effectively. If necessary AWO colleagues who may speak the refugees’ language may help with interviews. AWO has a contract with the Social Benefit office to see refugees and to deal with them as appropriate. Refugees are sent to AWO for active advice and consultation, and AWO is provided with a list of those whom they are expected to see. If those listed fail to come to interview they risk losing their benefits, so in effect AWO plays the same role as the public employment service. This is an AWO pilot project in Hamburg following their initiative, with potential for being replicated nationally.

The service includes a diagnosis of refugees’ language, training and employment needs and potential, followed by referral to appropriate services, or a direct employment outcome. For example refugees would be referred if needed to appropriate German classes, to procedures in the local Chambers of Commerce for requalification of vocational or professional skills, or directly to employers. After only 18 months considerable success has been shown in securing jobs for 160 refugees in full-time or part-time employment, while 350 are now involved with requalification, vocational training or state subsidised work placements.

- ☺ Guarantees a more sensitive approach to refugees than in the mainstream services
- ☺ Effective outcomes in employment results
- ☺ Good alliance of NGO with public employment service
- ☹ Transnationally there might be some risk of confusion with punitive nature of some of the employment service agenda, with some risk too of compromising the independence of NGOs, and isolating refugees away from mainstream
- ☺ Nevertheless the model is transferable within limits of a national programme; or transnationally, especially where there are concentrations of refugees

Sensitising officials

In Portugal a programme looks at sensitising officials and long-term support for refugees:

Social & Economic Integration of Refugees: Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)

CPR provides training courses for professionals dealing with integration issues, aiming to develop expertise about the special needs of refugees. Employment is considered to be one of the key issues in these training courses, due to its importance in the integration process as a whole. In CPR refugees can benefit from individual advice and guidance during the different stages of their integration into the labour market. Even though this casework is very time-consuming it has been very useful. In this service mediation tools are often used to promote better communication between refugees, the employment services and employers. At the same time it is also a way to disseminate information both about labour-market opportunities and about the social and economic rights of refugees. Refugees are entitled to the same access to employment services as nationals and / or other migrants. Partly due to the small number of refugees in Portugal there is no special provision for refugees as far as employment is concerned. Therefore CPR refers them to the mainstream services while offering to the employment services this guidance and advice in order to help to guarantee that their service can be tailor-made and appropriate. This avoids treating refugees separately, which might risk increasing their exclusion.

- ☺ The integration process is helped through sensitising officials
- ☺ This approach avoids treating refugees as a separate group
- ☹ No access for asylum seekers, who are not entitled to work even while waiting for a final appeal
- ☹ Lack of specific measures provided on an ongoing basis to overcome barriers such as language.
- ☹ No direct involvement of refugees in providing the guidance and advice service
- ☹ Long term nature makes evaluation difficult at this stage

A “mainstream” approach

In another approach there are integration models based more within the mainstream provision of employment services, such as the following two models, one in Sweden, one in Italy:

Integration programme: activities aimed at integrating new arrivals: Botkyrka Kommun Employment Service, Stockholm, Sweden

Botkyrka is a municipality (pop.71,500) just south of Stockholm with a very high concentration (52%) of immigrants: some areas such as Fittja have a concentration of 92%. Segregation between Swedes, immigrants and refugees is a reality in schools and communal housing, with unemployment at 2-3 times the

rate for Swedish people. In 1998 Sweden moved away from an immigration policy and towards an integration policy, no longer viewing and treating people arriving in Sweden as a group with special needs just because they are immigrants. Instead, what is important is that everyone has equal rights and opportunities regardless of ethnic and cultural background. A new national institution, the National Integration Office was created for this purpose, developing a new individual 2-year introduction programme (in force 1 July 1999), a partnership between the municipality and the newly arrived refugee or immigrant in need of protection, aiming at giving the individual the skills and knowledge to become self sufficient, and the ability to participate actively in Swedish society. Included in the comprehensive programme are employment-related programmes which give clients:

- Knowledge of the Swedish language so as to be able to use it as communication tool · An opportunity to start education / training to supplement their qualifications · documented assessment of their educational and professional background · An opportunity to make contacts with employers and associations. *The “flow” of the introduction programme – the Botkyrka example:* once a newly arrived refugee in Sweden has been given refugee status or some form of protection, the Immigration Service refers him/her to a municipality (based on quotas) which in turn will receive compensation for the settlement costs involved (annual compensation of approx. 17,000 euros per individual enrolled in the programme).

The newly arrived person will have an individually tailored introduction plan, based on individual skills, needs, and desires. Information meetings give the newly arrived information about services in Botkyrka, including employment. Once an introduction plan has been established, activities normally involve full-time study or work (8 hours per day). A monthly introduction grant in cash is closely connected to attendance on courses, and performance. All absence must be verified. However, the system is flexible, and part-time work side-by-side with the programme is possible, although that would mean a reduction in the grant. The Social Service has ultimate financial responsibility for the introduction programme, but the Employment Service is involved at an early stage to find vocational placements and employment opportunities within the municipality (including subsidised public works) and local businesses. One requirement for getting work placements is that the newly arrived person has passed an exam in Swedish. The programme ends when the goals in the plan are achieved.

- ☺ Well funded, ensuring refugees are not a financial burden at a local level
- ☺ Provides subsidised employment for work experience
- ☺ Respects individual needs, but can be quite prescriptive.
- ☺ Transferable, but only where government has a comprehensive settlement or integration programme,

with a national programme for dispersal of refugees

- ☹ No room for refugee community development initiatives
- ☹ No provision for asylum seekers
- ☹ Too new to be able to judge effectiveness

“World Job”: an initiative in the Milan area through the Municipal Employment Bureau, Milan, Italy

This has developed as a result of a protocol of understanding among institutions in the Milan area including the Municipality of Milan social service department, the Lombardy region employment agency and a number of associations and private foundations. Each signatory member offers its own particular skills and competence which is then available to all categories of non-EU foreigners including refugees. One objective is to highlight the positive role of immigration in the economic and cultural development of Italy. In Milan the municipality offers, through its Municipal Employment Bureaux, help in finding employment, in close co-operation with the private sector through analysing the labour market. Employers inform the office on the needs of the labour market (e.g. in their specific sector): vocational courses to meet these needs are organised by the municipality with high success rates (80%) and a positive side effect involves employers sharing information, thus strengthening this positive approach. Sometimes the concentration of ethnic employment in a particular sector can make it difficult for individuals to break out of a situation of “ethnic segregation” in employment. Additionally (and this is the only administrative tool specifically addressed to refugees resident in Milan in terms of economic integration) there exists the possibility of a “Vocational Training Grant” giving extra funds for training (“Training Contracts”) for new employees under the age of 32. This is a useful “equality” mechanism since there is otherwise no distinction made between refugees and migrants, and the Italian unemployed. Bureaux in each Province deal with the unemployed, though it must be stressed that the traditional Italian approach to job search is through networks of family and friends, and these Bureaux, responsible for helping refugees into work, have to act as the first stage in that role for refugees, relying on the greater flexibility in the private sector than exists normally in the public administration. Thus the private sector is integrally involved in the orientation, training and vocational qualification of refugees leading towards employment. For example this has worked well in the North and North West of Italy where there is a need for technicians and specialist workers, or with international chains of restaurants, bars and self-service cafes; this is frequently through work experience placements or through companies’ personnel staff being involved in training. Thus the Municipal Employment Bureau becomes a reference point for refugees looking for work, recognising them as an important resource while offering them customised guidance and advice.

- ☺ original methodology through co-operation between public institutions (municipal employment service) and the private sector
- ☺ effective employment outputs
- ☺ provides support for newcomers with no established social networks; supplements the traditional informal contacts in job search
- ☺ easily transferable nationally and transnationally

B. Refugees advising refugees

This is a feature of several UK models whereby a ‘refugee community development approach’ characterises the whole integration process, and this extends in many areas to the realm of employment where ‘refugees advising refugees’ is seen as both productive and appropriate. Sometimes this is done by employing refugees in refugee agencies (see also Section 5 on equal opportunities); at other times it is done through independent, refugee community organisations, or refugee-managed agencies, who get funding for employment development work. In such cases however the theme still is how best to develop working partnerships with other agents working in the employment field, though refugees’ experience of the public employment services in UK (Job Centres) have not usually been very positive and community- or NGO-based projects are often seen as a better bridge into employment.

Haringey Refugee Consortium, London-UK

This consortium is in one of the most deprived London boroughs with a large refugee population. It is a grass-roots alliance originally formed, with special ethnic minority central government funding, by refugee community organisations mostly sharing the same premises, representing Eritreans, Ugandans, Iranians, and Somalis. More recently it has been joined by other community groups including from Kurdish, Ethiopian and Zairean refugee communities. Originally the Consortium was solely managed by representatives of the refugee organisations but more recently other local professional organisations and individuals have joined in the management. These refugee organisations were independent in their core activities but agreed to pool their employment work to give more strength to the local case for refugee employment. This has paid dividends through giving an added public profile and better access to local funding and to training and jobs for refugees. Currently services include careers advice and vocational counselling, training provision in English or other skills, and also referral to other agencies, small business enterprise development advice and support, job search skill support. Particular services have included a minicab training course, computer maintenance course, and a women’s outreach and advice work service.

- ☺ Refugee involvement in management, planning & implementation

- ☺ Good local alliances between different refugee communities
- ☺ Strong local alliances with public employment service, training and employers' organisations

Skills Match: Midlands Refugee Council (MRC), Birmingham-UK

MRC is one of a network of regional refugee organisations in the UK: it is the only one wholly managed from the beginning about 10 years ago by refugees. MRC works on a range of integration issues, including this employment project. They have a project aimed at improving the employment capacity of qualified refugees by setting up work placements and structured feedback sessions. Much of this is done on an individual basis through expert mentoring via contacts with the 'minority' sections of local professional associations. This will lead to the creation of a dossier of information and guidelines and direct employment for participating refugees. Also, more appropriately for less qualified refugees, there is a working alliance with a local Positive Action training organisation involving interview techniques, accreditation of prior learning, exploration of different career paths, with a general introduction to the labour market. Through this initiative work, stimulated by the likely need to prepare for Albanian speakers, has been done in the context of training to develop the capacity and employability of interpreters, as well as negotiating for appropriate accreditation for interpreters for the probation service; while for doctors financial support was made available for the expensive process of registering and buying books, leading towards requalification, and setting up of links with the School of Medicine. At the same time a conference has been organised exploring the links between health and employment. (This project is supported by EU budget line B3-4113).

- ☺ Refugee involvement in management and implementation
- ☺ Individual approach to clients' needs
- ☺ Good links with professional organisations, training providers and employers in the region
- ☺ National partnership with Wales (local authority strategy) and Scotland (mental health)
- ☺ Links between employment and health issues
- ☺ Some funding available for individuals for employment-related needs, but never enough

Capacity building for refugee community organisations [RCOs]

Another UK initiative in London seeks to strengthen this type of refugee-based initiative by developing a *network of organisations working in the field of refugee employment and training*

The Pan London Refugee Training and Employment Network (PLRTEN), London-UK

Initially designed to add value and capacity building support to the established ESF-funded Refugee

Training Partnership [see Vocational Training Guide, Section 2] operating in Central London, the scope of the project was widened to the whole of London at the request of the Government Office for London. PLRTEN addresses the key difficulties refugees face through the development of closer relations between employers, training providers and RCOs. Its main activities include: capacity building support for RCOs, increasing RCOs' involvement in training, supporting refugee employment and training initiatives, developing the Network and Partnership Board, publicising its members' activities through media events. The project is funded from ESF Objective 3 Priority 4, with co-financing from the Refugee Council and other partners. It is a partnership between organisations from different sectors of the economy; based at the BRC it is led by a partnership that includes representatives from training providers, RCOs, Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) and employers. It has a two-tiered structure with a managing partnership of 12 [including 6 RCOs] and a membership of about 100 organisations. PLRTEN adds value to existing training and employment initiatives by: funding the assessment of initiatives so they can be developed as models of good practice, filling gaps in programmes such as the provision of beneficiary travel expenses or child-care costs that can prevent refugees from taking part, publicising and linking projects across London to improve the provision or to avoid replication, resourcing support for RCOs in other regeneration partnerships or consortia so that they are able to influence work that is carried out in their name. RCOs (the immediate beneficiaries of the project) are in the majority in the Partnership Board and therefore play a key role in directing the work that is carried out. This initiative could be replicated at EU level within ESF through other regional voluntary sector capacity building programmes; it already interlocks with 4 other networks, helping RCOs to get into working relationships with other organisations for their mutual benefit. It is innovative as it is a unique regional forum, and as it has an RCO majority on the partnership board. Over 60 RCOs are members of PLRTEN, and many individual refugees benefit, though the size both of the problem and of the refugee population in London means that within its limited time-frame (total 2 years) the significance of sustainable RCO capacity building will to an extent be limited, and certain parts of London or certain organisations may not be reached. (See Vocational training Guide, Section 2, C)

- 😊 Strong refugee participation in management, planning & implementation
- 😊 Fosters good links between economic and social integration
- 😊 Capacity building for refugee NGOs
- 😊 Good regional alliance with employment contacts, with educational and training providers and local authorities.
- 😞 Eventually could facilitate access by NGOs to more EU funds
- 😞 Short term funding; too early for clear results yet

(Also refer to Employment Guide Section 5: Equal Opportunities in Employment)

C. Targetting special groups of refugees

Refugees are not a homogeneous group and some projects focus on some of *the more disadvantaged refugees*, such as:

“Vivir Aquí”: Unió Pobles Solidaris, Valencia, Spain:

A Spanish project providing rented and supported accommodation while looking at the connection between housing and integration, and assisting refugees to bridge the gap and at the same time to be able to transfer between ‘precarious’ employment while asylum seekers and the ‘normal’ labour market, in times of great economic hardship and high unemployment in Spain. “Vivir Aquí” acts as a sort of decompression chamber or acclimatisation process to help to prevent newcomers from being marginalised. It gives a sound base which will help refugees to overcome the barriers such as language, lack of technical skills or knowledge of the labour market, or of appropriate documentation. It helps by giving training to those still in the informal economy who need cash today rather than participation in medium-term training programmes, and can give a boost to those less motivated to the world of work, encouraging them to access training and at the same time reinforcing contacts with employers, training organisations and the institutions dedicated to job search. This work is done in partnership with regional and local authorities in Valencia, other public institutions, and the national Ministry of Social Affairs. (See Housing Guide, Section 1, C)

- ☺ Focuses on needs of more disadvantaged refugees
- ☺ Links housing and employment issues
- ☺ Rescuing people from the damaging situation imposed on asylum seekers without permission to work (Section 1)
- ☺ Partnership between NGOs, central and local government and EU funds
- ☺ Transferable across EU

whereas some focus on *higher achievers*, such as medical doctors as in

“Doctors’ Journal Club” with Refugees into Jobs, London-UK

This is a project assisting doctors to requalify. It is an alliance between an NGO and the local Public

Health Authority. Established in 1998 it offers a weekly central meeting place in N.W.London for refugee doctors who were qualified in their home country. It is convened and mentored by a local doctor who has himself gone through the long and difficult process of registration and re-qualification. Among the issues discussed are the appropriate technical language testing scheme that is needed as a first step to registration, together with language coaching, and support through the system of requalifying exams, clinical attachments, and alternative routes to registration. The meetings also provide for useful exchange of information, familiarisation with English medical terminology, and with the UK health system, with discussion of how to overcome barriers to employment. The Club also has a medical library with an extensive range of medical references, and can give financial help with fees from the NGO and the local Employment Zone, since language classes and exam fees in particular are expensive. It is attended by about 20 doctors weekly and efforts are being made to make the provision more accessible to women doctors. Successful moves into employment by Journal Club participants are now being seen, beginning to address a shortage of doctors in the UK. **(see Health Guide Section 2)**

- 😊 “High value” employment outcomes enabling highly skilled refugees to re-enter their careers in the UK
- 😊 Good mix of funding via “health” and “regeneration” support through an NGO initiative
- 😊 Transferable to other countries and to other professions (e.g. nursing, engineering?)
- 😞 Requalifying processes are expensive

(also see Health Guide, Section 3 for a number of links between health and employment projects)

Others work more generally on *refugee and migrant issues together*, as for example in Austria. The approach in Austria reflects the need to combat some fairly intransigent attitudes to refugees and considerable difficulty in approaching the need for refugees to seek work into order to become integrated. Several projects address these issues which include the need to overcome both legal obstacles to work for foreigners, and general prejudice and cultural misunderstanding. The approach is not usually to have refugee-specific provision. This is in the context of a traditional Austrian approach which tends to be assimilationist without really respecting different cultural identities.

Intercultural Forum: ISOP, Graz, Austria

This project works closely with the Employment Service to support migrants and refugees seeking work, through using individual advisers to give appropriate ongoing support and advice on a one-to-one basis, both before and after employment. Project work is funded by the City and regional councils, Public Em-

ployment Centre and ESF. Main activities include most aspects of integration into the labour market, with advice and support for those on the margins of the labour market (even for those already in low skilled work to improve their prospects) or simply helping those with a low chance of integration into the labour market, with appropriate advice, language and training courses. The combination of training and employment work in an organisation that allows for the needs of individuals, or for special groups (e.g. women or young people, Bosnian or Kosovan refugees etc.) can include work on legalisation of work permits for clients, public awareness with employers, and 1 year long work placements (possibly 2 years for those over 45) in ISOP. This includes training on the job, and social, language, as well as professional and educational support. These initiatives have the effect of helping with socio-economic integration by securing the legal situation of migrant workers and refugees, the counselling of a target group that would normally wait for several years to get a chance in the labour market, and the active participation of migrants and refugees in the process of finding new fields of work, by enhancing and making use of the specific capacities of individuals. Work is done too through regular publications (ISOTOPIA) and public awareness activities concerning anti discrimination, human rights issues as well as labour market and other integration issues.

- 😊 Work with multi-ethnic teams including full participation in planning and implementation
- 😊 Parallel projects on health, language, schools and youth
- 😊 Good success rates
- 😊 Challenges prejudice in a hostile environment via public awareness work
- 😊 Links training, advice and substantial work placements
- 😊 Focus on refugee women, less advantaged groups etc.
- 😊 Good alliance with Public Employment Service
- 😞 Short term funding and the reality of the labour market

Integrationshaus, Vienna, Austria

The opening up of potential is a key ambition of **Integrationshaus** seeking to follow a long term path to integration which is a progressive process via language learning and psycho-social stabilisation. They have developed specific 18 week orientation and vocational training and / or 12 week employment search courses with 6 week on-the-job training through work experience, which serves to help refugees to examine their idea of an intended career and to cope with the reality of the work situation in Austria. This latter stage helps them to make employment contacts and several trainees have secured jobs in this way through demonstrating high motivation and eagerness to learn. This provision has been made on behalf of the Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice) for refugees with a right of

access to the labour market, initially with Bosnian refugees, latterly with other Convention refugees and other foreigners. Many participants were women who have been seen to have particular difficulties in gaining access to the labour market.

- ☺ Good alliance with Public Employment Service
- ☺ Focus on refugee women, less advantaged groups etc.
- ☺ Parallel projects on health, language, housing etc.
- ☺ Good success rates
- ☺ Links training, advice and work placements
- ☹ The reality of the labour market and the external environment

D. Miscellaneous

A particularly interesting initiative in the Netherlands looks at *Work Experience internships* as a route to employment

Refugee internships in a government department: EMPLOOI, the Netherlands

Responding to an initiative from the Tax Office in the Netherlands in 1998-9 work placement “internships” in the government department responsible for Inland Revenue have been arranged by EMPLOOI. Placements so far offered to refugees include among others the income tax office and the Customs Laboratory. Refugees are selected according to their qualifications and previous experience (e.g. a chemistry background for the customs laboratory) and are paid for a period of one year. The project has been financed by a special fund provided by employers who give a small percentage of their yearly profits to this fund. Ten refugees with a high level of education and a suitable background, and who were unemployed for a long period, have worked and studied for a year under this scheme. Individuals are offered support by staff members. Each of them had at least weekly meetings with a mentor / supervisor from the Tax Office and at least once a month with an EMPLOOI adviser, or the three of them together. Training on intercultural communication was given by the Dutch Refugee Council to the mentors and to the refugees separately. Although there was no guarantee of secure employment at the end of a year, all except two are now working for a regional Tax office. It is still hoped to be able to repeat this experiment. This unusual initiative can be a lesson to other governments looking to encourage diversity within their civil service departments, by recognising the skills and previous experience of refugees, and further respecting refugees by not presuming that they are a threat to national security, which is the more common national approach. For example most countries have rigid nationality rules about entry to the civil service. Some

countries see the civil service as also including local government. At the same time the UK has a high profile campaign to recruit ethnic minorities who are extremely poorly represented especially in the higher levels of the civil service. Apart from the Netherlands therefore this is an area of employment opportunity that is considerable in size and prestige but is effectively closed to refugees in most EU countries since no other government seems ready to consider this due to traditional national preference and national security concerns.

- ☺ Effective outputs
- ☺ Helps Civil Service to be more diverse
- ☺ Respects high qualifications and commitment of many refugees
- ☺ Actually very transferable but no other support outside the Netherlands

Other work is done through publications or through IT on the following:
Training refugees in how to get jobs (Job search Training)

“Job Search Training Handbook for Refugee Professionals” (WUS and Goleta / Horizon partners)

This is a useful publication [in English & Spanish] aimed at helping refugees with professional qualifications who are either unable to find work or who are working in low paid, insecure jobs with no scope for using their skills and experience. It is helpful for refugees themselves and for agencies offering Job Search courses and covers such issues as personal stocktaking, identifying and putting into place a plan of action to deal with barriers, increase in self-confidence, preparing for work, addressing language issues, CV preparation, application forms and interview techniques.

- ☺ Transferable through translation into more languages
- ☺ Refugee involvement in preparation

Training employment advisers

AHOI [Action and Advice for Labour Market Integration of Refugees and Migrants, an on-line Distance learning project, German Red Cross, Bonn-Germany]

The Red Cross in collaboration with the University of Saar runs this distance learning project through the Internet at a national level for advisers, trying to improve their skills at careers guidance in support of the labour market integration of refugees and migrants who are entitled to work. In Germany many public

services and voluntary agencies give such advice. Clients for the training are advisers, social workers, or counsellors who need support in labour market-related skills and for Job Centres, social services, training bodies etc. across the country who need support in working with refugees in this context. On the whole it is felt that this is appropriate equally for advisers for refugees, and for migrants, who are concerned with careers advice, job search skills, self employment, and advice about job vacancies. The training programme is delivered by internet providing scope for interaction and access across the country, giving participants the opportunity to network on all aspects of labour market integration. It is felt that distance learning can be a powerful tool for such specialist training. Overall the project aims to counter the increasing difficulty faced by refugees in accessing the labour market, through improving the quality of advice services and local infrastructures, and by qualifying 'multipliers' in the field of vocational guidance and labour market integration. Following testing in Saarland, Berlin and Dresden 200 trainees from a wide range of German organisations including NGOs, municipalities and refugee / migrant organisations will have participated in 1999/2000. Also together with 6 INTEGRA partners a transnational module in English is being developed on the key topics: promoting labour market integration through empowerment, cross-cultural competence, networking, and cross-cultural awareness in mainstream services. This module will be available across Europe in 2000.

- ☺ Innovative use of new technology
 - Cost effective once pilot stage has been completed
 - Transferable nationally and transnationally

IT support for employment & self-employment

Migranet Information Technology Project: London-UK

Initiated by DAYMER, an organisation catering for the needs of migrants and refugees mostly from the Turkish Community in two London boroughs (Islington & Hackney), with other partners in local regeneration (Local Economic Consortium, supporting capacity building for NGOs that deliver training and employment initiatives, & the Islington Enterprise Agency, working with community organisations and small businesses), it especially focuses on those who are already in work and are wanting to upskill themselves. The project provides a drop-in Information Technology [IT] centre, has an employment web-site that is tailored for the needs of refugees and migrants, helps to develop links between local employment providers and community organisations. In the long-term it aims to develop links between community organisations and employers, to develop a reputation for its IT services, and to enable other sites for cyber-cafes to be identified and developed. The internet service is free to members and users of the centre. Users have the opportunity to learn how to use the net, search

for specific information, find out about jobs, develop their own web-sites, and can also be used for essay writing or college projects for students, CV preparation, job applications etc. It also runs a training programme for Small & Medium Sized Enterprises to help them access IT skills, increase efficiency and reduce risks of business failure. It is hoped that by developing this model for open learning centres on three sites with choice of venue, times and environment this can be mainstreamed for other refugee / migrant groups in the UK and EU. Working with such a diverse range of businesses has had its difficulties. The businesses are owned by refugees or migrants, the language of the business is usually Turkish, there is usually very little communication with mainstream business services, there is natural suspicion of outside intervention in family-run affairs, there is no culture of training, high staff turnover, and a high rate of business failure. It has been hard to reach the client group but the staff team has managed to break down some of these barriers and engage owners and managers in a dialogue around the benefits of having staff skilled in Information & Communication Technology and are now delivering services to these businesses and their staff. MIGRANET has also developed training manuals and tuition notes in Turkish and English for commercially recognised exams.

“ I have started to contact my friends and relatives in Turkey using the internet” (Turkish cafe owner)

“ The nature of my business changes so often I need the latest IT services to keep up to date” (Turkish Supermarket owner)

- ☺ Refugees / migrants closely involved in implementation
- ☺ Innovative use of new technology in a community that initially finds it hard to accept
- ☺ Transferable nationally and transnationally; could be developed using other languages
- ☹ Short term funding for long term project

*Signposts to Good Practice*⁸⁷

Public employment services

- **Public employment services need to work closely and sensitively with refugees who are seeking employment, and with NGOs that are supporting them**

Refugees advising refugees

- **There needs to be encouragement for more refugee involvement in the delivery of advice and guidance to refugees in the employment context: this increases refugee employment and shows refugees as role models**

Refugees as a special group?

- **Refugees are not a homogenous group and appropriate care needs to be taken to treat refugees**

87 See also Appendix 2: “ECRE Position on the Integration of refugees in Europe” paras. 60, 63-71

as 'special' where this is needed and in the mainstream where this is possible

Internships in government offices

- **Any employment restrictions that are claimed to be justified by national security and citizenship considerations should be minimal and based upon reasonable grounds**

Internet development

- **Great need for the further development of the potential for use of internet to foster employment prospects for refugees and information and training for advisers**

Section 3: The role of the social partners⁸⁸ (Employers and Unions)

Perceptions about the barriers to employment

Both the analysis of questionnaires and the Dalfsen refugee employment panel have indicated the following views of NGOs, employers and refugees as to the key barriers to be overcome: though the barriers are quite similar seen through these different eyes the priorities are in some aspects quite different. The following indicates an order of priority among the main issues identified as barriers and while not scientific it does show that refugees see prejudice and discrimination as being more of an issue than NGOs seem to do, particularly as the refugee employment panel also noted that ... *"language problems can be used by employers to mask discrimination, as it is an easy excuse to say that since a refugee does not speak a host language perfectly, s/he cannot get a job"*...

"...refugees and the host community must be more exposed to each other so that mutual understanding is improved and the multi-cultural society is strengthened." (Refugee Employment Panel)

A. Employers

How should refugees be presented to employers?

"Refugees are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances". This was the conclusion of some market research⁸⁹ completed in the UK in 1998 as to arguably the best way for refugee agencies to represent refugees. This seemed to be preferable to their being persistently portrayed (i) as if they were all Einsteins via

88 " 1995 Joint Declaration by the Social Partners" against discrimination. The Social Partners are represented at EU level by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industries of the European Community (UNICE), & the European Centre for Public Enterprise (CEEP)

<i>What are the biggest barriers faced by refugees according to NGOs?</i>	<i>What are the biggest barriers faced by refugees according to refugees?</i>	<i>Employers perceptions of barriers to employment according to NGOs?</i>	<i>Employers perceptions of barriers to employment according to refugees?</i>
Language & communication problems	Language & communication problems	Ignorance of refugee issues, fear of culture clash	Ignorance of refugee issues, fear of culture clash
Lack of understanding of work culture	Prejudice & discrimination	Language & communication problems	Language & communications problems
Prejudice and discrimination	Low pay, low status, job insecurity	Legal barriers, permission to work etc.,	Prejudice & discrimination
No recognition of qualifications	Lack of understanding of work culture	Lack of appropriate skills	Legal barriers, permission to work
Low pay, low, status, insecure jobs	No recognition of qualifications	Prejudice & discrimination	Lack of appropriate skills

an unrepresentative and elitist use of famous figures (ii) through shock tactics causing a national guilt trip (iii) as not here through choice, however true that may be (iv) as if they were the only problem in the world, or (v) as purely the result of distant dictatorships in far off lands.

The Refugee Employment Panel, Dalfsen broadly supported this approach [*“refugees must be seen as individuals within a group”*] but in relation to the question of how refugees want to be portrayed by refugee agencies in their contacts with employers refugees are in a dilemma between the desire to be treated as equals, and the initial need for special treatment. [*“refugees are human beings who are ‘legally’ equal in the community”*]. A summary of the discussion among the refugees at Dalfsen on how they would like to be portrayed by refugee agencies in their contact with employers led to a conclusion ... *“highlighting the importance of refugees being presented as individuals with skills and valuable experiences willing to make a contribution to the host society. This also goes for women refugees who should be portrayed as individuals in their own right and not as dependants of their spouses. However the group identified a real dilemma between being presented as equals and the need for (initial) special support.”*

To counter some of the barriers a number of agencies involved with employment work have tried some of the following interesting initiatives with reference to employers:

“Employment Charters”: France Terre d’Asile (FTDA), Paris, France

FTDA has established a process that involves agreeing “charters” with large, national private sector employers. These are formalised by both parties signing an agreement. This represents a national agreement between FTDA and well-known French employers, including those which are “household names” and with a nation-wide remit. *“The Director of FTDA and the President of the ‘xxx enterprise’ undertake for their mutual benefit to secure employment at a local level for refugees by signing up to a “Charter”: “xxx” encourages its regional agencies or branches to make FTDA aware of vacancies...”* FTDA operate a ‘first-stage selection’ among refugees about the jobs on offer. People offered jobs will be entirely the responsibility as employees of the employer but will maintain a FTDA person as contact in case of need, and to provide feed-back about the success or otherwise of the arrangements.” One example of a well known French employer agreeing to an Employment Charter is CHRONOPOST, the premier French enterprise in the field of transport and express deliveries. The enterprise thus expects to participate in the economic integration of refugees through its 43 agencies throughout France by informing the refugee hostels about vacancies. The hostels, particularly in Creteil, Bordeaux, Mulhouse, Rennes and Strasbourg, which anyhow have a role to play in helping refugees to find employment opportunities, have found the initial contacts with CHRONOPOST very helpful in providing job opportunities or training that could lead to jobs. Other, similar, employers are being approached with a view to creating networks of job opportunities throughout France. The decentralisation does not make evaluation and follow-up easy and it is in any case time-consuming but a nation-wide approach to job-vacancies is seen as realistic and of potential value to refugees.

- 😊 Useful example of NGO / private sector partnership.
- 😊 Good public awareness potential through snowball effect.
- 😊 Easily transferable as most EU countries have such employers.
- 😊 Fairly inexpensive to set up.
- 😞 May be harder to follow up or monitor; not really tested nationally yet

“Individual profiles”, EMPLOOI, the Netherlands

A Dutch initiative starting in 1999 using the EMPLOOI newsletter to highlight the profiles of a number of highly qualified refugees; for example “Ms xxxxxx, followed by details of education, professional background, qualifications and experience in country of origin and where appropriate in country of asylum, with the contact number for the Dutch EMPLOOI adviser who is supporting that person’s search for employment as a mentor. (see section 2 above, and below).” The newsletter has a wide circulation (around

15000) and this recent initiative has helped a number of refugees to get work already because it showed to employers searching for skilled workers the possibility of accessing a person with those skills, through the mediation of a respected NGO backed by a team of employment advisers whose background is familiar to employers.

Mentors: recruiting advisers, EMPLOOI, the Netherlands

EMPLOOI did some research and discovered that there were approximately 3000 potential advisers in the Netherlands, recently retired and with time and expertise to spare. Various ways are used to recruit suitable advisers; one of the best is through general positive publicity about EMPLOOI, or through specific meetings and conferences for retired people. Other methods include direct mailing and newspaper advertisements which can be expensive and do not necessarily work well; and personal contacts through others in the EMPLOOI network, although that can sometimes become difficult as it may be harder to say “no” if someone is considered unsuitable for any reason. Recently Emplooi has also started a poster campaign.

Basically (“Code of Conduct”) advisers are recruited to *“assist as many refugees as possible to find a place for themselves in Dutch society through paid work...through the voluntary effort of ...advisers, former directors and ex-managers who are able to move at a high level within the public service and in the business community, and are socially active.”*

- 😊 Good alliance between private sector individuals and refugees
- 😊 Good potential for links with Public Employment Services and real job opportunities for refugees
- 😞 Could be seen by refugees as potentially paternalistic, and also tends to be rather “white and male”-oriented as the “pool” from which advisers are recruited is quite narrow.
- 😊 Could tend to focus on more easily placed refugees?

The critical comment above was clearly indicated among the refugee perceptions at Dalfsen where it was felt that: *“having host community input in terms of connections and social networks was important, but that as successful refugees are good role models, refugees themselves could be the actual mentors... The risk of refugees being passive receivers must be avoided”*

WUS-RETAS /UK has a small mentoring project modelled partly on the Dutch initiative described above, one specifically for Doctors and another using an agency for retired executives. Both include refugee or ethnic minority mentors. SWITCH (Brussels) similarly has a mentoring project including women mentors.

“Employability”: a series of events in UK looking at the undiscovered talents that exist among refugee communities: City Parochial Foundation (CPF), London-UK

The CPF is a major trust that funds refugee groups and other disadvantaged groups. It has been established for over 100 years to benefit the poor of London. This project was initially a one day workshop to promote employment opportunities for displaced professionals (i.e. refugees). This event brought together refugee professionals with senior representatives of major private sector national companies, central, local and regional government, and the leading refugee agencies in London. Its purpose was to raise awareness of the potential human resources within refugee communities in Britain, especially their potential for management. They met and talked to each other as individuals and had opportunities for one-to-one discussions in an informal setting with key employers with whom they were matched. The day included the presentation of a written profile of each refugee participant, offering their full curriculum vitae if required and indicating their huge range of qualifications and experience, including language skills. Some “success stories” were there too, those who had been successful in getting good jobs. Trying to work across sectors and with government to remove barriers, the aim was to work with employers on effective strategies for building bridges between refugee communities and the world of work, and to provide UK employers with the opportunity to meet face to face with selected individuals with potential for senior management. Among the outcomes were agreement on the need for some of the following to be addressed: the need for clarity from the government about who has the right to work, and for individuals to be clear about their own position; the need for individuals to be able to experience the world of work, perhaps by attachments; the need for individuals to build their confidence and to have practice in polishing their interviewing and communication skills; the need for better partnerships to be established between employers, refugee agencies and organisations working with refugees; the need to educate employers about the skills and experience which exist amongst refugees and displaced people. Next steps included correspondence with government ministers and the development of partnerships between key participants acting together to make practical improvements through working groups on policy, marketing and lobbying with the government; on helping refugees into management-type jobs; and setting up a “jobs fair” in November 1999 as a forum for employers and qualified professionals from displaced communities to meet. This event will be for a wider audience of potential employers including other major national employers and small businesses contacted through the London Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Meanwhile training in interview skills for individuals already involved will have been facilitated by some of the major companies, after pioneering with the internet for the presentation and circulation of their CV’s. Key issues still remain the perceived “risk” to employers and particularly to small businesses of the unfamiliar qualifications and “history” of previous work experience of refugees.

- ☺ Joint venture between private sector and refugee agencies
- ☺ Integrated programme including public awareness, policy issues and help for individuals
- ☺ Providing a meeting point for “real” refugees to meet with “real” employers
- ☺ Proactive work by a major trust fund, with potential spin-off for other funding opportunities
- ☺ Focuses only on an élite group of refugees

Integration-participation in society: Ale Kommun-DIS project: Sweden

Ale Kommun is in the vicinity of Goteborg. Aiming to make employers aware of immigrant and refugee issues this part of a wider project focused on the host community rather than on the minority groups, since *“integration politics has up to now one-sidedly focused upon minority groups as a target for measures to be taken”*. It is a partnership between municipal Labour Market Unit, Employment Office, Refugee Reception Centre, Care & Welfare Administration. Refugees have been closely involved in the planning and implementation. The aim has been to create an acceptance of refugees’ integration into local society and to influence society, particularly employers, to see refugees as a resource. This includes focusing on attributes which refugees may have that the host community may not have (such as knowledge of different languages, cultural skills, wider knowledge of law, markets, economics etc.) that could be interesting to Swedish companies, and also proficiencies that can enable employers to relate better to ethnic minority communities in Sweden. The primary target was local companies and public service employers in the community: the principal actors were the refugees employed to plan, lead and implement the project and who were to act as a catalyst to open up opportunities for refugees (*“just the fact that they met immigrants who themselves are working on the issues has made many people reconsider”*). Apart from trying to survey large numbers of local employers to see if they employed immigrants / refugees or had specific policies to address this, the project workers were able to participate in the employers’ association monthly breakfast meetings, make presentations about the project to a seminar on managing diversity, and to make personal visits to a number of the employers both Swedish- and immigrant-owned. They reported positive reception rather than hostility or ignorance; the employers’ views were that the initiative itself was positive but with no clear commitment to change the world on their part. Managing diversity is a long range philosophy that eventually should have favourable effects on both the individual (improving positive identity and co-operation at work), the company or organisation (reduction in conflicts leading to increasing productivity), and society in general (less marginalisation, more engagement with society).

- ☺ Refugee participation in planning and implementation
- ☺ Local partnerships between public sector and refugees
- ☺ Direct face to face meetings with employers

- ☺ Some successful outcomes for participants amid general improvement in employment situation
- ☹ Ambitious targets in a short term bid to solve long term issue

B. Trade Unions

Reference should be made to two key documents at an EU level dealing with general issues relating to models of practice to fight discrimination in the work-place. Though not specifically relating to refugee issues these are an indication of the basic situation (including its problems and its solutions) into which refugees in their search for employment are placed.

(i) European Foundation for the Improvement of Living & Working Conditions “*European Compendium of Good Practice for the Prevention of Racism in the Workplace*”; including 25 case studies (ii) European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC] “*Trade Unions Against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination in the Work-place*”, research and sharing of good practice prepared during the 1997 EU Year Against Racism.

A “Southern EU model” of work in trade unions.

Italian and Spanish trade unions in particular have, on the whole, a good record in protecting the interests of refugees, though they frequently do not distinguish between refugees and other immigrants. This reflects the general approach in those countries, where there still are a significant number of immigrants. They tend (as in the Confederation of Workers in Italy-CGIL) to seek to treat refugees and migrants as workers but at the same time are able to promote specific refugee integration projects which do not prejudice the integrity of the union. On the contrary they help to solidify support and sympathy within the work-force for refugee issues. Additionally union membership is declining in Italy and refugees are an important new source of union membership, particularly where they come from a strong union tradition in their home country. In three Italian unions refugee or migrant workers have taken up significant posts in unions, although it may still be difficult to secure elected office. CGIL is also active in defending the rights of people (including refugees and migrants) who find themselves in frequently exploitative situations in the informal economy. Similarly in Spain unions (such as the Unión General de Trabajadores / General Workers’ Confederation-UGT and Comisiones Obreras / Trade Union Confederation of Workers’ Commissions-CC.OO) are working on social action programmes especially with women, ethnic minorities including refugees, and younger and older people, seeking to help with their integration programmes. These traditions in Italy and Spain reflect some of the history of the southern countries in Europe with their own history of dictatorship and emigration, whether for political or economic reasons, and their experience of their unions’ active representation of their own nationals as migrant workers in

Western and Northern Europe in the past, where they were initially treated frequently as exploited ethnic minorities. This sense of solidarity in the southern countries is often quoted as being more conducive in human terms to successful integration than are some of the more material integration programmes experienced in some of the northern countries. The focus is still on the occupational integration of immigrants and refugees but important work is achieved in the raising of the profile of a group of workers faced by specific problems and influencing and preparing public opinion and fellow workers to prioritise issues of discrimination and xenophobia.

There are some “southern European” examples of refugee integration projects within Trade Unions for example:

“Una cultura per il lavoro”, Turin, Italy:

An Italian trade union project with CGIL-Piemonte (Turin) faced with the growing number of refugees in the north of Italy and insufficient opportunities for employment this project working jointly with CC.OO. Barcelona and USS-CGTP Setubal (Portugal) looked at the similarities in coping with refugee issues in the southern EU countries which were able to offer little in assistance and guidance. Information sessions were organised about refugee legislation and employment opportunities for them, testing the different issues refugees face than those faced by the “traditional” migrants with whom CGIL has worked for years. A research project looked at backgrounds of refugees entering Italy with a view to running specially adapted training courses to address the issues that arose, comparing success of integration in the past of e.g. different groups (economic migrant Albanians and qualified Somalis), and current groups (former Yugoslavs and gypsies and travellers from central and east Europe who were in a de facto refugee situation, even if not accepted as such). A small group of refugees and gypsies was brought together for a training course looking at improving self-esteem and self-respect, information on the Italian labour market, job search, testing the validity of job advertisements etc. This project made an impact on the consciousness of refugee issues within the trade union and its work on identifying new forms of discrimination.

UGT Aragon (Zaragoza, Spain) works in Spain on refugee economic integration issues within the general context of a holistic approach to labour and social integration through addressing language, health, housing, training, legal, issues etc. (See Vocational Training Guide, Section 4)

In some of the northern countries strong union influence is visible particularly in campaigning for rights of asylum seekers and refugees, for example

Trade union campaigns on refugee issues

- ☺ (See above, Section 1) Involvement by Trade Unions in campaigning on the issue of “permission to work” in alliance with NGOs on this issue, particularly in Ireland (ICTU) and the Netherlands (FNV)
- ☺ (see Section 5 below) on more anti-discrimination issues and the following more general campaign with strong Trade Union involvement.

“See difference as an advantage”, a Danish joint Trade Union / NGO campaign for ethnic equality; Mellempfolkeligt Samvirke, Copenhagen, Denmark

Other partners joined with trades unions and initiated a communication strategy concerning ethnic equality. This initiative brought together the Labour Movement Network, (part of their International Forum), the Danish Association for International Co-operation, and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, together with an advertising agency DDB Needham. The intention was to draw the attention of Danish wage earners and their organisations towards ethnic minorities (including refugees) as a resource in the Danish labour market. (This was in the context in 1998 of intense discussions around new Integration legislation, an Aliens Act and reform of Social & Labour legislation). The initiative included (i) a media campaign including stand-up comedy tour of work-places, a humorous but provocative cartoon strip, partly animated in a cinema advertisement “*How Danish should a person be to get a job?*” and three different advertisements in trade, technical and professional journals with the slogan “*see difference as an advantage*”. Thus humour was used as a tool to create greater openness and more debate, producing wide public recognition and positive responses. Additionally employers supported the campaign with press releases, information material and statements. Apart from the media campaign there was (a) an information stage (a campaign newspaper, material for local TU members, articles in trade journals, 3 booklets on (i) how to shape ethnic staff policy, (ii) about initiatives in Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK, and (iii) an international evaluation booklet in Danish, French, German and English (b) debate arrangements including after-work meetings, seminars and the stand-up comedy tour in which they discussed the issues of mutual prejudices at work-places in Denmark and (c) tapping in to existing networks, including involvement in regional seminars, lobbying, and involving the Employers’ Organisation, Employment Exchange and municipalities and language schools; organising meetings in companies, establishing equal opportunities on many different agendas, and co-operating with the newly established Board for Ethnic Equality on the issues of co-ordinating the fields of initiatives with reference to employers. (This project was supported by EU budget line B3-4113).

- ☺ Alliance of “private sector” media, NGOs with an international dimension, & Trade Unions

☺ Unconventional methodology, using media etc.



Signposts to Good Practice

*Employers*⁹⁰

- Both parties in anything relating to a “communication problem” need to work on the solution
- Within existing equal opportunities and diversity programmes the specific needs of and problems faced by refugees must be highlighted without creating another form of discrimination by overstating the “problem”
- Nevertheless unwitting discrimination, or ignorance, is no less racist and ways must be developed to help refugees and employers to be more aware of each other
- More work needs to be done both in public and work place awareness to deal with the disparities of emphasis between how refugees visualise their problems, how NGOs supporting them see the problems and how employers see them.
- Positive images of refugees need to be fostered by all possible means

*Trade Unions*⁹¹

- Need for more access to good potential Trade Union support for refugee issues throughout EU
- TU work on positive policies and better diversity management needs to include a refugee perspective
- TUs have a role play both in the work-place and in public awareness campaigns against discrimination, and on the specific rights of asylum seekers and refugees

Section 4: Self-employment

*The key issues*⁹²

Refugees have clearly stated that they need the following:

- Information upon which to base decisions before starting a business, and advice before starting
- Information, training and support after start-up
- Money for business starts and for expansion
- Money for individuals and families while starting up

Among the refugee perceptions at the Refugee Employment Panel, Dalfsen it was argued that “*the self employment (option) would also function better if the links with the refugee communities were en-*

90 See also Appendix 2: “ECRE Position on Integration of Refugees in Europe” paras: 70-72

91 Idem: paras 45, 70-72

92 See ECRE Task Force “Report on Seminar on Refugee Self-employment: Copenhagen”

hanced. Thus, one way forward would be for refugee entrepreneurs to develop strategic niche markets based on competencies within refugee communities” and one clear suggestion concerned the need to “reduce the stringent self-employment regulations that exist in many countries to enable more refugees to start up their own businesses”. Strong refugee support for self-employment initiatives emerged from the refugee employment panels including the positive belief that “self employment could boost morale among refugees and communities, as well as generate further refugee employment, including giving opportunities for women”, but that self-employment was a complex issue which “should not be seen as a substitute for employment.”

Different national contexts demonstrate different ways of supporting entrepreneurs in the initial stage through the benefit system. Some national examples exist of good practice in national “welfare” policies offering help with survival income and wage subsidy programmes, aiming to reduce personnel costs during the first crucial stage after starting a business. These use the welfare benefit system “actively” to help create self-employment opportunities including, but not exclusively, for refugees.

Different national ‘welfare’ models

For example in Ireland “Back to Work” Allowances are available for all those (not only refugees) who put their “business start” proposal before a Jobs Facilitator to see if it is viable: if so, it is possible to continue to receive gradually reducing welfare payments over a 3 year period. In the Netherlands refugees starting their own enterprises can continue to receive welfare benefit payments for 18 months (though a 3 year period is being considered): the enterprise must initially show that it cannot function without the personal subsidy, but the money must be repaid after 18 months if the entrepreneur is able to support himself. In fact it is generally expected that 2-3 years is the optimum time for an enterprise to be established. This scheme is widely used by refugees in the Netherlands. In Sweden refugees (treated, together with migrants and women, as a special group) can continue to receive welfare benefit payments for 6 months, in monthly instalments, while planning a business start-up: during this period they are free to spend time planning their enterprise, subject to an assessment of the viability of the projects. However unlike the Dutch system it stops when a business begins trading, so much effort can be wasted if the business in reality cannot become operational. In Germany wage subsidies can be made available in particular for new employees of small but expanding new enterprises, rather than for the actual people starting them. In the UK it is only possible to continue with the housing benefit element of welfare benefits once an enterprise has started. ‘Family credit’ for those on a low income who have children may also be available for up to 12 months for those starting an enterprise.

A. Information, advice, training and support for refugee self-employment

A number of initiatives have been identified which look at the various stages involved in starting up a business

Information and Advice

Business Enterprise Adviser, British Refugee Council, London-UK

A refugee business adviser gives advice exclusively for asylum seekers and refugees, helping them to start up and to survive in business. This includes the offer of professional advice in helping to generate ideas, formulate strategies, and giving expert advice on business planning, business law and taxation, and about raising business start-up and expansion funds. Advice is given by the adviser who is himself a refugee who has run his own business, and had previously worked as business adviser in enterprise agencies in London. He can recognise the specific strengths that refugees may have as a result of their unique experiences. The project tries to overcome the language barriers in clients' efforts to plan their businesses and raise funds, recognising that many public enterprise advice agencies may make judgements about refugee clients' skills and abilities purely based on their level of competence in English. The advice and the environment of the Refugee Council Training and Employment Section enables clients to access good translators so they can, if needed, prepare their business plans in their own languages initially. They can be helped to understand that in the UK there exists a buyers' market, not the sellers' market that refugees may have come from, and contacts are maintained with successful refugee business people who can act as role models and supporters. The adviser refers clients to funding agencies in the appropriate locality, sometimes being able to guide the client to an area where there may be availability of grants for new enterprises. Support is offered in the following: refining and preparing a business plan, selection of premises, planning and marketing strategies, financial advice (tax, legal, accounting etc.), setting budgets, balance sheets etc., understanding of business law and contracts. Additional advice, support, contacts and references are given for financial institutions and other sources of funding for grants and loans. The post is partly funded by ESF and conducts about 300 counselling sessions per annum.

- ☺ Refugee involvement in implementation
- ☺ Language support available
- ☺ Close links between an NGO project and mainstream advice services
- ☹ No financial resources to offer

Training and support after start-up

Étnisch Ondernemen project-LIA: Antwerp, Belgium

This project provides training and support for existing businesses, with a highly personalised, and grassroots, approach. The training segment supplements mainstream “enterprise training” that may be too inaccessible because of language and cultural barriers. The project offers business management training free of charge for shopkeepers, and other entrepreneurs mostly of Turkish, Moroccan, and African origin including refugees, giving highly personalised coaching, using the language of the participant, and a high level of support throughout the course. For the first time in Belgium the project also set up a simultaneously translated mainstream ‘enterprise training course’ for Arabic- and Turkish-speaking candidate entrepreneurs. The support segment implies business counselling; a business consultant from the appropriate ethnic group gives personal and well-targeted advice aimed at socio-economic development. The project acts as an intermediary between host community and local ethnic businesses, helping to overcome barriers, formalities, bureaucracy etc. for 405 established ethnic minority shopkeepers. More and more, candidate entrepreneurs, including refugees find their way to LIA-Antwerpen as a pre start-up institution. Front-line advice is offered. The project stimulates and supports the setting up of transcultural organisations in order to promote the economic integration of entrepreneurs. Both the project and the neighbourhood attract increasing media attention which promotes a positive image of ethnic shops and businesses, as well as developing regional networks in Flanders to mobilise solid support for individual projects and for ethnic entrepreneurship in general. This project is part of the ELAINE network which in turn is part of a wider EU funded network LIA [Local Integration / Partnership Action Initiative]. It will continue after the termination of the LIA funding thanks to extra financial support by the local and Flemish authorities.

- ☺ Locally based but transferable already via EU-funding with partners in Denmark, UK, Spain, Netherlands and Belgium
- ☺ Responds to known need as participants are already trading
- ☺ Respects and uses the bilingual skills and needs of participants
- ☺ Raises positive profile of ethnic minorities in locality
- ☺ Innovative as highly personalised and with a “hands-on” and grassroots approach
- ☹ Has no current perspective for mainstreaming the project

Information, Advice, Training and Financial Support

“Refugees into Business”: (REBUS) / SEON Foundation -Stimulating the Social Economy, Counselling and Finance, the Netherlands

This joint project [EMPLOOI and Stichting SEON Foundation / Social Economic Entrepreneurship in the Netherlands] supports potential entrepreneurs from disadvantaged groups, especially refugees, to establish and manage their own enterprises. Among other initiatives the project aims to give guidance before (assessment of feasibility of idea, business planning and execution), and follow up after, start of business. The project offers a structured programme of guidance and finance to (starting) entrepreneurs who face extra obstacles because of their background, linking promotion, selection, training, finance and guidance on behalf of these entrepreneurs. REBUS tries to develop both the entrepreneur and the business idea, as well as mediating effectively between starting entrepreneurs and possible sources of finance, thus significantly enhancing access to finance. The programme consists of a preparatory stage of “orientation on entrepreneurship” exploring the pros and cons of entrepreneurship. SEON plays a role in selection too and individuals have to demonstrate that they have the necessary entrepreneurial capacities as well as adequate business plans. This is followed by training modules leading to preparation of an actual business plan. The financial phases may include submission of a loan application to the SEON Credit Commission which reviews the application, provides advice and may help to design an optimum mix of credit instruments, as well as mediation between financial institutions and the entrepreneur. In the implementation phase SEON will provide a coach / mentor for a determined period to give support in the initial difficult and hectic period as well as to develop possibilities for growth. One of the initiators [FACET BV] bases the approach on a concept used in developing countries, using the experience and knowledge gained in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Central & East Europe to influence the work of SEON; another initiator is Triodos Bank which provides finance for such “social” enterprises, manages several investment funds and makes risk capital available to private sector; another [SBMB] in particular promotes a positive image of migrants in the Netherlands. The project works in partnership with Chambers of Commerce, enterprise agencies, migrants and refugee organisations and local specialist advisory offices.

- ☺ Good structural alliance of NGO with public, commercial, funding / financial sector
- ☺ Innovative work in country with no long tradition of small businesses
- ☺ Transferable model of developing alliances between sectors
- ☹ Can seem to be selective and judgmental about type of trade refugees want to enter
- ☹ Mentors for small businesses not so readily available as most are ex-managers not small traders

Information, Advice and Financial Support

“Refugee policy” of the Prince’s Trust, London-UK

The Prince’s Trust is a national charity providing help to young people who lack the means or opportunity to make the most of their lives. One of its major programmes is to help 18-30 year olds to start up in business. Since 1997, the Trust has developed a policy to include refugees. The policy states that individuals with refugee status or indefinite leave to remain in the UK are eligible to apply for support from the Trust. Currently asylum seekers cannot apply, however this is being reviewed. The Trust provides start-up, loans (on average £2500) and on-going marketing and management support through a nation-wide network of staff and volunteer Business Mentors. The Mentors receive guidance from the Trust to work with young people sensitively. Both parties sign a Business Mentor / Client Agreement written by the Trust. It is a non-legal document clarifying the roles and responsibilities of both Mentor and the young person supported by the Trust. The Mentor agrees to keep in contact with the client and act in the best interests of the client at all times and attempt to encourage and motivate, pointing out opportunities as well as potential problem areas. The client agrees to meet the Mentor as required by the Trust and to contact the Mentor when necessary to seek advice and guidance. Test marketing grants to test business ideas are also available as well as free or low cost space at exhibitions. This has been particularly effective in identifying new markets and raising the commercial profile of a business.

A refugee from East Africa was given a loan of £3000 by the Prince’s Trust to set up a convenience store in North London. He has repaid the loan: *“The Trust were very helpful in giving me financial and moral support to start my business.”*

- 😊 Good business package of funding , advice and support
- 😊 Well developed mentoring scheme
- 😊 Methodology could be transferable for people over 30, though it is outside the remit of this organisation
- 😊 Other programmes are available within the Prince’s Trust which can help young people aged between 14-30 to raise self-esteem and confidence
- ☹ Not available for asylum seekers with permission to work; however this is currently being reviewed

Different conditions exist in the *southern countries of EU*, in particular since welfare benefits are not available even to the local population. For this reason it is significant that in Greece and Italy there exist schemes including those funded by UNHCR specifically aimed at supporting refugee enterprises. These are small initiatives and not without their problems but they demonstrate an unique alliance between UNHCR, Government Departments and NGOs which may in principal have lessons for others, and are particu-

larly significant in the context of the more limited welfare support available in the southern countries.

Financial support

Socio-economic integration: UNHCR funds in Italy supporting new refugee businesses; Italian Refugee Council, Rome

In principle this is a very positive initiative. In Italy a joint project between UNHCR and the Italian government (Ministry of the Interior) offers limited numbers of grants to refugees who present a project to start their own business, whether commercial, handicraft, professional or other. This reflects the lack of other social welfare support for refugees or indeed for others. Whereas the family is the expected support mechanism for Italians refugees are unlikely to be able to rely on such support. Every year there are 24 grants of up to ITL 15m and 6 of ITL 10m. This grant is subject to a means test, so recipients may not earn over a certain amount, and will have to repay it after a certain level of income (ITL 20m, or ITL 40 m for families with over 3 children). Some problems include erratic meetings of the Commission that decides on grants, the small scale of grants which are made in two stages, the first (one third) after waiting a minimum of 60 days after the allocation of the grant at beginning when there are highest costs, and long waits for second part (two thirds) which is only offered after 6 months of successful trading. So the real high costs of starting can sometimes damage the positive outcomes of an enterprise, especially where there may be a need to pay for an expensive trading licence. There can also build up a back-log of applications, which is hard for new business “ideas” which cannot always afford to wait. On the other hand it might be possible to re-focus on giving support to reward an “entrepreneurial idea” by funding and designing training modules to enhance knowledge in order to facilitate the implementation of a new project.

- 😊 Positive responses to particular system in southern countries
- 😊 Good alliance of UNHCR with national governments and NGO sector
- 😞 Complicated and expensive bureaucratic requirements for applicants
- 😞 Inadequate funding for a realistic and effective business-start up
- 😞 Need for some evaluation of these initiatives

Socio-economic integration: UNHCR funds in Greece supporting new refugee businesses: Social Work Foundation [SWF], Athens

In Greece there is a similar UNHCR scheme working through the SWF Small Business Assistance

Programme [and also a loan scheme for “Socio-economic Integration 1998-9” subject to a means test offered through the Greek Council for Refugees and financed by the European Commission]. These are available, though for limited numbers, for those with refugee or humanitarian status who demonstrate the potential to become self-sufficient. This fund can be repaid monthly or in a lump sum and is in the form of 80% interest-free loan, and 20% grant (max. 3m drachmas); it also includes some individual or group guidance, which can be accessed, for example, through the mini Labour Office of the SWF. These funds are available to those with refugee status, over 21, with a realistic plan both for the proposed enterprise and for repayments. The social worker assesses the plans and prospects and decisions are made by UNHCR, together with the social worker and refugee organisation. Priority is given to those who are heads of households, female, disabled or where there is no other income earner.

- ☺ Positive responses to a particular system in southern countries
- ☺ Good alliance of UNHCR with national governments and NGO sector
- ☹ Need for some evaluation of these initiatives

Training for self-employment

Solartech, Jarfalla Komvux (Communal Adult Education Centre), Sweden

This is a “self-help” project looking at one specific area of trade. It aims at combining training in a specific area of skills aiming to promote the use of renewable energy. This relates to solar energy technology, transfer of intermediate technology, combining training with self-employment initiatives and with a potential for development both in Europe and Africa. It strengthens both integration in Sweden and re-integration for those wishing to return to Africa, and is valid therefore both for refugees and African immigrants. Considerable work is also done within the project to make the general public and employers, unions etc. aware of the potential skills available. Particularly important is a dialogue with banks to help to get funds for new enterprises, with some degree of success. Grants are given to individuals when doing unpaid work and demonstration kits are provided to help set up new enterprises. Thus apart from delivering concrete vocational training particular stress is laid on building up participants self-confidence, inculcating or developing an “entrepreneurship mentality” to encourage people to rely on self-employment rather than waiting to be employed, and strengthening their skills and abilities to cope on a day to day basis with negotiations with local authorities and financial institutions. This includes appropriate business administration and computer training, market research and promotion, business languages etc. The project encourages a “bottom-up” approach focusing the efforts on the participants themselves which can lead to co-operative ventures or to individual trading. For some of the participants part of the

third and final year takes place in Africa working on market studies and product promotion mentors. Many other participants including refugee participants see their future in Sweden, and see this as an opportunity to achieve an economic self-sufficiency. This will help to guarantee a better quality of life in the face of the considerable discrimination faced, in particular by Africans above all others, in the Swedish employment field, where there is chronic unemployment and ethnically based discrimination. Over 30 participants from 12 different African countries are currently participating.

- ☺ Transferable to other EU countries, to other areas of trade, and to other non-African refugee groups
- ☺ Good Private Sector, local authority partnership, with EU funds
- ☺ Combines training with self-employment and realistic trading opportunities outside the traditional ethnic business sector

Information & training leading to job creation for refugee entrepreneurs

“The Village Grocer” project; Indvandrerprojekter, Denmark

This project funded under the European Commission’s Article VI funding is trying to encourage migrants and refugees to take over and run small village shops in rural areas where the village shop has closed. This happens sometimes through commercial pressures from suppliers’ co-operatives, leaving only supermarkets in such areas. Such shops seem more viable now as more Danish people are working from home. 8 months training in shops is provided, 53 shops have volunteered to participate out of 250 that were questioned. The viability of the shop, and of the willingness of the community were tested. Once a village was selected, meetings were organised to explain the nature of the project, to discover the village’s requirements of the shop, and to learn more about the culture of the village. Typically refugees or migrants would have been 5 years in Denmark, and be able to speak Danish. 10 shops have been so far identified and “matched” up with new entrepreneurs, and these shops are operational, some independently, some in a partnership between the migrant family and the local community. This project aims to utilise the professional expertise of refugee / migrant families who may have come with a family history of shop-keeping, while noting that such traditions may include the hard work, husband / wife (and children) partnerships and long hours that may be essential to keep such enterprises alive in the current climate in Denmark. This experiment aims to support families hitherto unemployed in cities to apply their potential as micro-entrepreneurs within the business / retail sector in rural or developing areas outside the main cities. The process includes the forming of local partnerships between private enterprise and public authorities, utilising the resources of the incoming families, encouraging the Ministry of Industry to ease some of the administrative formalities for starting up shops in country districts, and includes some

two way / multicultural education processes. It will create jobs for minority / refugee families in areas where it may be cheaper to live and work. It may accelerate the integration process by letting the foreigner meet the Danes “over the counter” in a way which is not possible in the bigger cities.

- ☺ Transferable in countries where dispersal is the normal practice
- ☺ Good mix of training with employment potential, via private and public sectors, including public education measures
- ☹ Some risk of individual families becoming isolated
- ☹ Innovative project, still to be proven

A multidimensional project in Belgium gives

Advice and support leading to job creation for entrepreneurs

Global Village: Ostend, Belgium

The main aim is to enhance the positive contribution of ethnic minorities, while giving management support to ethnic minority enterprises. Established in Ostend in 1998 as a community-based social-profit enterprise the ultimate goal is to support private initiatives of refugee and migrants towards self-employment, and the creation of socio-economic enterprises that will create employment for socially excluded individuals. It therefore has a short-term and a long-term strategy. The short-term strategy phase consists of assisting refugees in three areas: (i) legal aspects (registration, VAT, social laws) relating to start-ups, (ii) management support (feasibility studies, market research, interaction with other NGOs, government organisations and inspection bodies) and (iii) organisation of socio-cultural events. Advice is provided free of charge for the first 6 months with the hope that after that time a small charge can be levied if such services are needed. The centre has a multi-cultural restaurant managed by a network of refugees and migrants, with a network of volunteer cooks. This centre serves as a contact point between refugees and migrants and the host community. It hosts exhibitions which attract people from all over Belgium, as well as foreign tourists to Ostend. It is anticipated that the proceeds from the multi-cultural restaurant will be used to finance the long term strategy: supporting private initiatives of refugees and migrants towards self-employment, and the creation of employment through the establishment of social-economy enterprises. With minimal start up capital it has innovatively managed, within the framework of existing laws, to start up social-profit enterprises that are liable to taxes but that are not subject to all the legal barriers associated with small business formation. The project has been wholly initiated and implemented by refugees and ethnic minorities, and facilitates economic, social and cultural integration.

- ☺ Implemented by refugees and migrants
- ☺ Potential for income generation and job creation
- ☺ Good public awareness potential and for interaction between refugees and the host-community
- ☺ Transferable with right mix of confidence and enthusiasm
- ☺ Still at early stages of development

For those ethnic minority companies already established there is a project aiming to help existing companies to expand through diversity training.

“Diversity training” in a small business context

“Inspiration & Results”: Diversity Training -Bo Granqvist AB, Stockholm, Sweden

This is a private sector initiative through a programme funded by participating local municipalities, the Employment Service, and occasionally individual companies. The entrepreneurs contribute their time, energy and commitment. All participants are established entrepreneurs looking to develop their registered businesses and to make use of their cultural competencies. The work aims to strengthen the development of companies run by immigrants and people with different cultural backgrounds in Sweden. They must all have a good knowledge of Swedish. It aims to foster a spirit of enterprise by helping to develop successful role models, which would also positively influence attitudes among the host Swedish community, and to help existing (ethnic minority) companies to expand by employing more people. It helps to see ethnicity as a resource, develops networks, gives confidence. Its methodology: selection for a 12 month programme of groups (10-15) of small entrepreneurs including Swedish, refugees and immigrants, giving personal help with advice on their own business for 11 days of seminars in the one year, mixed with practical work with their own and others’ businesses. Without actively seeking such attention, media coverage has included a number of newspaper articles, as well as television features, about both the programme as such and about individual participants: additionally participants have been invited to lecture at universities, schools or business courses. This serves to strengthen public perceptions of participants as role models. Much mutual help and support is fostered. A spin-off effect has been the establishment of an alumni association of former participants who keep in touch with each other on an informal basis: this serves as a support and a network resource; some end up doing business with each other, or it may help them to establish contacts with key people in the local authorities and to know other entrepreneurs in the area. Good outcomes after 11 programmes since 1995 have included increased self-confidence, an average doubling of profits and a definite increase in recruitment of other refugees / ethnic minorities has been noticed. Approximately 125 company leaders from 35 different nationalities including refugees have been involved in the programmes.

- ☺ Helps refugees towards effective social and economic integration
- ☺ Helps develop good refugee role models via wider public and employer awareness
- ☺ Positive private sector joint activity between host community, refugees and migrants
- ☺ Inclusive as Swedish people can participate too
- ☹ Easily transferable but only where there are already economically active, well established refugee or ethnic minority enterprises.

Community-based enterprises

Some other examples of community-based enterprises which include a training, community development or health element can be found in other Guides:

- **BAOBAB** project (Brussels), a catering business in Belgium [see **Vocational Training Guide, Section 3,C**]
- **Bardolato** project in Calabria, Italy (a Kurdish refugee community based initiative in southern Italy refurbishing a village in a declining rural area while developing building skills and reviving a tourist trade) [See **Community & Culture Guide, Section 2,E**]
- **Susret**: a health and employment project in Frastanz [see **Health Guide, Section 3,C**]



Signposts to Good Practice

- Most countries allow refugees to receive welfare benefits which are terminated once a refugee enters into self employment, but personal benefits need to continue for a reasonable period until a business is seen to be sustainable
- It is probably more cost effective to support refugee businesses than to keep refugees on benefits, and this can create employment too
- Legal barriers, restrictions and unnecessary “red tape” are particularly hard for refugees to overcome as they are new to the system
- Finance for new businesses is especially hard to access via institutions and there is a case for seeing refugees as a unique group with a unique set of needs requiring specially earmarked funding
- Similarly funding is needed for specialist advice and training on self-employment both before and after start-up
- Refugee businesses may seem to be concentrated typically in the service and retail sector which may often seem saturated: and refugees may be encouraged to diversify to avoid self exploitation
- On the other hand hard work, usually involving family members, may prove as it usually has, to be the best way to accumulate capital and to expand into a more lucrative and physically less demanding sector. And at an EU level
- Support mechanisms need to be available throughout EU for new businesses established by refugees

- (advice, guidance as well as support for individuals and families)
- Governments and EU institutions need to stimulate financial institutions to offer loans to seemingly “high risk” groups such as refugees
- There is a need to investigate “alternative” sources of funding

Section 5: Equal opportunities in employment

*Background to the debate*⁹³

Methods of achieving equality of opportunity and rectifying disadvantage can include changing attitudes, changing behaviour, positive action, culturally-or-specifically refugee-sensitive service provision (e.g. in the public sector employment services: see Section 2), ethnic monitoring (see below) and, within the theme of employment, stressing the “business advantage” of diversity. [see Swedish initiative, Section 4]. Several different national traditions exist in relation to equal opportunities policies. For example in France and Denmark it is not legally permitted to identify certain groups according to ethnicity; in southern EU countries the external factors relating to insecure and undocumented migrants in the unequal society outside the work-place makes “ethnic monitoring”, targets and equal opportunities in the work-place more elusive. Among the refugees with which it has been discussed ethnic monitoring and equal opportunities it is a contentious issue. There are political differences too, varying at one extreme from the view that this is all about political correctness to the other extreme that it is a cosmetic exercise that hides continuing inequalities which will inevitably continue “because people are not equal”. A more positive image is that equal opportunities initiatives offer a real prospect of introducing greater fairness and of utilising talents in the work-place that would otherwise remain under-used or hidden. Thus, monitoring “equal opportunities” with reference to ethnicity, let alone separately identifying refugees, is a complex issue with emotional, legal, constitutional and geographical differences across EU. Ethnic monitoring may yet have to play a key role, particularly in light of any future EU wide anti-discrimination legislation.⁹⁴ However we must be aware, from the report on the Refugee Employment Panel, Dalfsen that *“most participants were highly sceptical of the benefits of this type of monitoring and saw it as contradictory to equal treatment of refugees. In particular the participants objected strongly to the use of race and ethnicity as the defining criteria for the categories.”* Preference seemed to be for more objective criteria such as by monitoring for nationality or place of birth (as used in most countries), although in reality it is race / ethnicity which is the greater cause of discrimination, and after one or two generations (the UK

93 “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination”

94 Article 13: Treaty of Amsterdam

argument) the place of birth and nationality on paper does not necessarily help when monitoring levels of racial disadvantage. In this context is set the question of whether refugees should be separately identified and separately treated. If, as a group that is supposedly over-represented in the unemployment figures in all EU countries, we cannot identify and quantify the level of disadvantage, or of unfair treatment, or of prejudice that they experience, how can we take steps to rectify this situation? About 70% of respondents to the ECRE Task Force questionnaires on Employment⁹⁵ in 1998 felt that refugees should be specially treated; but on a one-to-one basis when looking for a job refugees do not want to be specially identified as refugees. However even without such complications even “friendly” organisations demonstrate that they have their difficulties. Refugee organisations working on integration issues and responding to the questionnaires reported that even in those working on employment issues (89 respondents) the proportion of refugee staff employed in the agencies was low, with over half having no refugee employees. Only 10% of respondents reported that more than 50% of their staff were refugees. However for UK organisations this figure was approximately 25%. 20% of UK-based organisations had a “significant” number (75%) of their volunteers who were refugees, whereas the corresponding figure was about 8% in other EU countries.

A. Equal opportunities policies

In this context two examples are shown of “*equal opportunities policies*” provided by the two Task Force Lead Agencies based in the UK.

“Taking Positive action for equal opportunities”: British Refugee Council [BRC], London, UK
Extract from the BRC “*equal opportunity policy*”:

“Refugees and asylum seekers are the first priority of our Equal Opportunities Policy. This is not to the exclusion of other issues but recognises the special responsibilities the Refugee Council has in this area. We will:

- Set (and reach) ambitious targets for the employment of refugees and asylum- seekers at all levels of the organisation so that our staff make-up reflects the experience of our users and members.
- Strive to ensure that refugee staff are employed in positions where they can represent and speak for the organisation.

BRC carried out an “Equal Opportunities Work Force Survey” in June 1998 (paid and volunteers staff: 212 responses = 71% of staff). Key findings: BRC employs staff from 40 ethnic groups; just under one third were refugees or asylum seekers; the proportion of white staff: non-white is 60:40. The proportion of senior managers who are refugees or from ethnic minorities is still proportionately lower than among those employed at lower / middle grades. This is also true nationally. A ‘Positive Action initiative’ has therefore

95 “Analysis of survey on refugee employment”

been implemented (September 1999) to address this issue. Called 'Moving into Management', this initiative is for ethnic minority and refugee / asylum-seeking staff. It includes training, mentoring, external work placements and a fully funded management qualification opportunity. Led by the Chief Executive and including membership from management, staff and the union, BRC has an Equal Opportunities Task Group. Part of the role of this Task Group is to monitor an effective implementation of the policy. In addition the Task Group may be involved in ensuring that equal opportunities for those seeking jobs at BRC are properly monitored. All job seekers are asked to complete a confidential 'Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form'. Categories assessed are gender, disability, age group, refugee / asylum seeker and ethnic origin. Ethnic categories are an adapted version of those used in the 1991 census. These are: White, Black African, Indian, Chinese, South East Asian, Black Caribbean, Pakistani, Middle Eastern, Latin American, Black Other, Bangladeshi. Such monitoring exercises are not unusual in the UK employment market and although not compulsory for employers, they are considered to be integral to the promotion of equal opportunities policies in employment practice, and to be consistent with current legislation in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

"Working towards being an Equal Opportunities Employer": WUS / RETAS-UK

WUS currently (July '99) has 21 staff members, 11 of whom are refugees. WUS-RETAS has an *Equal Opportunities Policy* that is generally similar to BRC but also includes a "positive action programme" including the offer of work-placements to refugees which further encourage them to apply for jobs at RETAS. Specific policy statements include, in relation to Employment Practice, the statement: "*WUS pays particular attention in drawing up job descriptions, person specifications and advertisements to encourage refugees to apply; as far as is legally possible, a refugee will be appointed from those candidates who are otherwise equally qualified for the appointment*". Before that, refugees may have an opportunity under Volunteers and Work Placements since "*WUS uses a number of volunteers and work placements and particularly welcomes the placement of refugees and asylum seekers*" and, "*When a temporary paid post becomes available in an area where a volunteer is working WUS will, if appropriate, advertise the post internally to volunteers...*". WUS, like BRC, has a significant number of its Management Committee or Trustees who are, or have been, refugees or asylum seekers.

- ☺ UK demonstrates best results for refugee employment within NGO sector
- ☺ Positive Action is a legitimate way of trying to rectify disadvantage by meeting identified targets: this is not positive discrimination, which would create a new form of discrimination
- ☹ General hostility to and suspicion about ethnic monitoring in most EU countries, and among refugees



*Signposts to Good Practice*⁹⁶

- Refugees must be recognised as a particular group who are likely individually to have special needs and distinct requirements
- Acceptable methods must be devised to enable ethnic monitoring and the monitoring of specific refugee situations to be carried out in order to be able both to quantify their disadvantage and to justify and implement special measures in favour of refugees
- Refugees' perceptions on the need not to be treated "differently", as this causes more discrimination and resentment, must be respected

Section 6: Training & employment programmes to help refugees get jobs⁹⁷

Some examples of government-run programmes that have direct employment outputs are the result of purely national funding and there are examples of NGOs working closely with these to bring good results specifically for refugees; some programmes are the direct result of co-financing between government and EU funding and represent (as in Ireland and Spain) the government's role in the economic integration of refugees; a few NGOs rely heavily on the use of EU funding and have a good track record, in spite of some inherent difficulties, in the creative use of EU funds on behalf of refugees. Whatever the context it is clearly necessary for the provision of vocational training, in the employment context, these have to be made available for refugees, those with subsidiary forms of protection and for asylum seekers after 6 months waiting for a decision

A. NGOs working in partnership with nationally funded government schemes for the unemployed

The following are models that show strong alliances between NGOs and government training / employment schemes with a particular focus on employment outcomes:

"Stimulans": Access to work for refugees through the "Melkert II" scheme (up to 1998): an initiative of EMPLOOI, the Netherlands

⁹⁶ [refer also to Appendix 2: "ECRE Position on the integration of refugees in Europe"; paras. 68-71,125-7)
⁹⁷ For introduction on role of vocational training refer to Vocational Training Guide

This “work subsidy” scheme gave employers a financial incentive through a grant and exemption from certain national insurance contributions if they offered work to the long-term unemployed. The scheme was financed by using the cost of unemployment benefit as a labour cost subsidy (about 60% of gross labour costs) on condition that the unemployed person was in the subsidised job for between 6 months and two years, with this period to be agreed before work started. EMPLOOI was an executing agency for the Ministry of Social Affairs, finding jobs for refugees under this scheme, which was generally available through other agencies for the Dutch too. Dutch employers tended, in times of high unemployment, not to have any specific need to employ refugees with whom they were at best unfamiliar and unaware of their potential or capacity. At worst they were felt to be prejudiced or fearful of the attitudes of work colleagues. However more than 2/3 of refugees who participated in this scheme (invariably their first job in the Netherlands) now have regular jobs and the scheme is felt to have been important both in helping refugees to get into the rhythm of working and in exposing refugees to employers. Indirectly, too, employers seem to be more concerned, because of a commercial to have a staff composition that reflects their customer base, and refugees had, under “Melkert II”, been seen to be a good “investment”. Though this scheme was discontinued in Jan. ’98 when new regulations limited its scope to local authorities for such subsidised jobs it maybe resurrected in a similar fashion in coming years.

- ☺ Good and lasting results
- ☺ Good alliance of government and NGO sector
- ☺ Easily transferable, with governments’ will, except in countries where there is no welfare / unemployment support to cross-subsidise
- ☺ Good means of “exposing” refugees to employers
- ☹ Potential for jobs (and refugees holding them) to be labelled as cheap or inferior

“Refugees into work”: British Refugee Council, London, UK

This is an “Into work” project to follow successful trainees as they leave the government training scheme (Work-Based Learning for Adults). When trainees leave, they are assigned a mentor who works closely with them in seeking employment. The “Into Work” staff link mentor and refugee from similar vocational areas. The staff work with each trainee as they look for jobs by teaching job-search skills, interview skills, and presentation techniques. Once the refugee finds work the support continues for a minimum of 6 months. This consists of on-the-job training, mentoring, and tutorial guidance which helps the refugee understand the dynamics of the work-place and meet the demands of managers. Specific English language training is part of customised training, tailored to the needs of each employer. The project aims to

- Give refugees English language support in the new work environment
- Use the mentor scheme to set up networks to support refugees who are newly employed
- Equip refugees with language skills and vocational skills to excel in the work-place
- Capacity building by enabling refugees to secure work and possible promotion in the work-place
- Raise awareness of refugee issues among employers
- Increase the number of refugees finding work

On the whole this tries to overcome the feeling that employers as an “institution” are more ignorant about refugees than directly prejudiced, by giving support in the areas that employers identify as the biggest problems i.e. language, and awareness of the work-place culture. (For information about a preliminary stage to this programme run by the BRC: Stepping Stones into the “New Deal”, see Vocational Training Guide, Section 1, A)

- ☺ Develops strong links between an NGO and employers
- ☺ Reassuring support after job has started
- ☺ Counters some unwitting discrimination
- ☺ Transferable in principle within other national systems

B. NGOs working with government programmes for the integration of newcomers

Work and Language Experience project: Dutch Refugee Council Utrecht, the Netherlands

Stichting VluchtelingenWerk Utrecht / SVU introduced the project (1995), initially as a “joint venture” with the City-Council, now extended with funding shared by the Utrecht City & County Councils, the Regional Employment service, with INTEGRA funding from EU. In the process of integration⁹⁸ the project provides refugees with an opportunity to gain skills and master the conventions and codes necessary to play an active role in society or in the labour market. The results of this experience are reflected in the fact that almost 100% of project participants, having finished the project’s programme, remain actively involved in society (mostly within a voluntary project or employed under various subsidised labour programmes). The project has targetted two groups of refugees: (i) the so-called “phase 4 category participants” (the more disadvantaged in the labour market) participate in the social-activation project, whilst (ii) another approach has been chosen for “phase 3 category” participants, who have a clearer orientation towards the labour market. The key point of the SVU language-and-work project is creating an environment for practising and perfecting Dutch for refugees with relatively advanced but not sufficient lan-

98 See also Newcomer Integration Act & Language in the Education Guide, Section 2A

guage skills. This is carried out by short programmes in which participants learn basic rules of being employed in the Netherlands. Eventually that boosts the definitive transition to regular employment; sometimes it leads directly to regular jobs. Either voluntary or regular paid work opens up a real, substantial career perspective for phase 3 participants; for phase 4 participants it means true advances in participation in Dutch society. The main activities include short-term individual work experience enabling refugees to take part in activities of a company or a public organisation. Project participants are offered counselling while working; part of the programme is also a short course getting information and answers to questions regarding the local labour market and its constantly changing conditions. The social-activation project offers a six months work-and-language programme guiding refugees at a less exacting pace. First with each participant an interview is held; then the SVU mediator looks for a place in the programme on an individual basis. Once a successful introduction between participant and employer has taken place, arrangements are made to ensure that the working conditions are agreed. After the matching a contract is signed by all parties involved (employer / work experience supervisor, participant and SVU mediator). There are two supervisors for each participant: one at the work-place who takes care of his / her functioning on the work floor; the second at the SVU and this mediator/counsellor monitors participants' language learning advancement. Voluntary work is widely accepted in the Netherlands as a way of building up both work experience and a social network and is done by e.g. graduating students, would-be employees, or socially conscientious individuals. A refugee starts from scratch within a different framework. Having access to work for newcomers to Dutch society is commonly seen as a way to survive and to develop oneself socially and economically, with earned wages as a key goal. Dutch employers on the other hand are extremely cautious in engaging such people. The project is intended to provide a refugee with the necessary skills, knowledge and empowerment to overcome these initial obstacles and to find a worthy place in his / her new social and economic environment.

- ☺ Local scheme now beginning to be replicated elsewhere in the Netherlands (Rotterdam)
- ☺ Tailored to suit individual needs
- ☺ Close interlink between language and employment
- ☺ Transferable where there is a national integration strategy
- ☺ Successful results

C. Government schemes specifically for refugees, with EU funding

Two national models where government responsibility for the economic integration of refugees is linked in part to EU funding:

Interact Ireland: Dublin, Ireland

Positive employment outcomes from Interact Ireland's special government-funded training and employment programmes for refugees (refer to Vocational Training Guide for details of these, and to the Education Guide for details of language provision). Interact Ireland is a partnership initiative which aims to promote the integration of refugees in Ireland. Partner organisations include the Refugee Agency, FÁS (the Irish National Training and Employment Authority), the Centre for Language and Communication Studies, Trinity College Dublin, the Bosnian Community Development Project, the Irish Refugee Council and the Association of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland (ARASI). The project is working with all refugee who have been given the right to stay and work in Ireland. It is supported by the Integra strand of the EU Human Resource Initiative EMPLOYMENT, and by the Irish Exchequer through FÁS Community Services (Dublin North), and has successfully developed an access route to mainstream training and employment for refugees through its pre-vocational and focused language training programmes. To date 63% of all participants are currently in full-time employment or mainstream vocational training. Courses focus on integrated language and work-related modules including work-placements. In the context (1999) of a booming Irish economy with particularly good prospects, especially though not exclusively in the Irish electronics industry*, significant outcomes leading directly into employment have been experienced in the following employment areas: software testing and localisation, systems operator (machines), desk-top publishing, translating, electronic assembly, tourism industry, & clerical. [* publicity such as ("*Bosnians have IT*"... "*.war refugees ... known for their work ethic... are mastering the new information technology in Ireland*" / Andy Pollak, Focus on Education 1997)].

- ☺ Good links between training provider and employers, with well integrated training provision and excellent employment outcomes
- ☺ Linking public awareness campaign with positive reaction to one specific group, with potential for spin-off to all refugees
- ☹ Not so easily transferable as economic boom not everywhere as in Ireland; and refugee population still quite small

Imsero, Madrid, Spain

In Spain IMSERSO, the Institute of Migration and Social Services, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is an example of a government agency accessing EU funds both under HORIZON II [IN.LAN.DER-CAR] and INTEGRA [INLABOR-CAR]) specifically to assist refugees into employment. In particular under both these programmes the focus has been on refugees in reception centres

(CAR) in different regions (Seville, Valencia and two in Madrid), including the development of the role of “employment manager” (gestora de empleo) at each reception centre. They try to facilitate the integration of individual refugees into the labour market, to manage the training activities for individuals, and to work on advocacy with employers (e.g. in Seville via Andalusian Entrepreneurs Association, and holding a “Sensitising Employers Day”) to try to create networks of sympathetic employers, and on self employment initiatives (Vallecas, Seville, Madrid) through advice and help with access to funds. IMSERSO’s strategic position as a government agency facilitates some connections with appropriate official channels in provincial, municipal and public institutions, but also with NGOs. Though access to the labour market for refugees is not impossible, work does tend to be concentrated in the more precarious sectors of employment.

- ☺ Recognition by government of special need of refugees at a national level
- ☺ New specialist role of employment adviser / manager
- ☺ Good links with appropriate public institutions
- ☹ Low refugee participation in implementation

D. Access to EU funds for NGOs working on refugee projects⁹⁹

Summary of findings from analysis of research

The difficulty of access by NGOs to mainstream EU funding has been stressed in our research. 75% of all organisations responding to the 1998 ECRE Task Force questionnaires received EU funds, many only through B3-4113; of those 75% of the smaller organisations with less than 20 staff received “specially targeted” funding such as B3-4113 or INTEGRA rather than mainstream EU / ESF funding; only 15% of the smaller organisations accessed broader or mainstream funding whereas some 42% of the larger organisations did so. Responding organisations’ comments on the non-financial added value of EU funding included the following: networking, increasing awareness, setting standards, exchange of practice and innovative ideas, upgrading of work standards, added status, and increased public and media attention.

There is a parallel issue of the value of, and accessibility by individual refugees to, provision made with EU funding support which aims to have training and employment outcomes. It should be borne in mind that refugees are not yet a specified target group under mainstream ESF Objective 3, and in some countries there are questions of eligibility for those with subsidiary forms of status.

99 such as ESF, LEONARDO, and Community Employment Initiatives e.g. INTEGRA, EQUAL (in future) etc

Positive models by small NGOs using EU funds on behalf of refugees

Indvandrerprojekter: Copenhagen, Denmark

This organisation has functioned for 12 years focusing on special initiatives for migrants and refugees in the field of training and employment, with a special focus on ethnic entrepreneurship. Most of the work has been completed using a variety of EU funds. A number of initiatives have included ones focused on import / export, and on the training of vocational interpreters who may wish to do free-lance work, as well as the Village Grocer (see above). The projects try to build on the informal qualifications and natural flair of migrants and refugees. Using informal practical teaching methods, considerable expertise has been developed in accessing EU funds, including under ESF, HORIZON, LEONARDO, ADAPT, and ARTICLE VI. This includes having transnational partners, at different times, in UK, France, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Germany, and Belgium, while at the same time working closely with national partners in various Government Departments, Social Services Departments in local authorities, and employment offices / job centres. Additionally the project has participated in an EU reflection group on Commerce in Rural Areas, and a number of EU wide networks. Participation in EU programmes calls for well organised transnational partnerships, and a lot of understanding. The application processes, the uncertainty, the red tape, the reporting mechanisms can be burdensome for small organisations, but in the long run are advantageous for the refugees and migrants who are the beneficiaries

- 😊 Innovative programmes made possible, building on strengths of refugees
- 😊 Positive networking opportunities
- 😊 Most programmes have transnational partners with strong transferability element
- 😊 Can generate extra national funds
- 😞 Bureaucratic problems; risky financially through cash flow & matching funding issue

Refugee Training & Advisory Service-WUS, London-UK

RETAS gets most of its funding from a variety of EU sources. These include ESF (Objective 3: training for unemployed refugees), ESF-Integra, and previously HORIZON funding (activities to promote employment for refugees), and a variety of other EU budgets. There are many positive aspects of being funded by EU sources. However there are a number of serious disadvantages and problems which the practical experience in managing such budgets has thrown up. RETAS has been able to attract EU funding by building up a track record over many years of developing training and advisory services under this kind of funding; RETAS employs a dedicated and expert staff to administer and monitor all aspects of the

projects; RETAS currently employs over 20 staff and EU funding has enabled the staff to learn new skills and to work in partnership not just with other UK organisations but with a number of transnational partners across EU. Ambitious programmes of activity have been developed which would not otherwise have enabled the provision of pathways into employment for refugees or effective responses to the needs of individual refugees and their community organisations. Substantial match funding from UK sources has also been attracted as a result of obtaining EU funding in the first instance. However EU funding is extremely bureaucratic, the monitoring and reporting is time-consuming, complex and impossible for small organisations without dedicated staff. Cash-flow problems resulting from late payments make EU funding hazardous for small organisations. Time is needed to secure the match-funding which is generally required at over 50%. Transnational work and partnerships can also be extremely problematic, though on balance they can be very rewarding.

- ☺ Innovative programmes made possible
- ☺ UK government reasonably supportive of approaches via the NGO sector
- ☺ Already many programmes have transnational partners with strong transferability element
- ☺ EU funds can generate extra national funds
- ☹ Bureaucratic nightmare; risky financially through cash flow & match funding issue
- ☹ Out of range of the capacity of many otherwise effective grassroots & refugee organisations

*Signposts to Good Practice*¹⁰⁰

National employment schemes

- These are the core services for the unemployed and where refugees are not being effectively provided for there may be need for provision of special measures
- Access to such programmes should also be guaranteed for asylum seekers after a reasonable period and for those with subsidiary forms of protection. (see Section 1)
- Within such schemes periods of work experience may be critical as these can give employers a taste of the potential value to them of employing refugees and can give to refugees a taste of the 'culture' of the work-place¹⁰¹

Special Government / EU funded employment schemes for refugees

- This has the advantage of guaranteeing co-financing but does not necessarily mean that the NGO sector plays a central role in implementation
- This can help to ensure that there is a uniform pattern for refugees within the whole country, or at least

¹⁰⁰ See also Appendix 2: "ECRE Position on Integration of Refugees in Europe" paras. 51-8, 75-81

¹⁰¹ See also Vocational Training Guide, Section 1,C

in areas where refugees are settled

EU funding for small NGOs

- EU funds should provide additional funding to help address equal opportunities and social exclusion issues, as a bridge to mainstream services for refugees: and the organisations living nearest the problems may be the best placed to solve them
- Care must be taken with future funding priorities to see the integration of refugees as a key issue frequently requiring innovative approaches
- The refugee NGO sector must be more fully recognised as a key partner, and governments must be prepared to trust the NGO sector and to facilitate access to co financing
- Attention needs to be paid as a matter of urgency to the bureaucratic difficulties faced by small organisations in accessing and living with EU funds
- Lessons from past and current project work on employment must have a direct influence on policy development at local, national and EU level

Employment: **BRC**



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