



Managing global flows at local level

# Workshop Report

## Integration of migrants into the labour market

### Vantaa 24-27 January 2017

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## **Introduction**

The second workshop in the transnational programme for the Arrival Cities network took place in Vantaa in January 2017. Delegates from all the 10 partners took part in a programme that focused on the sub-theme of Integration into the Labour Market. The focus included actions to support Migrants to secure work AND also develop their own businesses.

This was an issue that members of the Urbact Local Groups (ULG's) created by each partner had identified as one of the key issues that they wished to explore through a process of transnational exchange of practice and learning.

This report captures the work of this workshop. The report is designed to support the ULG's in the deliberation and development of their Local Action Plans. In addition the report seeks to provide useful resources for wider dissemination beyond the Arrival Cities network.

The report is structured into the following sections:

- **Section One** provides an overview of the situation for migrants in relation to their integration into the labour market
- **Section Two** provides examples of case studies undertaken to support the integration of migrants into the labour market at a local level.
- **Section Three** provides some useful links and other resources related to the theme.
- **Section Four** provides details of the workshop in terms of agenda, presentations, and list of participants.

### **Section One: Integration of Migrants into the Labour Market: An Overview**

In any overview of this theme it is essential to make an important distinction at the outset between two categories of “migrants”

Firstly, the situation facing the large numbers of migrants (classified as “refugees” or “asylum seekers”) who have arrived since 2014 (which are referred to below as the “new wave”) and secondly,

migrants (third country nationals) who have been settled in various EU member states for many years.

This overview provides firstly a profile of each of the two groups in relation to the situation in the labour market. It then provides an overview of the barriers faced by both groups and lastly a typology of actions that have been taken at local level to address these barriers.

There is a widely shared consensus among experts that labour market participation is the single most important step to a successful integration into host societies for all groups of migrants. For example ,the EU Common Basic Principles of Immigrant Integration<sup>1</sup> state that "employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible"

However, what needs to be made clear at the outset is that integration remains primarily a national competence and the implementation of integration policies falls under the responsibility of the Member States. More recently, the European Agenda on Migration, adopted by the Commission in May 2015,<sup>2</sup> sets out the aim to better support national governments, local authorities and civil society. However, only a small section is dedicated to integration policies. It sets out that Member States can be financially supported by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), the European Social Fund and other EU Funds in their efforts for integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Member States are also supported by policy recommendations on social inclusion and labour market participation in the context of the European Semester. However, till now recommendations refer generally to people with migration background but not specifically to asylum seekers and refugees. This is also the case with the European Modules on Migrant Integration<sup>3</sup> which the European Commission produced in 2014. .The Modules have been developed with experts from all over the EU aiming to provide a common language and a reference framework regarding integration. The EU modules cover all migrant groups. The European modules are mainly directed at

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles\\_en.pdf](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/common-basic-principles_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [European Agenda on Migration](#)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/european-modules-on-migrant-integration---final-report>

the national authorities of the Member States and closely linked with the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration.

### **The new wave: Post 2014**

Europe has experienced an unprecedented surge in the arrival of new migrants in the past few years. It is estimated that between 2014 and 2016 an additional 1.7 million asylum seekers arrived. The age distribution of the new arrivals indicates that more than 70% are between 18-64 years old. Thus of working age. Moreover, the majority of the new arrivals have come from countries which are deemed to be unsafe (such as Syria).

In the last seven years, the yearly number of first-time asylum seekers has increased from 153,000 in 2008 to 1.3 million in 2015 and close to 900,000 in the first nine months of 2016. This has been driven by conflicts in the Middle East (e.g. the war in Syria) and in Africa<sup>4</sup>. In 2015, the number of asylum seekers reached 1.3 million and 900,000 in the first nine months of 2016 .

Young people aged between 18 and 34, and notably young men, constitute the largest group of asylum seekers. 41% of all arrivals seeking asylum in 2015 and first nine months of 2016 (896,000 people) were young working-age men between 18 and 34

Whilst, there is no systematic assessment of the qualifications and skills of asylum seekers at entry. Evidence points to average qualifications being lower than those of the native population, while illustrating a considerable variation according to countries of origin.

Within the EU, Italy, Greece and Hungary are on the front line but the main destination countries are Germany, in absolute terms, and Sweden and Austria, relative to their population. These countries accounted for more than 75 % of all applicants, while in a number of East European countries (Slovakia, Croatia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia) less than 100 asylum seekers applied. Applications numbers are also comparatively low in some Southern European countries, e.g. in Portugal (780 applications in 2015).

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<sup>4</sup> For more detailed explanations of the timing, reasons and factors influencing the current wave of migration see for example Migration Policy Institute (2015), Europe's Migration Crisis in Context: Why Now and What Next?, 24 September 2015 – available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/europe-migration-crisiscontext-why-now-and-what-next>

The most recent figures on first-time applicants by countries of origin show a strong increase in the inflow from Syria. In January 2016, 51 % of all applicants for asylum in the EU were Syrians, followed by applicants from Iraq (13%) and 10 % from Afghanistan

With respect to the labour market integration of refugees, what is very clear is that there is no specific EU policy. In contrast to EU standards on reception and protection, the effective integration of refugees is not at forefront of the European migration policy. As stated above, although there are Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration, specific and practical issues of refugees' labour market integration has not been on the EU policy agenda so far. There are no policy documents or refugee-specific recommendations with the exception of resettled refugees. In recent EU level reports and policy documents refugee integration is generally mainstreamed into immigration policies for third country nationals. Specific and practical issues of refugees' labour market integration have not been on the EU agenda so far. Hence, there are no commonly agreed standards and guidelines against which to assess refugee-specific integration policies. While many of the guidelines and recommendations of the European Modules on Migrant Integration are equally valid for refugees, there are only a few specifically tailored towards refugees.

One exception however, to this lack of specific focus on this target group can be found in the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals which was presented by the European Commission on 7 June 2016<sup>5</sup>. It envisages actions in the following five key areas:

- Support for pre-departure and pre-arrival measures planned within the context of resettlement programmes with the help of the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF);
- Education with support of some existing tools – examples include the New Skills Agenda and the Erasmus+ programme;
- Labour market integration and access to vocational training;
- Help to secure access to basic services – for example, by using EU funds to improve reception and housing conditions;
- Promoting active participation and social inclusion of third country nationals, particularly refugees and asylum seekers.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

Regarding labour market integration while many of the planned actions aim to assist all third-country nationals,

there are some that specifically target refugees. The main ones include:

- Recognition of academic qualifications;
- Better training of staff in reception centres in order to accelerate recognition procedures;
- Improvement of access to the procedure for beneficiaries of international protection;
- Better communication between the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) in the European Region and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) in the European Union<sup>6</sup> and stakeholders including, in particular, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – active in education in reception centres (that is, focusing on training staff in reception facilities);
- Revision of the European Qualifications Framework—the aim is to better understand qualifications acquired in third countries;
- Funding fast-track insertion into the labour market and vocational training – skills assessment, employment-focused language training and on-the-job training are considered important and the main tools are planned to be AMIF and the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI);
- Exchange of information on promising practices –already happening through the European Commission’s online database<sup>7</sup> and also conducted through existing networks and programmes such as the European Network of Public Employment Services, Youth Guarantee coordinators and the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP);
- Funding for strengthening capacities at local level –for asylum seekers, this is particularly relevant at reception centres and in integration practices, with a focus on labour market integration;
- Identification of best practices to facilitate migrant entrepreneurship

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<sup>6</sup>ENIC-NARIC is a joint initiative by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that provides information on procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications. For more information see their website ([www.enic-naric.net](http://www.enic-naric.net)).

<sup>7</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1208&langId=en>

## **Integration into the labour market**

Information on labour market outcomes of persons in this group are scarce. For this new wave of migrants the impact on labour markets has not as yet been very noticeable. This is due very simply to the fact the majority of new arrivals have not yet been available for job search due to pending asylum procedures. According to OECD estimates the cumulative impact of the asylum seekers inflow by end 2016 will correspond to less than one million entries in the labour market, or 0.4 % of European Economic Area's labour force (OECD, 2015b)<sup>8</sup>. For Germany, the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) estimates an increase of 1.5 % of the German labour force in a mid-term perspective. Assuming a net inflow of 1 million asylum seekers in 2015 and in 2016 the potential labour force increases from 380 000 persons in 2016 to 640 000 in 2018. What is also clear is that unemployment for this group will rise in the near future when more recognized applicants enter the labour force.

Preliminary data point to limited integration in the labour market of asylum seekers and refugees who arrived since 2014. Employment statistics of the public employment service from Germany for September 2016 show a year-on-year increase in employment of 47,000 (40%) for people originating from the group of non-European countries from which most asylum seekers come. Over the same period, unemployment among this group increased much more steeply, by 87,000 (102%). Among people who came to Germany in the context of an application for asylum around 406,000 were looking for work in November 2016. Among this group, 160,000 were counted as unemployed, while the rest were benefitting from active labour market measures, following an integration course, on short-term sick leave or working a limited number of hours. The picture is similar in Sweden where refugees participate in a two-year comprehensive programme and effective entry to the labour market is limited. Between July 2015 and July 2016, the number of registered unemployed born outside Europe increased by 13,000 to 148,000, while total unemployment fell by 11,000, thus increasing the proportion of the non EU born among the unemployed to 42% .

As stated above, information on labour market outcomes of persons in this group are scarce. Due to the lack of data, there has been very little empirical research done on the labour market integration of this new wave of migrants. However, there is data available regarding previous groups of refugees and how they fared in the labour market. The available data comes from the Labour Force Survey

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<sup>8</sup>

(LFS). In 2014 the EU Labour Force Survey included 11 additional variables on migrants and their descendants to supplement the information already contained in the core EU-LFS (also known as the 2014 LFS Ad Hoc Module on the Labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants)<sup>9</sup>

The available data demonstrates that in the past refugees found it particularly difficult to enter the local labour market and their outcomes generally lagged well behind those of other migrant groups. On EU average, it took between five and six years to integrate more than 50 % of refugee migrants into the workplace and as much as 15 years to reach a 70 % employment rate converging towards the outcomes for labour migrants.

Even though the Ad Hoc Module only covers data up to 2014 - i.e. it came one year before the big 2015 wave of refugees - it provides important lessons from previous inflows of refugees.

Non-EU born people are very unevenly distributed across Member States. According to the 2014 Module, five countries alone (Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Spain) host 83% of all non-EU born migrants aged between 15 and 64 years in the 25 EU countries (EU-25) that took part in the Ad Hoc Module. Those included all current EU countries except the Netherlands, Denmark and Ireland. By contrast, the 13 countries included in the Ad Hoc module which joined the EU from 2004 onwards host less than 5% of non EU born migrants in the EU-25.

However, social integration of people with a migrant background will continue to be a challenge in the EU. Non-EU born migrants are a very vulnerable group among which refugees tend to be an even more vulnerable one compared to the rest of the non-EU born due to their lower employment and education outcomes. Non-EU born migrants have a much higher exposure to poverty (both general poverty and in-work poverty), material deprivation and low-work-intensity households than the native-born population, which indicates that the situation for refugees is likely to be even more severe. There is also evidence that many migrants have become homeless (European Commission, 2014).

Refugee women face more serious challenges securing employment than their male peers but also than all other groups of migrant women. The employment rate for refugee women is on average 45%.

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<sup>9</sup> The last LFS ad hoc module on this topic was in 2008 and the next one is planned for 2021.



It is lower than for other female non-EU born and native-born women and 17pp lower than that of refugee men. Refugee women also have the highest rate of unemployment of all groups: 21%, compared with 19% for refugee men and 17% for non-refugee migrant women from outside the EU.

### **The second group: settled third country migrants**

In 2013, one in ten people (that is over 50 million) residing in the EU was born abroad. Over a quarter of these people arrived before the age of 15. Native-born offspring with at least one foreign-born parent account for a further 6% in the EU. More than half of the native-born population with a migrant background have two foreign-born parents (and are often referred to as the “second generation”). The immigrant population has grown by one-third in the course of the last ten years. It more than doubled in Finland, Ireland, Italy and Spain. In 2012-13, two-thirds of immigrants had been living in the host country for more than 10 years, primarily in the settlement countries and in the longstanding immigration destinations.

In contrast to the first group, here their situation in the labour market is much better documented. What emerges from the data and research is the following profile of this group:

- In a majority of Member States, the activity rate of nationals was higher than for non-EU citizens, except in particular in Greece (72.6% for nationals compared with 80.7% for non-EU citizens) and Slovenia (75.7% vs. 83.5%), followed by Slovakia (76.2% vs. 81.3%), Italy (67.9% vs. 72.6%), Spain (78.7% vs. 82.0%), Cyprus (79.3% vs. 81.5%), Portugal (79.0% vs. 80.9%), the Czech Republic (78.7% vs. 79.2%) and Hungary (73.8% vs. 74.1%). In 2015 across Member States, the most significant differences between the activity rates for non-EU citizens and for nationals were recorded in the Netherlands (59.7% for non-EU citizens compared with 82.2% for nationals, or -22.5 percentage points), Finland (-18.8 pp) and Germany (-18.3 pp), followed by France (-15.7 pp), Denmark (-15.6 pp), Sweden (-15.3 pp) and Belgium (-14.6 pp). On average in the EU, the difference between the activity rate for non-EU citizens (69.8%) and for citizens of the reporting country (77.3%) was -7.5 percentage points in 2015.
- In 2010-11, an average of 80% of the immigrants living in EU countries were of working age (15-64 years old), while 13% were over 64 and 6% under 15. Immigrants are overrepresented

in the working-age population (80% compared with 66% of the native-born), particularly in the 25-44 age group. The 25-44 year-olds are an especially large age group in the countries of recent immigration, as well as in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, where they account for more than half of the foreign-born population of working age.

- The employment rate for non-EU citizens aged 20 to 64 in the EU stood at 56.7% in 2015, while it was 70.6% for nationals. The share of employees with a temporary contract was higher for non-EU citizens (21.4%) than for nationals (12.9%). The pattern was the same for the proportion of part time employment, which was more widespread amongst non-EU citizens (28.3%) than amongst nationals (18.4%).
- For unemployment, the rate for non-EU citizens aged 20 to 64 (18.9%) was more than twice the level for nationals (8.7%). However, the share of people unemployed for 12 months or more was slightly lower for non-EU citizens (49.5%) than for nationals (50.7%). In 2012-13, the immigrant unemployment rate was 16% in the European Union—6 percentage points higher than native-born rates.
- 45% of unemployed immigrants in the EU had been looking for work for over 12 months in 2012-13
- Immigrants with no or low education were more likely to be in work than their native-born peers in half of EU countries. A high level of education makes it easier to join the labour market. Yet, immigrants with higher-education degrees struggle more to enter the workplace than their native-born peers. The gaps are even larger for women. Across the European Union, degree-holding immigrants are on average twice as likely to be out of work than their native counterparts. Moreover, even when they are long-term residents, the foreign-born are worse-off than their native-born peers when it comes to overqualification and working hours. Across the EU, over one-third of immigrants who hold a tertiary degree are overqualified for their jobs, compared to one in four native-born. Rates are as high as 50% in recent immigration destinations like Greece, Italy and Spain where inflows have come in response to the demand for low- and medium-skilled labour over the past decade. In those countries, overqualification is the lot of twice as many foreign- as native-born workers as it is in Germany and the Nordic countries

- EU-wide, higher proportions of inactive immigrants (21%) than inactive native-born (16%) are willing to work. In other words, they are more likely to experience involuntary inactivity.
- Across the European Union, immigrants held an average of one-quarter of low-skilled jobs in 2012-13. However, in some countries the levels were much higher—75% in Luxembourg, over 60% in Cyprus and more than 40% in Greece and Austria. In fact, in most countries, immigrants are largely overrepresented in low-skilled occupations. And in most countries, both male and female immigrants were more likely to be hired under short-term contracts than their native-born peers
- Immigrants tend to make greater efforts to compensate for any disadvantage in the labour market. Some studies have shown, for instance, that immigrants tend to apply for more jobs than the native-born to eventually find a job.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, they are generally less fussy about jobs, accepting ones that may not always match their skills. Indeed, indicators point to wide and significant immigrant-native differences in overqualification. Differences between immigrants and native-born remain large also, especially in job skills, relative poverty and household overcrowding.
- In EU countries, differences in outcomes between third-country (non-EU) nationals and host country nationals are generally greater than between foreign-born and native-born. There are a number of reasons. First, third-country nationals are more likely to be recent arrivals, as citizenship take-up increases with time spent in the host country. They may also face legal barriers—to employment in the public sector in some countries, for example. Similarly, third-country citizens may have limited access to social services (e.g. low-rent housing or benefits), which can also impact on their outcomes. Furthermore, most third-country nationals come from lower-income countries where educational systems do not always perform as well as those in EU countries and deliver qualifications whose worth host country employers may struggle to recognise.
- In many countries, the 2007-08 global financial and economic crisis has hindered the progress being made by immigrants, notably in labour market and economic integration. Job losses have been greater among immigrants than the native-born. Foreign-born men, who widely

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<sup>10</sup> (see Liebig and Huddleston, 2014)

work in sectors more exposed to cyclical fluctuations, have been worse affected than women. However, immigrant women have seen greater deterioration in the quality of their jobs.

- In 2010-11, 80% of immigrants in the European Union were of working age, compared with 66% of the native-born. Women are slightly overrepresented among the immigrant population of working age, accounting for about 52%.
- Migrants (whether employed or not) are less likely than host-country-born adults to attend employment-oriented training courses, while economically active immigrants are less likely to take part in on-the-job training. Immigrants state more often than natives that they need training, but do not take up courses. Reasons given are chiefly that they do not meet the standards required or that they cannot afford it. In 2012, an average of 85% of training schemes attended by host-country natives in the previous 12 months were work-related, while only 78% of those taken up by immigrants were. Employment-based programmes accounted for even less of the training that immigrant women followed – 25% of the courses they attended had nothing to do with jobs, compared to 20% among their native-born counterparts. These shares are similar EU-wide. Around one-third of the training courses that immigrant women attended in France, and the Netherlands had no connection with jobs.
- Across the European Union, an average of 12% of immigrants are self-employed. The proportion is slightly higher than among the native-born in most countries and considerably higher in central Europe, and the United Kingdom. And in Poland and the Czech Republic, more than one immigrant in four is self-employed – a rate that is two to three times higher than among their domestically born peers. However, in countries where self-employment is widespread, particularly in southern Europe, immigrants are not more likely than the native-born to be self-employed. In Greece and Italy, they are actually half as likely.

### **The position of young people is different**

While it might be difficult to assess skills that immigrants have acquired abroad, this is not the case when it comes to young people from immigrant families who have been raised and educated in the host country. Their success in finding work is widely considered an integration “benchmark”.

On average in the EU, young native-born (aged 15 to 34) with immigrant parents are 5 percentage points less likely to have a job than their peers without a migration background. The employment gap is about the same in both public and private sectors.

What is blocking the integration of these young people? Several factors are at work, including:

- low levels of contact with potential employers,
- Limited access to the networks through which many vacancies are filled and lack of knowledge of how the labour market functions.
- Discrimination is also a factor. Candidates with names perceived as sounding “immigrant” often have to submit twice as many job applications as people with similar qualifications and experience but with a name that sounds “native”.

Efforts to encourage integration need to start young, especially for the native-born children of low-educated immigrants. It is crucial that they start receiving early childhood education and care in the host country from the age of three or four. Yet the children of immigrants are still often underrepresented in this form of education and care. As for children born abroad, early family reunification should be encouraged as each year of delay further sets back educational outcomes.

Here is a table which summarizes some of the barriers faced by the target group:

**Barriers to the labour market**

<b>Areas</b>	<b>General issues experienced by people seeking work</b>	<b>Specific issues facing immigrants</b> <b>Skills and competencies lacking</b>
Skills and competencies	Lack of generic skills (communication, self-management, professionalism)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language skills</li> <li>• Lack of socio-cultural knowledge and understanding.</li> </ul>

	<p>Lack of specific competencies required for job</p> <p>Lack of specific qualifications required for job</p> <p>Lack of skills in navigating the labour market</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competencies required may be different from those required in home country.</li> <li>• Lack of funding and/or subsidies to access education and training locally.</li> <li>• Lack of local referees and lack of local work experience to prove competencies.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the value and relevance of qualifications and experience gained in other countries.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge of local labour markets</li> </ul>
<p>Accessibility issues</p>	<p>Geographical isolation (distance from employers, distance from transport networks)</p> <p>Social isolation (lack of access to social capital,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concentration of some immigrants in poorer communities and in ethnic enclaves.</li> <li>• Lack of familiarity with local social networks</li> </ul>

	social networks)	
Availability to work	<p>Availability of childcare and care for adult Dependents</p> <p>Social and psychological issues, motivational problems</p> <p>Work in the informal economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of relatives in the country may make it difficult to delegate caring responsibilities</li> <li>• Immigrants who come as refugees may have particular problems with overcoming trauma</li> <li>• The children of migrants may experience disaffection if their parents did not succeed in the way they had expected.</li> <li>• Immigrants often become concentrated in the informal economy where they have entered the country illegally or their work permit has expired.</li> </ul>

Employer attitudes	Prejudice and the ascribing of false or stereotypical characteristics (for example due to social background, residence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of normal recourse to information on an immigrants experience and qualifications</li> <li>• Racism, particularly as regards visible minorities. Concentration of immigrants in poorer areas which may become stigmatised</li> </ul>
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**Section Two: Local Actions to support the integration of migrants into the labour market**

In terms of general trends what is important to emphasize is the growing recognition at EU level of the importance of local actions. This policy development is linked to wider macro factors such as:

- Globalisation, combined with market liberalisation which amidst all trends towards supranationalism has highlighted the need to tap both those local markets that cater for needs overlooked by the global markets, but also connect those local markets, which do compete, better with the global economy to remain competitive;
- The persistence of high levels of unemployment which has forced decision makers to search for new solutions and the identification of new sources of jobs;
- The transformation of homogeneous labour markets to complex labour markets with an increasing variety of jobs and contractual situations;
- The increased complexity of individual needs and local conditions which cannot be addressed by standard, central solutions;

Here is an initial typology of the kinds of actions that can be seen in relation to integration into the labour market.



## **1. Taking stock of immigrants' skills**

To integrate adult immigrants, the point of departure is to take stock of their qualifications and skills. This initial step should be designed into integration programmes, which should themselves be tailored to meet specific needs.

## **2. Validation of existing skills and qualifications**

The available evidence suggests that procedures for recognising foreign qualifications and converting them into their host-country equivalents are highly valued by employers and are associated with better labour-market outcomes. In Austria, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, at least 75% of tertiary-educated immigrants who asked for recognition of their qualifications were granted it.

Yet, few immigrants seem to seek to have their qualifications recognised. One reason is the lack of transparency surrounding the procedures and the large number of actors involved, particularly in heavily regulated professions.

A much broader issue is the validation of skills – acquired both formally and informally. It is a measure from which immigrants would be expected to benefit disproportionately, yet they are underrepresented among people who seek to have their skills evaluated.

## **3. Learning the local language**

Immigrants have many skills that the labour market should value more, but they also need to develop new ones – most notably the host-country's language. However, in order to be effective, such training must account of different needs and be geared towards labour market integration. One way to do this is by providing vocation-specific language training, ideally on-the-job. Although such training is costly, it is an investment that appears to pay off.

## **4. Basic skills training**

In several countries, between 20 and 40% of immigrants aged 25 to 54 have attended only primary education. For immigrants who lack basic skills, significant investment must often be made to ensure they can function in the host country.

## **5. Mentorship programmes**

Mentorship programmes have been shown to help tackle the obstacles that migrants face and have met with some success.

## **6. Tackling workplace discrimination**

There is an emerging trend in workplace policy for businesses to tackle discrimination through voluntary diversity measures. These can include companies volunteering to be audited for potentially discriminatory hiring practices, and then implementing measures to diversify their staff. Such efforts may be supported by consultants paid by the public employment services.

## **7. Improving local co-ordination**

What is very clear from city , national, EU and International evaluations/reviewsof actions/policies to improve the position of migrants in the labour market, is that a key weakness in terms of impact relates to a lack of an integrated approach and effective co-ordination. So action to create better working between Public employment services, municipalities, vocational training providers and social services have been undertaken in many locations.

## **8. Enterprise development**

Supporting immigrants in the development of enterprises, and particularly the expansion of these enterprises beyond “home industries” that frequently involve long hours and poor working conditions;

## **9. Work placements**

Work experience placements provide a means to enable migrants to obtain some on job experience and at the same time bring about change in employer perceptions and assessment of the generic skills of migrants.

## **10. Social capital, network building and acculturation**

Building solidarity and understanding between local residents is seen as an essential element in ensuring the wider participation of immigrants in society and as such their ability to access work. In countries where much employment is advertised informally this may be an effective strategy.

## Some Case Studies:

### **Neighbourhood Mothers Project, Nicehearts, Vantaa (FI)**

#### **Background:**

Nicehearts is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2001 and based in Finland that aims to support community self-reliance and promote gender equality and activities for girls and women. The organisation started in the City of Vantaa, and now has expanded its services and activities to the cities of Helsinki and Espoo as well the South Karelia region. The Neighbourhood Mothers project is a core part of the Nicehearts programme. The project works with women currently unemployed or outside of working life (i.e., due to child care or family reasons) who are active or want to be more active in society. It supports them to be active agents within their communities. The common denominator between the individual neighbourhood mothers is their desire to help other women in need.

Many of these women have immigrant backgrounds and act as crucial links on the ground between women and local services. Through the structured support system of Neighbourhood Mothers they are able to pass on they're own knowledge learnt from navigating the Finnish system and language.

The aims of the project are:

- The prevention of marginalisation and isolation of vulnerable women in their communities
- To empower women to reach their potential and to act as change agents to, in turn empower their communities.
- To create long-term networks and promote a place of encounter between girls and women of different cultures and ages on a daily basis.

#### **The Action:**

The Neighbourhood Mothers model originated in Berlin and was replicated in Denmark. Nicehearts has transferred this model of working into Finland and key to the success of the project so far has been the clear staged process of best practice transferral which has involved 3 years of development and action learning. This has resulted in a model which suits the local context.

This can be broken down into a 3 phased approach:

- Stage 1: R&D and preliminary research to establish needs and partnerships within the city (2014).
- Stage 2: A pilot phase- the Danish model was put into practice and was continuously evaluated in order to develop the model within the context of Finland (2015-16).
- Stage 3: Implementation of the Finnish Neighbourhood Mothers model (2017-18).

There are currently 63 active neighbourhood mothers across Helsinki Capital Region and South Karelia and this network is expanding. The project is funded by the European Social Fund, the cities of Vantaa, Espoo and Helsinki as well as the South Karelia social and healthcare district.



The Neighbourhood mothers are involved in the project from planning to implementation, giving them the space and the voice to input ideas, design, plan and implement the changes that they would want to see in their communities. Nicehearts provides a safe, welcoming space where they can learn and try out new ideas so that they can more actively pursue their own personal and career goals.

A core part of the project is a training programme which aims to build up participants knowledge of service provision in Finland and how to navigate the system as well as develop personal skills such as communication and facilitation skills. The training programme also explores fundamental concepts such as democracy, women's rights and diversity.

The sense of community built through participation in the project provides the neighbourhood mothers with a valuable support system to articulate and pursue their goals and build friendships. Through this personal empowerment neighbourhood mothers are supported to act as support agents and to provide signposting to women in their own communities and networks. This role acts to fill the missing link between vulnerable women and their local services. Neighbourhood Mothers may take on many different roles such as serving as aids to nurses and caregivers or facilitating discussion between schools and ethnic minority families.

### **Reflections:**

Although not explicitly a programme focussed on work and employment, this project of women's empowerment and wider integration has helped to raise women's aspirations and abilities to develop careers. During the pilot phase, 60% of participants got jobs or internships in their field or embarked on education and training programmes. The approach of Neighbourhood Mothers means that issues around work attainment are dealt with in a holistic way, combining information and signposting with the development of softer skills and self-esteem. Also through supporting those women with the motivation and desire to make change, these women then act as agents of change within their own networks reaching members of the communities which service providers may find it hard to reach.

**Further Sources:**

Nicehearts <http://www.nicehearts.com>

Blog <https://naapuriaidit.wordpress.com>

Web magazine <https://ioom.ag/UYeQ>

**Contact:**

Meg Sakilayan-Latvala, Training Coordinator: [Meg.sakilayan-latvala@nicehearts.com](mailto:Meg.sakilayan-latvala@nicehearts.com)

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**Coaching for Integration, Vantaa (FI)****Background:**

Vantaa is the most multicultural municipality in Finland with the highest proportion of migrants. More than 15% (2015/2016) of the population are foreign language speakers. The largest language groups in Vantaa are Estonian, Russian, Somali, Albanian, Vietnamese and Arabic. The unemployment rate in Vantaa was 12.4% in 2015. Though there are no accurate statistics for migrant or ethnic minority unemployment rates, migrant unemployment is currently thought to be around 30%, including new arrivals. For settled and second generation migrants the unemployment rate is estimated to be lower than 30% but higher than 12.4%.

Coaching for Integration was a project which took place between April 2015 and December 2016 in the area of Hakunila-Lansimaki, Vantaa aimed at supporting employment and integration of immigrants. It was a collaboration between the City of Vantaa, Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Department and the NGO, Hakunila International Organisation. It was developed in response to a need for new experimental working methods to better serve the immigrant populations in the face of shrinking public sector resources.

It was financed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment and the City of Vantaa. The total budget was 62 000 €, plus one salary paid by the Employment Office, and a share allocated for the NGO.

The aim of the project was:

- To experiment with a new model of outreach work.
- To offer local immigrants a lower threshold service of advice and support for integration and job seeking.
- To transfer knowledge and competence from public servants to an NGO
- To get a more accurate profile of immigrant communities and to map out the residents needs and challenges.

**The Action:**

Two officers from the municipality were relocated from council offices to the premises of a local NGO, Hakunila International Organisation. Through this relocation officers were able to link more directly with the

NGO and also extend council services into a more front line service for communities who were more likely to be experiencing barriers to accessing services and gaining employment.

Once underway the project focused most strongly on customer service which detracted from an original aim to transfer knowledge and competence from public servants to the NGO. The variety and level of support needed meant that the officers were largely preoccupied with a large number of individual cases with people needing guidance to navigate the complexities of the Finnish system. In terms of offering employment support, a significant challenge was how to manage expectations. Clients came with an expectation of jobs being on offer. This highlighted a need for better linkage with potential employers so that the service could have potentially acted as a broker between clients and employers.

Evaluation has indicated that unsurprisingly clients accessing the service strongly correlated with the nature and clientele of the NGO and the social makeup of the local area- 80% of the clients were women who were Arabic or Somali speakers and mainly of a refugee background. Therefore a challenge for the project was how to expand this service to other migrant groups and to rebalance the gender take up of services.

### **Reflections:**

This trial project was innovative through its relocation of services to a place more accessible to people in need and in particular utilizing the groundwork and networks of a local NGO who had the understanding, relationships and physical space to reach people. This closer collaboration of working between local government and NGOs has shown potential to reduce inequality of access to services.

The project also shows the importance of client mapping in order to plan interventions and reach targeted groups. This involves understanding the context /neighbourhood and identifying the role and clientele base of potential partner organisations. Additionally this project highlights the importance of linking employment services with wider signposting and support to immigrants. In recognition, future plans for Coaching for Integration include building the capacity of NGOs already providing support to immigrants to support integration into employment.

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## **Pro:connect- Integration through Education and Work. Oldenburg (DE)**

### **Background:**

22.1% of Oldenburg's population are from a migrant background, mainly originating from Poland, Romania, Italy, Bulgaria and Spain. As of September 2016, nearly 4700 of Oldenburg residents were asylum seekers, mostly from Syria and Iraq. It is estimated that 3100 of these will potentially receive work permits. While much media attention has focused on the challenges of high levels of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany, the real challenge is demographic change. No other country in Europe is ageing as fast as Germany.

In a situation of economic growth the rapid labour market integration of refugees is both important and a great opportunity.

The combined dynamics of demographic change and immigration underpin the need for initiatives to create better pathways for migrants into the German labour market. The existing dual vocational training system in Germany means that the Labour market is strongly structured around formal qualifications thereby potentially making access/permeability hard for unqualified employees. On the other hand, the the dual vocational training system enables companies to provide a more direct route into the workplace for refugees so that they don't have to spend many years in education outside of the labour market.

Oldenburg has a range services and programmes to help refugees integrate into society and the labour market and considerable effort has been put into qualifications and vocational training.

### **The Action:**

Pro:connect is a non-profit organization founded in 2015 by the City of Oldenburg, the County of Ammerland and representatives of businesses. It is funded by the European Social Fund. A significant characteristic of pro:connect is that it was an initiative mainly pushed by the local companies and the private sector. It aims to better link job-seeking refugees and immigrants with potential employees in the city and provides free support and consultancy to both the job seekers and companies. It also acts as a central point of contact for companies and immigrants in order to rationalise information and simplify employment pathways. In particular, it helps deal with often complex legal issues around work permits and qualifications which can be onerous to companies, thereby removing barriers to companies taking on immigrants and refugees.

As well as bridging the gap between refugees and employers, pro:connect provides immigrants with individual support including clarification of labour law issues, support with certification/qualification issues and the provision of professional career guidance. A strong focus of pro:connect is to support immigrants to understand and enter into the dual vocational system, setting up internships and linking immigrants to vocational training. Pro:connect manages a database of work/training opportunities. In the context of Germany this vocational training is an essential way into work- companies tend to have a preference for this in-house training over qualifications gained through the school/college system.

### **Reflection:**

Pro:connect has enabled companies to become more proactive in the wider process of integration of immigrants and refugees into the Oldenburg area. It is also performing an important role in supporting companies to take on immigrants through dealing with the time-consuming and complex issues of immigration, work permits and certification/qualification verification. A continuing issue however is that some existing employees of companies see this as a threat to their job security therefore effecting internal company relationships. Additionally, there has been some resistance from immigrants to the vocational system with a preference for either pursuing a university education or moving directly into the labour market.

### **Further Sources:**

pro:connect- <https://www.proconnect-ev.de>

**Contact:**

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**The Office of Support for Employment and Entrepreneurship (OSEE), Amadora (PT)****Background:**

The Office of Support for Employment and Entrepreneurship (OSEE) is a project implemented by the Associacao Cultural Moinho da Juventude (ACMJ). ACMJ is a non-profit organisation located in the neighborhood of Cova da Moura, in the city of Amadora. It's overarching mission is community development and empowerment through social, educational, economic and cultural programmes. Cova da Moura has a population of 6000 with 50% under the age of 25. It is a multicultural neighbourhood characterised by strong relationships of mutual aid but faces a number of challenges in relation to employment- low educational attainment; a lack of familiarity with the reality of the national labour market; professional skills not matching current labour market requirements; personal and social skills not aligned to those needed for employability.

OSEE was set up in 2012 to tackle these issues and aims to support those in the most vulnerable situations who are unemployed and in precarious working situations. It is financed at a total cost of 51.318 EURO/year through a Cooperation agreement between the Institute for Employment and Training (IET-a governmental organisation), RUMO and ACMJ (both private institutions).

OSEE aims to support the unemployed and those in precarious working situations to develop professionally through employment, training and entrepreneurialism

**The Action:**

OSEE works to solve critical vulnerabilities affecting those in poverty and risk of social exclusion which are accentuated by the context of immigration. Through use of a personal counselling methodology people are supported into employment, training and entrepreneurial ventures.

This work is delivered through a team of 3 professionals- 1 Psychologist/Employment Support Technician and 2 Employment and Training specialists. This brings together a team of specialists with academic backgrounds and expertise in higher education to work in tandem with Experience Technicians based in ACJM with a background in poverty, immigration and social exclusion. The positions funded by the IET, ACJM and RUMO. The office has 4 main areas of intervention- vocational advice; training; employment; and entrepreneurialism.

Personalised support is provided in a staged process:

-Personal counselling and diagnosis of needs

-Referral to appropriate vocational guidance and support



- Creation of a personal employment/professional plan
- Employability skills development/training and internships if applicable
- Motivational support and advice through the process of job searching or development of an enterprise
- Support after integration into the labour market



In the year 2016, 884 people were supported through the process by OSEE with 474 of these people gaining employment or embarking on training at the end. The work of OSEE acts as the central nucleus for a wider employability support network made up of public bodies, companies, training providers and NGOs.

#### **Reflections:**

The innovation of this project is in the mix of skills employed to provide the service and the adopting of a counselling methodology to ensure that support is specific to each individuals needs. The fact that each technician role is based on a different set of skills mean that service users can access a wide range of knowledge and advice.

#### **Further Information:**

<http://www.moinhodajuventude.pt/>

<http://www.tomkiewicz.org/>

<https://pt-pt.facebook.com/Gabinete-de-Apoio-ao-Emprego-e-Empreendedorismo-Moinho-da-Juventude-908262829187984/>

#### **Contact:**

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## **Internship and Training Programme for Women, Champigny, Val de Marne (FR)**

### **Background:**

Champigny is a town in Val de Marne, France with a population of 75 961 inhabitants, 22.3% of whom are from outside France. Since 1985, L'Office Municipal des Migrants (l'OMM) has delivered a range of support services for migrants, including French language and society courses; support for parents around the school system; internships; information and signposting; cultural and social events.

Established in 1989, the Internship and Training programme has been a key element of l'OMM's work. It is funded by the national government as well as Pole Emploi and Val de Marne Municipality at a total annual cost at 42,951 EUROS for 2015. It combines vocationally orientated language training with skills development, classroom based learning and practical work placements.

The scheme aims to:

- facilitate access to employment
- assist with language development
- Promote the integration and emancipation of migrants in society
- Enable self-confidence and self-esteem

### **The Action:**

The Internship and Training Programme is targeted at immigrant women without professional experience. Many of the participants apply for a place on the programme at their country of origin before moving to France. The selection criteria to participate on the course stipulates that the applicant must be registered at a job centre and actively searching for work; be available for, and motivated to find work or training; and have at least beginners level French. Applicants undergo a selection process, including an application form, a linguistic test and interview.

The course is fairly intensive (24hours/week) and runs for a 7.5 month period. As well as being free to participants, they also receive remuneration (based on their professional profile). The course covers a range of skills and topics including French and mathematics courses; job search techniques; ICT skills; understanding the labour market and basic labour law; practical internships; entrepreneurial skills; communication skills; learning visits and artistic/creative/social activities.

In 2015, more than half of participants gained employment during or after the training course. Additionally the participants reported that they benefitted both in terms of obtaining a greater knowledge of the French system and how to navigate it as well as gaining personal development and better self-confidence.

Problems encountered include difficulties setting up formal relationships with companies to establish internship positions and potential employment; a lack of transferability of qualifications/skills from countries of origin into the French system; difficulties in accessing occupations other than those labelled 'immigrant jobs'; the precariousness of occupations known to be particularly 'accessible' to immigrants; a lack of sustainability of funding for such actions which does not allow long-term development.

**Reflections:**

A key benefit of this programme is that it has developed links to potential participants prior to their move to the region and therefore a large number of participants apply from their country of origin. This means that immigrant women can start the integration and employment process much sooner after they arrive in Champigny and therefore start building a life in their new home. Also through targeting the course at women only, it can help the participants share experiences as women and create a stronger support network.

**Further Sources:**

L'Office Municipal des Migrants <http://www.officedesmigrants.org/>

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**Humusa Komanda (The Humus Team): By newcomers for local people, Riga (LV)****Background:**

Latvia has not traditionally been a destination for refugees and asylum seekers, however in more recent years numbers have been rising. Under the EU resettlement scheme Latvia has accepted an allocation of 531 asylum seekers for 2016-2017. Negative public opinion has been identified as a large challenge to successful migrant integration with a recent research study showing that 78% of Latvians consider immigrants as a very big threat. Additionally, resources and provision for refugees are limited with financial support at the minimum and dwindling.

Recently, the Latvian government voted to decrease the monthly benefit by nearly half for refugees from 253 Euro to 139 Euro/month. Moreover, only one person in a family receives 139/month Euro, with additional eligible members receiving a reduced 93 Euro/month. As a result, it is extremely difficult for asylum seekers and refugees who often lack resources, to settle in Latvia, to find affordable housing and afford even basic living costs.

Humusa Komanda is a social enterprise started by Ieva Raubisko to create employment and enterprise opportunities for refugees in Riga and improve their financial independence and prospects. It also aims to counter stereotypes of refugees from the Middle East in Latvia and promote integration. Through cooking and selling authentic Middle Eastern dishes, the project aims to make visible the contribution other cultures can bring to Latvian society.

**The Action:**

This social enterprise was started by 2 entrepreneurs in Riga and is still in the early stages of development. It is a rare example of collaboration between Latvians and refugees to work together on an enterprise. It combines local knowledge of the culture, social and economic system with the skills and food culture brought

to Latvia by refugees. The enterprise has worked with a number of refugees trialing different ways of working. It has evolved into a small-scale Middle Eastern food production business with a team of 6, which includes the 2 Latvian business founders working with 4 refugees from Iraq and Kurdistan. While it currently lacks an adequate production space, a number of different dishes are cooked and packaged. These are sold at the weekly Riga farmers market and also to private and corporate clients through a catering service.

An encouraging and interesting observation has been that there are clients who are keen to buy the products, not only for their quality, but also specifically to support refugees to better integrate into Latvian society.



#### **Reflections:**

While this social enterprise is very innovative within the context of Riga and Latvia, it has with it's innovation met with difficult issues. As well as the demands inherent in developing a food start-up, there have been added demands associated with working with refugees in precarious and unstable situations who need additional support. This has put an added strain on the business and affected viability. In particular, the directors of Humus Komanda have found themselves having to compensate for the lack of support for refugees from by the Latvian government, getting involved in issues such as housing. The transitory nature of refugee collaborators has also been a challenge for developing a viable business model. Despite these issues, it is an interesting example of a small social enterprise acting to improve the employment and integration prospects of refugees.

#### **Further Information:**

<https://www.facebook.com/humusakomanda/>

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## **The Reflection Toolkit, Glasgow (UK)**

### **Background:**

Scotland's immigrant population has vastly increased in recent times. During the decade 2001-2011 overseas immigrants living in Scotland nearly doubled, the rise in Scotland being much higher than other countries in the UK. This demographic change has made the issue of employment integration more important than ever.

The Reflection Toolkit is a bespoke tool to aid self and career development. It was created in Scotland through a collaboration between the Bridges Programme and the Open University. The Open University (OU) is a public distance learning and research university. The Bridges Programme is Scotland's specialist agency supporting the social and economic integration of refugees and migrants through work based employability initiatives and learning. They work closely with employers and employment sectors. It has particular expertise in brokering work placements, undertaking skills audits and implementing processes for reflective and experiential learning.

### **The Action:**

Bridges strongly believes in the value of reflection in dealing with transition and in recognizing and giving value to prior learning of their service users. The Reflection Toolkit was an extension of this and an attempt to create a structured process of reflection. While not specifically designed for people undergoing migration, Bridges uses the Reflection Toolkit at critical times of transition with clients. Moving to a new country is often the time for people to re-asses priorities, to learn and to make new goals. Moreover, being able to understand the personal journey and relevance of the past in the lives of the clients is highly relevant in helping people move forward.

The Toolkit is accessible and used in a variety of contexts. It is available free online to users on Open Learn Create- an open educational platform where individuals and organisations can publish their open content, open courses and resources. Bridges also incorporates use of the toolkit in their specifically designed course for migrants. The Reflection Toolkit was incorporated into their Life Skills (also known as JANCS – Joining A New Community) programme. Alternatively, case workers use the Reflection Toolkit on an ongoing basis. Delivery is through group based activities, on a one-to-one basis and in pairs.

Strongly linked to employability training and education, relevant sections in the Toolkit link to external pages giving clients essential information and advice all in one place. The Toolkit helps users capture and self-evaluate past experience/learning and skills which is then modified into an Action Plan to be taken forward. Learners are coached through the process and submit exercises. Progress is supported, evaluated and managed by the case work team at Bridges. A Personal Action Plan is developed which is then used by refugee support services in the area in which clients are housed.

### **Reflection:**

While the resource is available to all and is not specifically devised for migrants, the fact that it was initiated and developed by a migrant focused organization means that special attention has been given to how it could really benefit those in migration circumstances. Through an innovative partnership it has brought together the expertise of the Open University with that of Bridges and it's networks.

Evaluation has shown that group delivery of The Reflection Toolkit has proven challenging due to the personal content involved. Each participant had experienced a different journey to reach the UK and many of these journeys were harrowing. There were issues around the heterogeneity of group make up regarding gender, culture and age and gender in particular was considered to be a barrier to group discussion. As a result Bridges are now working with Reflection Toolkit users more often on a one-to-one basis.

It was felt that the Toolkit works best when clients have already achieved some stability- ie they have permanent leave to remain. Also as the Toolkit is only available in English, some users had language and comprehension issues.

**Further information:**

To access the free online toolkit <http://www.open.edu/openlearncreate/mod/oucontent/view.php?id=23737>

The Bridges Programme: <http://www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk/>

**Contact:**

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**Boost Refugee, Oslo (NO)**

**Background:**

The current refugee crisis has resulted in an increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Norway. Despite having the lowest immigrant unemployment rates in Scandinavia, immigrants and those with immigrant backgrounds in Norway are twice as likely to find themselves outside of the labour market compared to ethnic Norwegians. The perpetuation of this trend can impede the integration process as research has shown a positive correlation between the level of integration achieved and employment.

As a response to this situation, Oslo Municipality committed funding for civil, not-for-profit and social entrepreneurial driven projects that could lead to the improved integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Oslo. Recognizing that many applicants required more than financial assistance to implement their projects, the Oslo Municipality has worked in partnership with SoCentral (the Nordic Social Innovation Incubator). SoCentral proposed the development of an incubator program and brought in a third partner, Lundin Foundation (a Canadian nonprofit organization) who was interested in contributing to social innovation projects in Norway. Together, these three partners designed and created the Boost Refugee project.

**The Action:**

The Boost Refugee program is a three-month incubator program designed to support local entrepreneurs to develop and implement business ideas which aim to improve refugee integration into work/business. SoCentral is responsible for the implementation and running of the project and the program was officially launched in September 2016.

As a competitive funding programme the first phase was concerned with the application process. Criteria for selection included that:

- the audience were refugees who had arrived in Oslo within the previous 3 years
- the solution aimed to get members of this group into work
- the solution was effective and financially sustainable
- the solution was operated by or in close cooperation with people from refugee/migrant background.
- the solution to some extent had already been tried and tested

Out of 32 applications, 5 projects were chosen by a diverse jury with excellent knowledge of migration and integration including people with refugee backgrounds, representatives from the Oslo Municipality and experienced entrepreneurs. The five projects selected were:

**Give a Job**—A specialised job fair that aims to connect local community leaders and businesses with refugees. It provides a meeting point where refugees can pitch themselves to potential employers. Give a Job is led by an experienced entrepreneur who himself came to Norway as a refugee.

**Social Innovation / Kobler**— Using peer-to-peer technology, Kobler intends to create a platform where people can make meaningful connections for the purposes of finding a job, learning a new skill or simple social interaction. It aims to connect refugees with potential employers as early as possible. Kobler also aims to develop a new model for funding with and from the public sector.

**WIDE-INK**— WIDE-INK aims to establish a model of pop up hair salons and water pipe wagons that will be operated by refugees. The concept has already been successfully tested at local festivals with refugees being hired for permanent jobs. The entrepreneur came to Norway as a refugee, and does volunteer work for refugees.

**Possibilities**— Possibilities seeks to use their extensive experience from the textile and fashion industry to provide training for refugees through a sewing course, thereby creating jobs for refugees in the production of high quality products with national and international market ambitions.

**International Sandwich Brothers**— A business start up and work training program that trains unaccompanied male refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 18–30 to make and sell ice cream sandwiches. International Sandwich Brothers wants to develop a franchising model that can be implemented in other Norwegian cities.

Once selected, successful applicants took part in the 3 month long incubator and training programme led by SoCentral and SISU Business, a business coaching organisation. The concept underpinning the incubator programme was 'idea and product dependent' and based on research identifying what characteristics are important in the mindset and actions of successful entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs followed a proven methodology for business development (LEAN Business) and impact measurement (SoImpact) together with learning about the public sector as a potential market and other necessary business knowledge and skills. Through this process participants became part of the wider SoCentral entrepreneurial community thereby expanding and strengthening networks.

The incubator phase finished in February 2017 and the project has now moved into an evaluation phase. The programme and learning involved will be captured in a documentary film which will disseminate information to wider audiences and be shared with the range of agencies involved in refugee integration.



**Reflections:**

Boost refugee incubator program is the first of its kind in Norway and is the result of innovative partnerships between the public sector, business community and a not-for-profit organisation. Through supporting entrepreneurial ideas it could result in sustainable business solutions to the low immigrant employment rates in Norway. It is hoped that this programme gives rise to scalable ideas and methods which can be applied in other places around Norway.

In addition, the results of Boost Refugee can be harnessed to influence public opinion and policy direction. For example, entrepreneurs in the current program seek to do more than develop skills and provide employment opportunities for newly arrived immigrants. They believe that immigrants are a resource that can have a positive impact on the Norwegian society and economy, and want to use their work to make this visible.

**Further Information:**

SoCentral <https://socentral.no/samarbeid/boost/>

There are links to each funded entrepreneurial idea at link above

**Contact:**

[boost@socentral.no](mailto:boost@socentral.no)



## **Skills check for the Vocational Integration of Refugees, Vienna (AT)**

### **Background:**

Skills check for the Vocational Integration of Refugees was a pilot project implemented in Vienna by the Austrian Public Employment Service (PES) from Oct-Dec 2015. It was funded through the national budget for active labour market policy and took place at a time of very high unemployment in Austria (the highest since world war 2) and low economic growth. At this time with a sharp rise in refugees entering the country the government was exploring ways to best integrate refugees into the poorly performing economy.

The overarching aims of the initiative were to:

- fight poverty and social exclusion by integration into the labour market
- increase integration of refugees into the labour market
- make it easier for refugees to enter into employment and therefore reduce financial pressure on the social security system.
- reduce competitive pressures on unskilled work

This project focused on improving and speeding up the process of qualification and skill validation/recognition of refugees in order to achieve the aims above.

### **The Action:**

The first stage of implementation was concerned with information and data gathering. A skills and qualification audit was carried out with refugees registered unemployed and living in Vienna in order to collect information relating to employment and work such as qualifications, work experience, skills and knowledge of the German language and other languages etc.

PES Vienna staff were experienced both in the counselling of jobseekers with migration backgrounds and in the setting up projects for this target group. It was ensured that the staff employed to gather this data through interviews had the linguistic abilities to communicate in the mother tongues of participants. This audit was carried out over a 5 week period with a total of 898 refugees participating in the scheme.

Following this initial fact finding and consultation stage, PES coaches worked with participating refugees to assist with gaining recognition of their qualifications and skills for work in Austria. This involved the following processes:

- People with formal qualifications from overseas were supported in getting these recognized by the relevant Austrian institutions
- If required, work experience and skills were checked and verified through field trials. This involved working with relevant local professionals and institutions to assess the skills of refugees. The results of this assessment were summarized in a report for each person.
- Refugees received guidance and information about job seeking, the Austrian Education system, rights and responsibilities of employees and employers in Austria

-Each participant developed a CV and were supported to define their needs and training requirements for furthering employment prospects.

**Reflections:**

An interesting aspect of this project was the partnership between PES and local professionals and institutions who could assess abilities and skills through practical trials and assessing the person at work. Furthermore the use of native speaking training staff was very useful to avoid language and cultural barriers and to get valid information from the participants. Another key condition for success was working with coaches who had both knowledge of the education system of the home countries of the participants as well as knowledge of the Austrian education and qualification system. This element also presented a challenge in terms of finding staff with the required language skills and knowledge.

**Further Sources:**

<http://www.ams.at/ueber-ams/medien/ams-oesterreich-news/asylberechtigige-auf-jobsuche>

**Contact:**

Mag. Kai Themel (Project Manager, PES Vienna): kai.themel@ams.at

### Section Three: Additional Resources

This section provides access to additional background reports and also other case studies relating to the theme of community cohesion.

- OECD (2014), “Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills”, *International Migration Outlook 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2014-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en).
- How can migrants’ skills be put to use? <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-3.pdf>
- The European Commission’s website on integration is a useful resource <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/>
- EMN (European Migration Network) (2016), Integration of beneficiaries of international/humanitarian protection into the labour market: Policies and good practices. Synthesis report for the EMN Focussed Study 2015, European Commission.
- Eurofound (2016), Approaches towards the labour market integration of refugees in the EU
- Martin, I., Arcarons, A., Aumüller, J., Bevelander, P., Emilsson, H., Kalantaryan, S. et al (2016), From refugees to workers: Mapping labour market integration support measures for asylum seekers and refugees in EU Member States. Volume I: Comparative analysis and policy findings. Volume II: Literature review and country case studies, Bertelsmann Stiftung
- Liebig and Huddleston (2014), “Labor Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills”, in *International Migration Outlook 2014*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr\\_outlook-2014-en](http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en)
- A study by the European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO) covered 30 countries – Norway and Turkey were included as well as the EU28 Member States (European Commission, 2016). It explored various challenges refugees and asylum seekers can face during the process of labour market integration. The challenges include not only legal and administrative problems, but also institutional, economic and

labour market problems as well as challenges posed by education and qualification systems and societal problems in the host countries.

- The OECD also conducted an investigation on the topic and published a booklet entitled Making integration work: Refugees and others in need of protection (OECD, 2016). This covered the OECD countries (so not all the EU Member States) and was based on replies to a questionnaire sent to the countries.
- A recent study commissioned by the Employment Committee of the European Parliament focused on strategies and good practices, covering all the Member States (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

There have been many projects funded by EU programmes, here are some:

- The Project FORWARD has been initiated in order to design and implement an innovative competence-based portfolio and pedagogical tools for the identification, recognition, validation and development of the competences of migrant women, as a way to improve their employability and social inclusion. <http://forwardproject.eu/>
- DUO for a JOB association organizes mentoring in Brussels by contacting immigrant young job seekers with retired (pre)seniors experienced, ideally from the same area of research, so that seniors support and frame young job seekers in their job search. <http://www.duoforajob.be/>
- “IGMA – EU Integration Agent: An Innovative Guidance Methodology for Integration of Low-Skilled Immigrants into Adult Education” was a **two year Grundtvig project which aims to improve accessibility to adult education for low-skilled immigrants, in order to help them to enter labor market and become more active members of society.** <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intpract/romania-sweden-greece-netherlands-cyprus-eu-integration-agent-innovative-guidance-methodology-for-integration-of-low-skilled-immigrants-into-adult-education>
- The Project Promotion of Immigrant Entrepreneurship (PEI) seeks to foment entrepreneurship amongst immigrant communities, with a special focus on those that live in vulnerable neighbourhoods. <http://www.acm.gov.pt/es-imigrante/informacao/promocao-do-emprededorismo-imigrante>

## Section Four: Workshop materials

This section provides access to the workshop material:

The [agenda](#) of the workshop

Presentations of Case Studies: [Amadora](#), [Oldenburg](#), [Vantaa](#), [Val de Marne](#).

Some [photo's](#) on our Facebook album.

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