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EN

COMMIT

Labour-market integration of resettled refugees in the European Union

Guidelines for Practitioners

consorzio communitas

ATENEO INTERNAZIONALE
Università per Stranieri di Siena

FONDAZIONE ADECCO
PER LE PARI OPPORTUNITÁ
THE ADECCO GROUP

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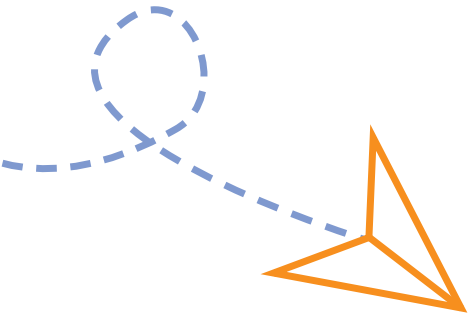
Summary

Introduction

Since 2015, the European Union (EU) has supported the safe and orderly movement of people in need of international protection to those of its Member States that have shown solidarity and willingness to receive them through resettlement programmes.

Between 2019 and 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented a project to contribute to the sustainable integration of some of these refugees, paying special attention to the specific needs of women and young people. This project – **COMMIT: Facilitating the integration of resettled refugees in Croatia, Italy, Portugal and Spain** – was funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the European Union and co-funded by IOM and the Italian Ministry of Interior.

COMMIT is built on the recognition that welcoming conditions and enabling social dynamics are crucial to the integration and participation of refugees in the country of resettlement. The project aimed to enhance the support received by resettlement beneficiaries at different stages of the process – prior to departure, during transit and on arrival – including through the engagement of community mentors.



THE GUIDELINES

Getting a job is generally a crucial step for adults in becoming active members of society, and this is no less true for resettled refugees. In order to help them, all of the different actors supporting refugees throughout the resettlement continuum must be aware of the difficulties they may face in finding a job; the different dimensions of job seeking and placement in their community; and existing measures and support mechanisms that facilitate access by refugees to local labour markets.

The objective of these guidelines is therefore to provide all actors involved in the pre-departure and post-arrival phases of resettlement – namely PDO trainers, hosting institutions, social workers and community mentors – with practical information on the different issues and considerations involved in supporting resettled refugees to define and implement employment objectives and related job-seeking strategies. They are also potentially useful for other stakeholders in the labour-market integration of resettled refugees, including potential employers, public and private service providers, civil society organizations and others.

The guidelines are structured in two main parts. The first section provides an overview of resettlement and the labour-market integration of refugees, highlighting key facts and figures and barriers to integration. The second section provides practical advice for those supporting refugees to access the labour market.

1. Context and background

1.1 Resettled refugees and labour-market integration

Refugees – people who are recognized as being entitled to international protection[1] – bring to their new country a wealth of experience, knowledge, skills and competence. Labour-market integration is a crucial step in developing a sense of belonging to a community. For the vast majority of people – not just refugees – having a job is not only important for economic survival and independence, but is a key dimension of identity and social position. For refugees, being employed is also a crucial part of the integration process, which, among other things, requires community participation and the development of social networks that can help refugees in building agency and their position within society.

However, the ability of refugees to leverage their potential for their own and others' benefit depends on a number of factors, including administrative, social and other contextual barriers. These factors interact in different ways and have different consequences for refugees. Where they impede access to employment and social opportunities, they can generate a high degree of uncertainty about the future and put individual (and families of) refugees under severe stress, with multiple impacts on their physical and mental well-being.

In addition, these factors shape the way in which refugees are perceived in a given community. For example, refugees may be seen as a "burden", as "victims" or as "changemakers", depending on local and national politics and on how the media reports on migration and asylum issues. These factors also affect how refugees perceive themselves and understand their own (sometimes traumatic) experiences and expectations at different stages of their journey – prior to departure, while travelling, in countries of first asylum, on arrival in their country of resettlement and during integration.

1.
A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group (UNHCR, 1951).

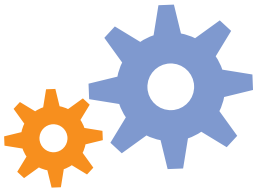
BARRIERS TO LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

Individual profile

- *Lack of formal education, training or working experience*
- *Knowledge of local language*
- *Physical and mental wellbeing*

Contextual barriers:

- *Bureaucracy and Administrative procedures*
- *Recognition of diplomas*
- *Missing documents*
- *Difficulties in assessing skills and experiences.*



SPECIFIC BARRIERS TO LABOUR-MARKET INTEGRATION

Some barriers arise out of a refugee's individual profile. For example, a refugee may lack formal education, training or working experience, or be unable to speak the local language. They may also face challenges to their physical and mental wellbeing, including the reasons for their flight from their country of origin and their experiences during their journey and in their country of first asylum.

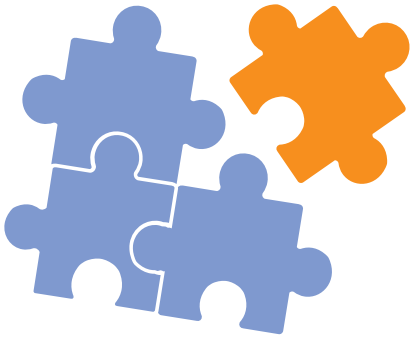
Other barriers are contextual. They may be related to policy and legislation, and/or obstacles in their implementation. Administrative procedures may not be efficient, transparent, time-bound or easy to comply with. There may be few mechanisms in place to assess and recognize foreign diplomas, qualifications or experience, or mechanisms may be difficult to access. If a refugee's documents are missing, there may be limited alternatives to assess their skills and experience. The structure of national and local labour markets and workforces also shape opportunities for refugees: what jobs remain unfilled? What skills are locally available and what skills will be needed in the future? What is the employment situation in host communities?[2]

Appropriate links between employment and other support measures are very important. Is language training provided and is it adequate for professional purposes? Is any vocational education provided related to refugees' previous job experiences? Is housing available near employment opportunities? Are there are employment opportunities in the areas where refugees live?

Social factors have considerable impacts on refugees' employment opportunities and recruitment. Employers may have their own perceptions, preconceptions and assumptions about the level of education or qualifications of refugees, or a preference for a specific group or type of worker. At the same time, many refugees rely on advice, information and references from their peers (e.g. those of the same ethnic group, gender or nationality) and may search for jobs and/or be employed in the same sectors as these peers.

2.
Barslund, M. et al, 2018.

INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIAL AND INDIVIDUAL BARRIERS



These barriers – particularly in combination – can prevent refugees from having decent jobs or from participating in the labour market at all. Their many consequences include long periods of unemployment; informal work without contracts; exposure to precarious working condition and underpayment; and refugees being placed in jobs for which they are overqualified and/or unable to use their skills or experience, or for which they are not paid in line with their level of qualifications or experience.

There are also negative consequences for the wider community, as the potential of refugees is underestimated or unused in terms of fostering collective welfare – economic (e.g. fiscal), demographic (e.g. reversing population decline) or social.

In order to address these barriers, many countries have put in place specific labour-market integration support measures for refugees (in addition to psychosocial support, housing, cultural orientation, language lessons, facilitating network building and access to services, which are indirectly related to employment). The most common measures focus on assessing refugees' skills at an early stage and providing: information on cultural and social norms; information about vocational education, professional training, apprenticeship or entrepreneurship opportunities; language courses; and access to counselling and placement services. These measures are often implemented by different government and non-government actors, sometimes in an uncoordinated way,[3] and sometimes without considering the specific needs and aspirations of refugees and matching them with services.

Refugees are a very diverse group, and it cannot be assumed that they all face the same difficulties or have the same needs and aspirations. Specific and personal support should be provided to help refugees develop individual pathways and link them with existing services so they can achieve their specific job search and employment goals.

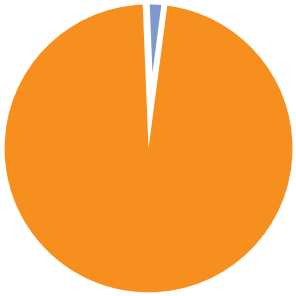
3.
Martín et al, 2016.

1.2. Refugees and employment in Europe: a reality check

RESETTLED REFUGEES IN EUROPE

At the end of 2019, at least 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations – around 1% of humanity.[4] Nearly 26 million of these individuals were refugees.[5] A total of 85% of the world's displaced are hosted in middle and low-income countries, with 80% in countries or territories affected by acute food insecurity and malnutrition. In the last decade, high-income countries have never hosted more than 19% of refugees.[6]

EU Resettlement VS Global Needs in 2019



Source: International Rescue Committee. 10 things to know about global displacement and EU refugee resettlement. July 2020.

In 2021, nearly 1.45 million refugees are in need of resettlement – they can neither integrate in their country of asylum nor return home.[7] This represents an increase of 20% from 2018.[8] However, refugees who enter the EU through resettlement and other humanitarian admission programmes represent only a small proportion of the total in need of resettlement. Only 63,726 refugees departed for resettlement under the aegis of UNHCR in 2019, an increase from 2018 but a decrease from 2017.[9] In the first quarter of 2020, thanks in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, only around 3,900 refugees were resettled to the EU, posing severe challenges to the EU's commitment to resettle over 30,000 refugees this year.[10] The percentage of global resettlement needs met by EU member states has never exceeded 2%, and not a single EU state is in the top ten of hosting countries when comparing the size of a refugee population to the national population.[11]

4. *UNHCR, 2020a.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *International Rescue Committee, 2020*
7. *UNHCR, 2020b.*
8. *European Resettlement Network, 2020.*
9. *UNHCR, 2020b.*
10. *International Rescue Committee, 2020.*
11. *Ibid.*

RESETTLED PERSONS IN EU+ COUNTRIES BY REPORTING COUNTRY AND MAIN CITIZENSHIP. TOP 20 COUNTRIES, 2015-2019

					2019				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	% change over previous year	Share in EU+	Highest share	Sparkline
Reporting country								**Citizenship**	
Germany	5 170	8 515	30 590	19 980	**13 275**	*- 34*	*32%*	*Syria (35%)*	
France	3 830	4 510	5 400	6 015	**9 335**	*+ 55*	*22%*	*Guinea (9%)*	
United Kingdom	4 030	6 170	6 170	7 510	**9 220**	*+ 23*	*22%*	*Iran (15%)*	
Austria	1 740	835	2 985	4 195	**4 350**	*+ 4*	*10%*	*Afghanistan (70%)*	
Sweden	745	1 120	1 890	2 045	**1 820**	*- 11*	*4.4%*	*Afghanistan (41%)*	
Italy	0	385	385	825	**895**	*+ 8*	*2.2%*	*Nigeria (45%)*	
Finland	50	185	535	930	**645**	*- 31*	*1.6%*	*Iraq (61%)*	
Ireland	180	205	30	185	**360**	*+ 95*	*0.9%*	*Pakistan (15%)*	
Netherlands	255	340	480	400	**350**	*- 13*	*0.8%*	*Iran (19%)*	
Belgium	395	320	290	475	**330**	*- 31*	*0.8%*	*Afghanistan (15%)*	
Greece	1 355	770	510	175	**295**	*+ 69*	*0.7%*	*Iraq (22%)*	
Bulgaria	0	0	5	0	**180**	*n.a.*	*0.4%*	*Syria (78%)*	
Switzerland	70	95	115	170	**155**	*- 9*	*0.4%*	*Eritrea (26%)*	
Denmark	210	205	245	200	**125**	*- 38*	*0.3%*	*Iran (56%)*	
Norway	200	130	145	110	**80**	*- 27*	*0.2%*	*Iran (38%)*	
Romania	10	5	5	15	**25**	*+ 67*	*0.1%*	*Iran (40%)*	
Slovenia	5	5	0	0	**15**	*n.a.*	*0.0%*	*Turkey (67%)*	

Source: European Asylum Support Office. EASO Asylum Report 2020: Annual report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union.

In 2019, the largest groups of resettled refugees in the EU came from Syria (19,015 or 62% of the total).

NATIONALITIES OF RESETTLED REFUGEES, EUROPE+, 2019

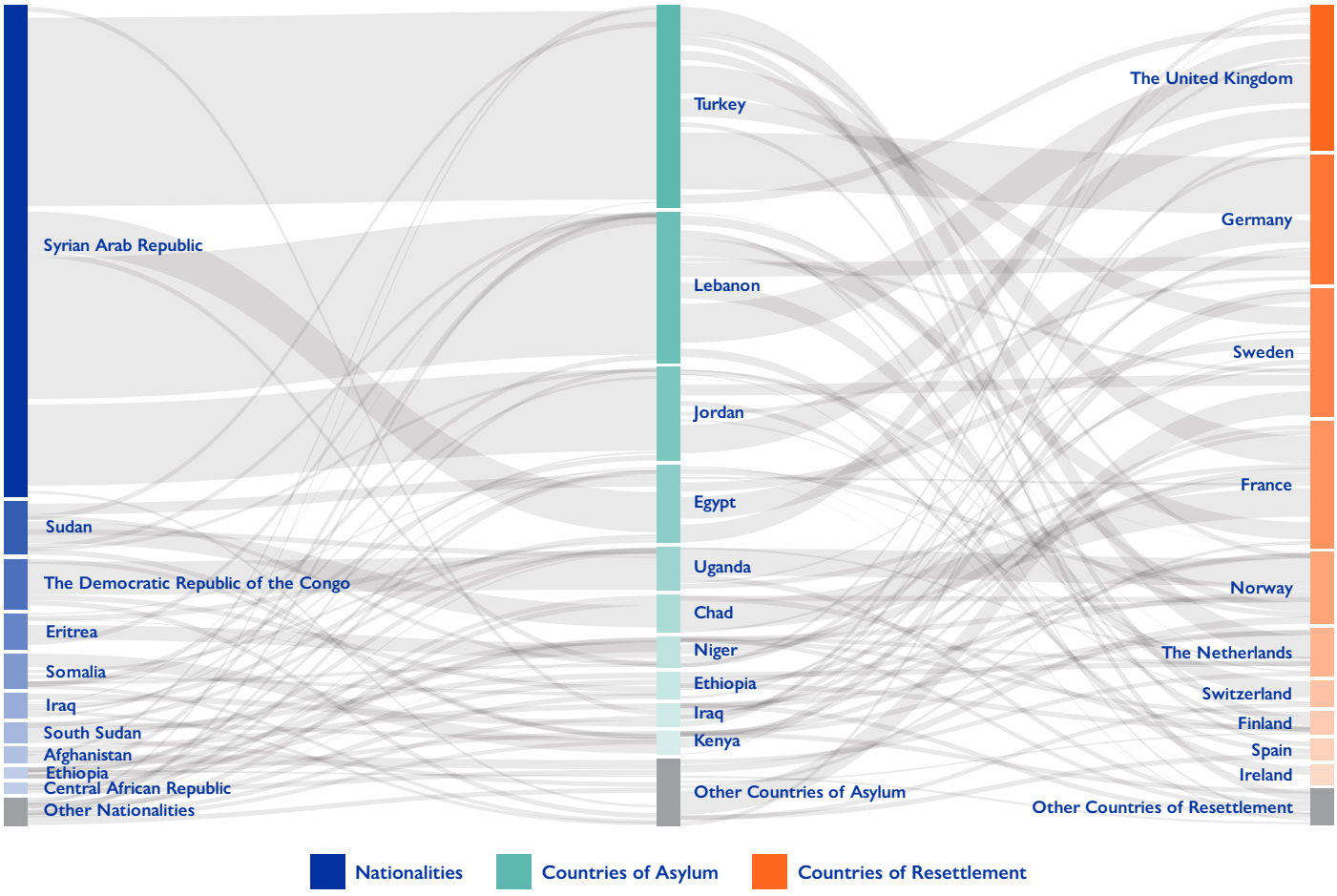
Citizenship								Reporting country
Syria	6 525	14 105	23 165	21 350	**19 015**	*- 11*	*62%*	*United Kingdom (23%)*
Sudan	465	200	505	910	**2 230**	*+ 145*	*7.3%*	*France (54%)*
Congo (DR)	1 120	830	1 065	1 805	**2 020**	*+12*	*6.6%*	*Norway (63%)*
Eritrea	325	625	645	1 435	**1 650**	*+ 15*	*5.4%*	*Sweden (41%)*
Somalia	660	370	405	370	**1 365**	*+ 269*	*4.4%*	*Sweden (42%)*
Iraq	270	240	535	540	**920**	*+ 70*	*3.0%*	*France (45%)*
South Sudan	10	50	75	165	**780**	*+ 373*	*2.5%*	*Norway (54%)*
Afghanistan	750	475	315	345	**575**	*+ 67*	*1.9%*	*Sweden (64%)*
Ethiopia	330	280	310	275	**460**	*+67*	*1.5%*	*Sweden (70%)*
Central African Republic	0	10	40	195	**410**	*+ 110*	*1.3%*	*France (83%)*
Unknown	60	10	80	110	**270**	*+ 145*	*0.9%*	*Netherlands (100%)*
Nigeria	0	0	10	75	**185**	*+ 147*	*0.6%*	*France (89%)*
Stateless	255	210	180	80	**105**	*+ 31*	*0.3%*	*United Kingdom (38%)*
Mali	0	0	5	130	**90**	*- 31*	*0.3%*	*France (72%)*
Burundi	15	45	60	50	**85**	*+ 70*	*0.3%*	*Sweden (76%)*
Other	410	175	285	595	**565**	*- 5*	*1.8%*	*Sweden (26%)*
EU+	**11 195**	**17 625**	**27 680**	**28 430**	**30 725**	*+8*		***Syria (62%)***

Source: European Asylum Support Office. EASO Asylum Report 2020: Annual report on the Situation of Asylum in the European Union.

Between 2014 and 2019, 127,026 refugees were safely transferred to the European Economic Area12 (EEA) through resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes supported by IOM – 30,264 of whom in 2019.13 Again, the majority of such beneficiaries were from Syria.

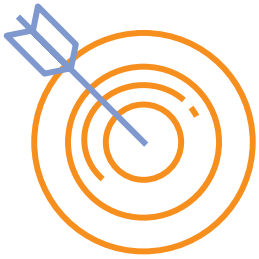
12.
The EEA consists of the EU member states plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.
13.
IOM, 2020.

RESETTLEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ADMISSIONS TO THE EEA WITH IOM ASSISTANCE (2019)



Source: International Organization for Migration (2020), IOM Resettlement Support 2019: European Economic Area.

It takes five to six years to integrate more than 50% of refugees into the workplace and 15 years to reach a 70% employment rate.



REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT

There is considerable evidence that refugees can make important economic contributions in their host countries if they are integrated effectively and in a timely way, starting with early integration into education and the labour market.[14] There is further evidence that labour market integration facilitates refugees' overall social integration and promotes their well-being.[15]

However, average employment rates of both refugees and migrants remain below those of host-country citizens in most EU Member States[16]. Despite falling for six consecutive years, the EU-27 employment rate for people born outside the EU in 2019 remained 6.3 percentage points lower (at 64.4%) than that for the native-born population (at 73.9 %)[17]. Although gaps between EU and third-country nationals are even wider among women than men[18] few labour-market integration measures address the specific needs of female refugees.[19] In addition, it is estimated that it takes five to six years to integrate more than 50% of refugees into the workplace and 15 years to reach a 70% employment rate.[20]

At the same time, EU countries are facing significant demographic challenges, with ageing populations and a shrinking workforce.[21] Workers from third countries (including refugees) are already filling key skills shortages in a number of occupations across EU Member States, but severe shortages across many sectors are likely as these demographic trends persist.[22]

Ensuring the prosperity of European economies will depend not only on reducing unemployment but also on adopting strategies to attract and retain the skills and talents of individuals, including by relying on the labour force of migrants and refugees already present in countries.[23] If appropriately empowered and supported – including through gender-sensitive and forward-looking labour-market integration policies – refugees resettled in the EU can be an important source of human capital for EU labour markets.

14. *European Commission, 2016.*
15. *See, for example, Llinares-Insa, L. I. et al, 2020.*
16. *Migration Policy Centre, 2015.*
17. *Eurostat, 2020a.*
18. *European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, no date.*
19. *Martín, I. et al., 2016.*
20. *European Commission Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion and OECD, 2016.*
21. *UNDESA, 2017.*
22. *European Commission, 2020.*
23. *Migration Policy Centre, 2015 and OECD, 2015.*

2. Practical guidelines: Helping resettled refugees to access the labour market

Host institutions and related actors assist refugees on their arrival in the country of resettlement, including by familiarizing them with the local job market and providing support during the initial steps of the job-seeking process. The main objective of these guidelines is to provide practical advice to improve support for resettled refugees in this area.

2.1 Getting a job: The challenges

Getting a job is not easy for anyone. Firstly, it requires a certain level of understanding of the host country and local job market, including knowledge of the sectors where there is demand for labour, and the ability to identify available opportunities. Secondly, jobseekers need to be aware of their competences/skills and be able to match their professional profile with opportunities. Thirdly, they need to be able to present themselves and their professional experience to potential employers.

For resettled refugees, the process is even more complicated. They may not be familiar with the host country job market or able to understand how their skills are relevant in that market. Their professional choices may be limited by poor language skills or difficulties in obtaining recognition of their educational qualifications and training. In some contexts, reception centres and housing for resettled refugees are located in areas with specific limitations on employment: in rural areas, for example, job opportunities may be limited and public transportation inadequate to serve larger towns where jobs are available. As a result, refugees may find it difficult to find or pursue any job at all, let alone job opportunities that are in line with their professional profiles, and therefore take jobs that are beneath their skill level and aspirations. This can lead to the deterioration of human capital on an individual level (through deskilling) and the community/national level.

The process of searching for and finding a job can take a considerable amount of time and create stress. All those providing support to resettled refugees should be aware that refugees may not be ready to initiate the job-seeking process immediately on resettlement or during the first months of adaptation. They (and/or family members) may have physical and/or mental health issues that impede their ability to undertake a job. They may have stress and anxiety related to such health issues, or to the process of adapting to a new culture and country, that prevent them from focusing on the steps involved in searching for a job. They may also be struggling with language issues. Even when the process is initiated, resettled refugees may become tired, frustrated and demotivated by the lengthy procedures. It is important, therefore, to manage jobseekers' expectations from the outset, and to provide emotional as well as practical support, bearing in mind that for someone who is rebuilding a new life in a completely new context the process itself may generate frustrations and anxiety.

Resettlement actors are encouraged to cultivate awareness of the gender dimensions of labour-market inclusion and the additional individual, structural and cultural barriers to economic integration faced by refugee (and other migrant) women. See section 2.10, below, for more information.

2.2 Laying the groundwork

As a first step in their job search, resettled refugees should receive support to define their career expectations, set realistic objectives and establish short-, medium- and long-term plans to achieve their goals. As part of this process, it is important to help refugees identify their professional experience and skills and whether and how these match the local labour market. Support should include assisting refugees to:

Clearly identify their skills and competences, both formal and informal. This may involve helping refugees to value different aspects of their life experience (such as childcare, housework and community activities) as skills;

Identify which skills and experience require recognition, certification or adaptation in the context of the host country labour market (even where the refugee has many years of relevant experience) and initiate the required processes/ administration;

Navigate the local job market and identify available opportunities; and

Prepare for the job application and interview processes.

2.3 Language learning

Learning the language of the resettlement country is key to accessing the local job market. At least a basic level of competence is required for any job (and the job search), and the majority of employers consider proficiency in the local language essential to carrying out work-related tasks and communicating with the team.
In some countries, resettled refugees benefit from language classes on their arrival. However, in order to access national labour markets, they will need to develop greater proficiency and specific work-related language skills. They can do this through formal education, such as:

Integration and other language courses for migrants that specifically focus on the development of work-related language skills (including those offered by NGOs and educational bodies)

Employability and pre-employment programmes that prepare jobseekers to draft a CV or prepare for a job interview

Vocational programmes for specific occupations, which foster the development of technical vocabulary

The Language for Work network is a non-profit membership organization (launched by the Council of Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages) that works on a voluntary basis. It provides a coherent approach to the development of work-related second language skills, with special attention to the integration of migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. The online resource centre offers a wide range of free resources.

Mentors can also be of enormous help to refugees in developing their language skills – both generally and in terms of work-related vocabulary, terminology and idioms. They provide opportunities to practice with themselves and with others in real-life situations, not only in an educational context. For example, a mentor may spend time with the mentee in a potential employment setting (e.g. a supermarket, worksite or restaurant) to help them learn the appropriate vocabulary and conventions.

2.4 Recognition of formal and informal skills and qualifications

Resettled refugees may not have any formal qualifications or any documentation proving their education and/or work-related skills. This may be for several reasons:

- specific work-related skills (such as the ability to drive a certain type of vehicle or operate machinery) may not require certification in the country of origin or the country of first asylum;
- a refugee's education/training may have been disrupted by the factors that prompted their move and/or the journey itself, with no final degree/certification awarded;
- a refugee may have been unable to take original documentation on their journey (it may have been destroyed, inaccessible or impossible to carry).

It is therefore crucial for resettlement actors to help refugees identify the tools and procedures available in the country of resettlement for the recognition of competences and/or qualifications. They should take into account the sector(s) in which beneficiaries have experience as well as their preferences and professional goals. This will help refugees find jobs in line with their aspirations and reduce skills mismatch.

There are two main types of qualification/skills recognition:[24]

Recognition of formal qualifications (e.g. secondary, vocational and tertiary education)

EU countries have their own procedures for the recognition of formal qualifications, as well as their own regulations on what certification is required for individual jobs.

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is an assessment scheme for refugees, including those who cannot fully document their qualifications. It provides reliable information for integration and progression towards employment and admission to further studies. The passport is based on available documentation and a structured interview and provides an assessment of a refugee's higher education qualifications, as well as information about the individual's work experience and language proficiency.

24.
OECD, 2016a.

Recognition of informal qualifications related to professional skills.

Skills and competences can be developed directly on-the-job or in other informal ways (such as through household, property and land maintenance or care for vulnerable relatives). Although work-related abilities built up through practice are often as useful and relevant as those acquired through formal learning, they may be less easy to identify. For this reason, a number of tools have been developed to support the recognition of informal skills.

Skills-assessment and competency-check tools can support the preparation of a skills profile, highlighting qualifications and previous work experience. They can also serve as the basis for providing personalized advice on the steps that a refugee needs to take to participate in the job market, including the recognition of diplomas/certificates; skills validation; further training; or employment support services.

The European Commission's EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals is a multilingual web application intended for use by organizations providing assistance to third-country nationals during interviews with advisers. It is accessible from most devices, including desktops, mobiles and tablets. The tool helps to map out an individual's profile of skills, qualifications and work experiences. It is not intended as a recognition or authentication tool.

Internships, apprenticeships and traineeships can also help to provide evidence of existing skills. Support staff can provide invaluable assistance to mentees in identifying aspects of their experience that can be classed as work-related skills or competences and be used in the job search or leveraged during the application process.

2.5 Vocational education and training and internship programmes

Adult refugees often take lower-skilled and low-wage jobs to support their families, even if these jobs provide few opportunities for professional or economic advancement. In many cases the jobs available to refugees are less attractive than those for which they are trained or in which they have worked, or for which they would have trained if given the appropriate opportunity.

Improving access to effective vocational education and training (VET) programmes helps refugees to reinforce their skills or learn new ones and can increase their ability to join the labour market.[25] VET can also have an impact on the quality of employment, particularly where programmes are linked to labour market needs and offer opportunities at a number of levels. Providing opportunities to combine education and work – including through internships – and encouraging continuing training and education also bolster access to skilled work and help prevent refugees being relegated to unskilled positions.

VET and other opportunities are usually available in resettlement countries at the central, regional or local levels. The staff of reception institutions should assist refugees in choosing the option that best fits their profile from among those available. To supplement this support, mentors are encouraged to help refugees to exploring such opportunities on the basis of their past experience, skills and/or aspirations.

25.
Jeon, S., 2019.

2.6 Looking for a job

DOING THE RESEARCH

Once a refugee has defined their career expectations and objectives, they can begin to look for a job. The first step is to contact and register with local public employment services (resettlement staff will usually provide support). The staff of public employment services have an in-depth knowledge of the relevant local regulations, training and professional opportunities, as well as any initiatives for the economic integration of refugees. In many countries, too, unemployed people can only access public subsidies if they are registered with such services and participate in mandatory training. Mentors can provide additional support by familiarizing mentees with the procedures of, and terminology used during, interactions with these services.

Refugees can also conduct their own job search. It is important that they are aware of the most appropriate tools and channels to use for different job sectors and roles. The size, nature and location of a company or business influence the media used to advertise job openings. The platforms most widely used by larger enterprises are internet platforms and social networks. These platforms – such as LinkedIn – also enable individuals to create professional profiles and showcase their skills; to contact potential employers directly or be approached by them; and to exchange ideas, information and opportunities with others. Such platforms are generally most useful to highly skilled professionals and those who have access to the areas (cities, for example) where jobs are located. On a more local level, small and medium-sized enterprises tend to advertise vacancies through public/private employment agencies, local newspapers or even informally, such as through word-of-mouth.

Other job-search tactics include:

Direct contact with the company/cold calling, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses, and/or for a more local job search (e.g. outside of large towns or industrial areas).

Mentors may be particularly helpful here, as they may be aware of open positions through their networks in local communities or support spontaneous applications by introducing their mentee to an employer. While this strategy may not be immediately successful, it may result in a job offer in the longer term.

Employment agencies are increasingly important in recruiting for medium-sized and large companies.

Resettlement staff, social workers and mentors can support refugees to access employment agencies, including by familiarizing them with the procedures and conventions.

Career days and job fairs are regularly held in larger cities and can be an important arena for research, preparation and the job search itself as they enable direct contacts between companies and jobseekers.

Resettlement staff, social workers and mentors can prepare refugees for these events, or even accompany them to support them in their interactions with potential employers.

Specialized online job search engines enable jobseekers to register their CV (see below), receive job alerts via email or text message and apply for openings. The engines can save job preferences and filter job searches by criteria including the desired work location, sector or role.

However, jobseekers should be wary of hoaxes or entrapment, reading job descriptions carefully and verifying the reliability of the employer/author of the advertisement. Resettlement actors, social workers and mentors should help refugees to avoid problematic advertisements and support them in the online application process.

Networking Research suggests that networking is the most effective channel for finding a job (and even for finding higher-paying jobs).[26] [27] Networks include relatives, friends, colleagues and other peers, such as fellow nationals and members of the same ethnic/cultural community. (persone che comunicano)

Care should be taken to avoid irregular/under-the-table employment through such networks.[28] Mentors can help refugees through their own networks, create new networks and ensure that any position offered complies with national laws.

As a general rule, all actors supporting refugee integration should encourage refugees to:

- react quickly to job openings (apply in a timely manner);
- persevere in the face of rejection; and
- consider temporary job opportunities or those in sectors outside their main area of interest/experience. Such jobs, even if less than ideal, can help refugees to accumulate experience and create networks as they start the process of labour-market integration.

26. *Arbex, M. et al, 2016.*
27. *Adler, L., 2016.*
28. *Reyneri, E., 2011.*

2.7 Applying for a job

Once a job opportunity or position has been identified, the candidate needs to apply. This may be online, through an agency or in person. Some positions will provide a specific application form the candidate needs to complete, while others require the candidate to submit a curriculum vitae and cover letter.

DRAFTING A CURRICULUM VITAE (CV)

A curriculum vitae, or CV, presents the candidate's professional experience, training and skills. It serves as the initial/primary input used by the employer to evaluate the candidate against the requirements of a position. A well-written CV (together with an effective cover letter, see below) is key to obtaining an interview with the employer.

A refugee's CV can be difficult and/or complex to write. Their experiences and journeys may have interrupted their education and employment history; they may have participated in the informal sector or in sectors that do not directly correlate to job opportunities in the host country; or they may never have had formal employment (particularly women). They will need to dedicate time and energy to prepare a complete, accurate and personalized CV and put thought into what information to include. They will benefit from help to select and focus on the most relevant job-related experiences and skills. It is often a good idea to tailor the CV to the position.

There is no precise formula for writing a CV, but some tips are provided below. The European Union has developed a free online tool, the Europass, which can be used by anyone to create a CV or a cover letter.

CV DOS AND DON'TS

Limit the CV to a maximum of two/three pages (ideally one page only)	Lie. A CV should not include untrue facts or fake experiences. Employers often undertake background checks and even if a person is hired, it will quickly become obvious if they lied about previous jobs and/or skills
Tailor the CV to the job position, focusing on the skills and experience relevant to the role	Make any typos or grammatical mistakes. These may be interpreted by the employer as a sign of sloppiness or lack of interest in the position

There are a few general rules to follow when drafting a CV:

- Use consistent language and style throughout
- Be detailed but concise
- Present education and experience in reverse chronological order (from most recent to least recent)
- For each job, list the employer organization, job title, duration and key tasks undertaken.

INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN A CV

Photograph (formal or informal as appropriate to the position)

Name and surname

Current contact details
(including telephone number, email address)

Availability: Timeframe, contractual obligations and location/willingness to travel

Professional objectives: A summary of everything that might be useful to the recruiter to get to know the person

Professional experiences: Include unpaid and non-traditional experience (e.g. childminding skills are acquired through raising children). Provide details; it is not enough to indicate the task performed.

Education and training: It is important to include education/training completed in the country of origin (or country of first asylum) even if the qualifications are not recognized in the country of resettlement.

Soft skills: personal and social qualities/ competences

Language skills and any evidence of level of competence, in line with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.[29] Refugees should include their mother tongue, proficiency in other languages/dialects spoken in the country of origin and any other language skills (e.g. acquired in the country of first asylum).

IT skills and any appropriate certification/training.

Other skills as appropriate: Including experience with tools (e.g. drills, lathes) and any certification demonstrating the capacity for professional use of the tool(s).

Hobbies and interests

Consent to the processing of personal data (as required in the country where refugees are seeking a job).[30]

Date and signature

29.
Council of Europe, 2001/2020.
30.
European Commission, no date.

PREPARING A COVER LETTER

The cover letter is an important tool that accompanies the CV. Candidates must adapt and tailor the cover letter to the company and position to which they are applying. The letter should not exceed one page.

While the objective of the CV is to demonstrate that the candidate is both competent and suitable for the position, the cover letter provides the candidate with the opportunity to present themself and their experience. The cover letter should focus primarily on professional experiences and aspirations linked to the position, but it can include life experience (such as migration) if this is relevant to the role or helps to explain skills and competences.

There are a number of different examples and templates of cover letters available, including through the Europass tool. Resettlement staff, social workers and mentors can help refugees to select an appropriate template (not all of those available online are of good quality) and personalize it to help ensure the candidate has the best chance of success in their application.

COVER LETTER DOS AND DON'TS

Adopt a simple and clear structure for the cover letter	List previous jobs/experiences (these belong in the CV)
Tailor the cover letter to the desired position and company – it should be different for every application	Make any typos or grammatical mistakes. These may well be interpreted by the employer as a sign of sloppiness
	Lie. Do not invent skills you do not have

The cover letter must explain why the candidate is the right person to fill a position and/or become part of a company or business. To write an effective letter, therefore, it is important to gather as many details as possible about both the position and the company. There are a number of ways to do this:

Ensuring each aspect of the job description/terms of reference are addressed within the letter

Visiting the company's website to find out about its vision, mission and areas of intervention

Searching social networks (including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) to gain insight into the company's communication style, how it presents itself and wishes to be perceived, how it interacts with communities, and the perceptions of staff and the public

If possible, speaking to someone who works at the company

Other key aspects of the cover letter include:

- Highlighting the candidate's motivations in applying for the specific position at the specific company
- Underlining the strengths the candidate brings for the specific position
- Ensuring that all points made are concise and relevant
- Expressing enthusiasm and dynamism.

2.8 Preparing for an interview

All those supporting refugees in finding and applying for jobs should also help them to prepare for the interview process. This process starts from the first interaction with the employer/recruiter, which may take place during the process of arranging the interview. Jobseekers should be careful to be polite and present themselves well and professionally during all such interactions.

Interviews themselves may be in person or through an audio or video call. They are of limited duration and provide a one-off opportunity for the candidate to communicate everything they have to say effectively.

An individual interview normally lasts between 20 and 45 minutes consisting of three phases: opening, running and closing. Whatever the duration of the interview, it is important that the person maintains concentration and continues to show interest throughout.

Although every interview is different because the people involved are different, some questions and subjects recur, generally in the same sequence. Preparing for these will help interviewees remain calm and present themselves as best they can. Mentors and other actors supporting refugees can help them to develop and practice their responses ahead of time, and to tailor their responses to specific positions.

1

SELF-PRESENTATION

Many job interviews start with the question "Can you tell us a little about yourself?". Candidates can prepare a response to this question in advance, and even practice an introductory speech.

Candidates are also often asked to specify their own strengths and weaknesses. Responses should be sincere and confident. Sometimes the weaknesses can represent not only the "human side" of a person, but also unexpected resources. It is important to ensure that the answer matches the skills required by the position and the candidate's profile.

2

WORK HISTORY

Candidates should think about what they want to communicate about previous work experiences, and how. While many people discuss their work history starting from their most recent job, it is sometimes better to begin with the most significant. The interviewer may explore further, asking more about specific experiences; successes; problem-solving; and difficult decisions. Sincerity and consistency are fundamental.

In this case, mentors and other actors supporting refugees should help them to identify which of their jobs and experiences are particularly relevant to the position (e.g. in terms of commonalities or useful skills), as well as those experiences that can be used to answer questions about successes and challenges (see below).

3

COMPETENCY-BASED QUESTIONS

Competency-based questions are based on the concept that past behaviour and experience are the best indicators of future performance and that a person's history tells a story about them: their talents, skills, abilities, knowledge and actual experience in handling a variety of situations.[31]

These questions are increasingly common during interviews. Candidates are asked to demonstrate their competency through situational questions — what they would do or how they would approach various challenges.[32] The interviewer may ask the applicant to give specific and concrete examples. Questions may include:

- Tell us about a challenging assignment when you went above and beyond your manager's expectations.
- Give an example of a time when you used your problem-solving abilities to resolve an issue between staff members.
- How have you handled situations when you had a number of demands being made on you at the same time?

Answers to these questions should be focused, as specific as possible and structured as follows: Situation, Action, Result. Candidates should also be ready to discuss the event further, and link it to their strengths and ability to learn from past

31.
United Nations, no date (a).
32.
United Nations, no date (b).

experiences, as well as any competencies mentioned in the job advertisement/ terms of reference.

Competency-based questions may work very well for refugees, especially when they have gaps in their employment record. They can enable refugees to present their strengths and skills even when these have not been acquired in professional contexts. Mentors and other actors supporting refugees should help them to identify a set of concrete examples, the specific skills they illustrate and their positive outcome(s) and/or lesson(s), and practice adapting them to different questions and contexts.

4

ORGANIZATIONAL/CULTURE FIT

Every company has its own vision and values, work environment and workplace culture and it is important for the interviewer to evaluate whether the candidate will "fit" with the team and the company as a whole. Candidates should be prepared to answer questions such as:

33.
Adecco, 2019.

5

THE APPLICANT'S QUESTIONS

Interviewers usually allow some time at the end of the interview for the applicant to ask questions. The applicant should use this time to help demonstrate their commitment to doing the job well – for example by enquiring about specific tasks and aspects of the role and the working team – and to the goals of the organization. This is also the right time to ask practical questions, such as when the selected applicant would begin working.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Candidates should always bear in mind that participating in an interview does not automatically mean they have or will get the job. Managing expectations can help a candidate deal with the frustrations of not getting a job, and/or of an interview that has not gone well. Mentors and other actors supporting refugees may need to remind them that there are many reasons an employer may decide not to hire a candidate and that a rejection is not a personal judgement. They should help the candidate to review and analyse what happened during the interview and address any difficulties encountered, including through practical tips, so that they remain/become more confident for future interviews.

2.9 Personal and social development and care

A core element of the work of hosting institutions, social workers and mentors is to support the personal and social development of refugees and bolster their ability to cope with transitions and change. As part of this work, mentors and other actors supporting refugees need to help them understand, interpret and present their personal and employment history.

Refugees should receive support to develop skills that foster choices and personal planning, particularly during educational and work transitions, including:

- Self-knowledge and awareness of personal resources (attitudes, interests, experiences, knowledge, skills)
- Knowledge and understanding of the host context (in relation to individual goals)
- Design of a professional project that includes a professional objective (a job that the person would like to do or a sector in which they would like to work) and an action plan (the required actions and timeline to achieve the professional objective).

Resettled refugees may also need support to deal with issues arising out of their experiences before resettlement (in countries of origin and/or first asylum) and in host countries. These may include trauma, stigma and discrimination.

Mentors and other actors supporting refugees should be careful to resist stereotypes and other forms of cognitive bias (particularly those that are negative) about refugees. This includes the idea that they are willing to settle for any job and any employment conditions,[34] which is often fed by the media and political debates in the host country.[35]

Active learning methods and techniques for overcoming stereotypes and prejudices during mentor training can be found here:

- Open Migration
- Accepting Diversity: an interactive handbook in progress
- Council of Europe Training Kit (T-Kit) on Social Inclusion
- IOM (forthcoming (a)): Paths to inclusion: Training for community mentors – Communication, intercultural and social skills. COMMIT project.

34. *See for example the work of R. Gallisot, M. Kilani, I. Chambers, A.M. Rivera, A. Appadurai and U. Fabietti.*

35. *Refugees Reporting, 2017.*

At the same time, mentors and other actors supporting refugees should make sure refugees are fully aware of these issues, as they may influence their employment prospects and broader living conditions. Their work should include helping refugees to develop skills, tactics and coping methods to deal with such challenges practically and psychologically. The COMMIT guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support provide further guidance on this subject.[36]

2.10 Refugee women

There is considerable evidence that a refugee woman who wants to enter the workforce faces the intersecting challenges of being a woman in an unequal job market; her refugee status and unequal access to integration measures; cultural expectations around women working; and care duties.[37]

Women in the European Union are underrepresented in the job market (67% are employed compared to 78% of men)[38] , and the gendered employment gap is even greater among refugee women. In the EU in 2014, only 45% of refugee women were in employment, well below both other immigrant women and refugee men. Their unemployment rate was over 20% (more than twice the rate of native-born women).[39]

Refugee women face difficulties in accessing help: they tend to have far fewer networks than men, and frequently receive less integration support than men, both in terms of hours of language training and active labour market measures. This lack of support leads to lower levels of host-country language skills compared to men in the first two to three years after arrival. Refugee women may also encounter particular difficulties in getting their skills recognised: studies show that women in developing countries are more likely than men to have skills that are not formally certified by diplomas.[40]

A large proportion of resettled refugees come from countries where gender inequality is high and employment of women tends to be low[41] which can affect perceptions of women working outside the home and therefore on women's ability to find and keep a job. Women also often take on family and

36. *IOM, forthcoming (b).*
37. *OECD, 2018.*
38. *Eurostat, 2020b.*
39. *OECD, 2018.*
40. *European Commission, 2018.*
41. *OECD, 2018.*

childcare obligations which may hamper language acquisition and labour-market integration.[42] Poor health leads to poor employment outcomes, and refugee women are more likely to suffer from health problems.[43]

When refugee women are employed, their employment is likely to be precarious or inappropriate:

Refugee women are more likely to work part-time: 42% are employed part-time compared to 36% of other non-EU immigrant women and less than 27% of native-born women.[44]

In the EU, the industries that employ most migrant women are often sectors with a high number of low- and middle-skilled jobs, and migrant women are strongly overrepresented in household services: 8% work in this sector compared to 1% of native-born women. More than one in four (26%) migrant women works in a low-skilled job (10 percentage points more than among native-born women).[45]

Undeclared and underpaid work are in some contexts particularly prevalent among refugee women, [46] [46] and they are almost certain to be undertaking unpaid care work in the home.[48]

Employed refugee women with tertiary education also have a high incidence of over-qualification (working in jobs that require a lower level of qualification than they possess): 40% were overqualified for their job (twice the figure of native-born peers).[49]

42. *European Commission, 2018.*
43. *OECD, 2018.*
44. *Ibid.*
45. *OECD, 2020.*
46. *European Parliament, 2016.*
47. *Kabir, R. and Klugman, J. 2019.*
48. *Care International, 2020.*
49. *OECD, 2018.*

Building basic skills in terms of educational attainment and host-country language training bears a high return in terms of improving labour market outcomes for refugee women.[50] Mentors and other actors supporting refugees should ensure that:

- If necessary, they reinforce the message that women are expected to work and support the family from the economic point of view and encourage refugee women to engage (or re-engage) in training or to take up employment, notably when they come from countries where women are underrepresented in the labour market. [51]
- They have the required knowledge of the opportunities available to refugee women, including language training; VET; skills assessment and recognition; employment programmes; empowerment programmes; childcare provision; etc. Specific and/or targeted services may be available, especially in areas where women are underrepresented in training and other labour market policies.[52] [53]
- They have reliable and relevant knowledge about the local job market and laws and help to ensure their mentees are not exploited (including by ensuring they sign a legal work contract).
- They provide focused support to create and expand social and other networks for refugee women.

50.
Ibid.
51.
OECD, 2020.
52.
OECD, 2020.
53.
European Commission, 2018.

Conclusions

Refugees are among the most vulnerable people in the job market and face many more difficulties than either the local population or other migrants.

Integrating refugees into the labour markets of resettlement countries in the European Union requires a multi-level approach. National and international institutions, public, economic and social actors and civil society organizations all have a fundamental role to play in a structured and successful inclusion process. It should be recognized that this process begins before resettlement. Pre-departure orientation curricula should ensure that refugees are aware of what resources and networks are available, and that they will need to make use of these. Expectations regarding the ability of host governments in resettlement countries to provide all of the support expected by refugees should be managed. Pre-departure skills profiling can also be conducted.[54] Training in the language of the country of resettlement should be provided ahead of departure in order (for example during the long waiting periods of the application process) to ease the transition and facilitate labour-market integration, particularly for women.

At the policy level, EU countries need to ensure that all resettled refugees have access to appropriate integration services, pre- and post-arrival, including labour-market integration services that cover:

Language training

Skills assessments and certification

Local employment offices

Personal support

This last point is potentially the most important. All of the actors engaged in resettlement and the broader process of integration need to work together to ensure the needs and employment objectives of individual refugees are being met.

54. *IOM, 2019.*

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