

**ENAR'S EIGHTH EUROPEAN
EQUAL@WORK SEMINAR**

TOOLKIT

REFUGEE INCLUSION IN THE WORKPLACE: A GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS



european network against racism

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Foreword



Europe is no stranger to people seeking safety and refuge: for centuries wars, economic hardship or totalitarian regimes have shaped the movements of people in need of safety and stability.

In more recent times, since 2015, the increased number of people seeking refuge from outside Europe as a result of severe and extreme circumstances has been described as a 'crisis'; this discourse has contributed to animosity towards people seeking refuge and by extension to anyone perceived as 'foreign'.

This animosity includes a distorted narrative depicting refugees - and more broadly all migrants and people from ethnic minority backgrounds - as a threat to European 'values', way of living and social norms but also from an economic point of view they are often referred to as "taking our jobs", "sponging off the system", or "eating up tax payers' money". These narratives are very dangerous and have an impact on employers and any potential commitment they would make to diversity in their recruitment policies.

Besides such harmful narratives, one of the things that people who have secured their refugee status desire the most is a sense of safety and stability and the surest way to feel stable and integrated is to pursue education for children and young people and to secure employment for adults; this becomes very quickly the priority. We at ENAR believe it is essential to match motivations, aspirations and skills with safe and meaningful employment opportunities; and we welcome positive attempts by some European countries to effectively accommodate people seeking refuge.

In order to navigate the complexities of this issue, ENAR's toolkit on refugee inclusion in the workplace supports employers to engage in the process of including refugees in their workforces. This toolkit is the result of the 8th edition of ENAR's annual Equal@work seminar. It provides some first steps and considerations for employers looking to transform their workforce to provide opportunities to refugees. This includes outlining the considerations relating to laws and policies, well-being and rights of employees, and also how to contribute more broadly toward a society more accepting and welcoming of refugees.

We believe employers of all kinds will greatly benefit from opening up their workplaces. We hope that this guide encourages some first steps towards a more open approach toward refugees in the workplace.

We would like to thank all participants at the seminar for their innovative and valuable insights, as well as the long standing supporters of the Equal@work Platform: Adecco Group, Coca-Cola European Partners, L'Oréal, Sodexo, the European Commission and the Open Society Foundations.

Amel Yacef
ENAR Chair

Introduction

The **Equal@work Platform**¹ is a space in which a diverse range of employers - from the public and private sector, civil society, trade unions and political institutions - come together to explore progressive ways to operate workplaces that are open, equal and free from discrimination. Participants engage in discussions about issues of diversity from an anti-racist perspective, with a common goal of finding solutions to the pressing challenges facing employers. The topic of this year's seminar was the **inclusion of refugees in the workplace**. We asked participants: how can employers create meaningful job opportunities for refugees?

Conscious of the complex legal and institutional landscape governing the reception, acceptance and integration of refugees in European states, participants acknowledged the limits of their own ability as employers to make change. The state, they argue, has the most capacity to determine how refugees are integrated into society. They also noted that **'integration'** is a broad term and must be understood beyond that of labour market integration. It has also often carried with it an implication of an uneven burden on the person on the move to assimilate to the culture of the receiving society. Thus, the term **'inclusion'** provided a space to reject assimilationist discourses in the seminar.

However, it also must be recognised that **employers are active agents of inclusion** when they offer opportunities for employment. Employers, by providing substantive, fair and quality employment can raise aspirations, develop individuals and promote economic independence and freedom; all pre-requisites for inclusion into wider society. The role of individual employers in the inclusion process is a vital yet under-explored issue.

This document summarises the results of an open, yet creative discussion and provides practical tools for employers with regard to inclusion of refugees in the workplace. First, we look at the **barriers** for various types of organisations (private companies, public services, civil society, trade unions) as *employers* and as *agents of change* in seeking to create employment opportunities for refugees. These barriers relate both to the broader institutional context surrounding refugee inclusion, and issues specific to employers themselves.

The **solutions** section then looks at some of the ways various agents of change have overcome or addressed such barriers, in contexts relevant to them. We demonstrate this good practice through short case studies. This toolkit is intended as an introductory guide for employers seeking to include refugees, rather than dealing with specificities of employment and refugee policy in every European Union Member State.

We then introduce a **checklist for employers** seeking to improve the inclusion of refugees in their workplace or exploring the possibility to commit to their corporate social responsibility by voluntarily recruiting refugees. Without attempting to conflate the numerous different in-laws and policies on refugee integration in European Union Member States, the checklist highlights general cross-cutting themes for employers to consider in relation to refugees and the workforce.

¹ See <http://enar-eu.org/ENAR-s-Equal-work-Platform>.

Terminology

Throughout the guide, the term **inclusion** rather than **integration** is used. This is to avoid cultural assimilationist connotations which suggest that the burden of ‘integrating’ rests primarily on the migrant and that it is their duty to assimilate to the culture, customs and ways of working of the host country. The term inclusion highlights that many actors have a role to play in the process; they too will adapt, accommodate and benefit from the process of refugee inclusion.

The focus of the toolkit is **refugee** inclusion in the workplace. A refugee is defined in international law² as a person who has fled their 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. There are other forms of protection such as **humanitarian protection**, **discretionary leave** and **subsidiary protection** which are granted by states when the refugee definition is not quite met. Often these terms carry with them a shorter permission to stay in the host state. For the purposes of this toolkit, people with these statuses are encompassed in the term refugee.

The term refugee is technically limited to those who have successfully claimed asylum and been granted refugee status in the host state. An **asylum seeker** is somebody who is still going through the process of requesting refugee status. Measures to include refugees in the labour market often are not limited to those who have already been granted refugee status; the process of inclusion must start as soon as possible.

‘Migrant’ is used as a catch-all term for people who have recently migrated. This can include, but is not limited to, refugees and asylum seekers. This term is used at times in the toolkit in the recognition that many of the benefits and strategies for including refugees in the labour market also apply to migrants more generally. The term **third-country national** is preferred by some reports; however this term relates only to migrants from outside the EU.

² 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Additional Protocol.

1. SETTING THE SCENE: THE BENEFITS AND THE BARRIERS TO REFUGEE INCLUSION

This section discusses the case for and against including refugees into the labour market. Starting with the benefits, participants at the seminar were very clear about the range of potential benefits of including refugees as part of broader efforts to operate a diverse and inclusive workplace. However, they also discussed the barriers that exist to the successful and equal inclusion of refugees in the labour market, mainly as regards implementing successful inclusion programmes.



This section particularly focuses on benefits and challenges from the perspective of employers. This includes problems experienced by individual employers in different EU Member States; however it is important to acknowledge that many of the barriers to the successful inclusion of refugees in the labour market are systemic and stem from institutionalised laws, policies and practices at the national and international levels.

1.1. Benefits of refugee inclusion

Speaking in their capacity as employers, participants at the seminar were clear as to why they wanted to include refugees into their workforce. Many pointed to benefits that come with having a culturally diverse workforce generally, others highlighted some benefits which were specific to the inclusion of refugees in the workforce. It was agreed that the benefits of working toward refugee inclusion were visible from the **individual**, the **employer** and the **societal** perspective. Below is a brief summary of the main benefits discussed.

Individual benefits: Work experience provides refugees a crucial economic independence and purpose which is necessary for inclusion into wider society. Although other elements (such as language learning or cultural ‘integration’) are often discussed as pillars of integration, employment is both a means to these goals and an end in itself.

Employer benefits: There are a vast range of benefits to including refugees into the workforce. In terms of increasing diversity more generally, having a workforce composed of people originating from many different places is likely to increase the range of different perspectives, be that cultural, educational and linguistic. These differences are likely to foster increased understanding but also tangible skills to benefit the business, including knowledge of other cultures and languages (facilitating market expansion). Further, employers highlighted that refugee inclusion programmes constituted a visible commitment to societal improvement, corporate social responsibility or ‘corporate citizenship’.

Refugees and recent migrants could be potential candidates for hard-to-fill positions, or to meet skills shortages. Employers facing difficulties with retention of

skilled staff may also look to recently arrived migrants, who may also seek employment stability.

Societal benefits: Numerous studies have documented the economic and social benefits of including refugees in the labour market. Working towards better access for refugees to the labour market is the realistic response to managing refugee inflows. Economically, refugees present a number of potential solutions for the receiving societies. This includes providing solution to skills and labour shortages, and demographic challenges linked to ageing populations.³

1.2. Barriers to refugee inclusion

Whilst generally agreeing on the need to include refugees in the workforce, the range of barriers to implementing schemes was broad and complex. Some barriers related to the situation of individual employers, such as issues of lack of expertise, understanding, time and resources. However, on a closer analysis, many of the barriers expressed by individual employers were linked to broader structural obstacles to employing refugees.

a. Barriers to inclusion: perspectives from individual employers

This section briefly summarises the main barriers experienced by individual employers to providing employment opportunities to refugees, as discussed in the seminar. However, this list is non-exhaustive and does not attempt to outline all difficulties employers may face in this exercise.

Barrier 1: Developing appropriate employment opportunities for refugees

The first and most discussed barrier for employers was the question of where to get started. Many employers expressed the desire to operate a refugee-friendly workplace, but noted a range of difficulties at the very outset:

- *Existing positions or tailored schemes?* Participants at the seminar debated between two approaches to refugee inclusion: opening existing positions to refugees or tailoring specific job opportunities or initiatives to migrants.

³ International Monetary Fund (2016) The Refugee Surge in Europe: Economic Challenges.

	Offering employment	In the workplace
Barriers for individual employers	<p>Employment regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of understanding of employment regulations ■ Restrictions to employing refugees <p>Complexity of the asylum process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of understanding of stages of asylum process and employment rights <p>Time, expertise and resources to develop schemes</p> <p>Difficulty reaching refugees</p> <p>Difficulty finding 'suitable' candidates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Perceived under-qualification of refugees (formal qualifications) ■ Perceived cultural barriers (language, ability to align with workplace culture) 	<p>Racism and discrimination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ resistance from other workers ■ employers' own perceptions about refugees ■ perceptions of cultural incompatibility <p>Specific vulnerabilities due to age, gender, background, race and ethnicity, disability, youth, family situation</p>
Structural barriers	<p>Legal restraints on right to work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In many EU Member States employers are obliged to give priority to local or European candidates before employing third country nationals <p>Asylum laws and processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National policies of reception, integration and dispersal, which relocate refugees without considering skills profiles and employment aspirations ■ Delayed access to the labour market and de-skilling ■ Poverty and social exclusion, lack of available transportation ■ Sanctions for being unemployed in some countries mean that refugees take the first job available rather than restarting interrupted careers <p>Lack of systematic skill recognition systems</p> <p>Structural discrimination and segmentation of the labour market:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legal restrictions on sectors migrants can work in <p>Wider mechanisms of exclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Practical barriers in day to day life (e.g. sometimes asylum seekers cannot open a bank account) ■ Criminalisation 	

- **Resources:** Resources is a recurring consideration for employers. If schemes tailored for refugees should be developed, where should the resources come from? How would the costs of training refugees be offset? Are such schemes part of corporate social responsibility programmes, or recruitment and human resources? Many employers are interested in accessing government support for training schemes, but are not always aware of how to access it.
- **Legal requirements:** Legal barriers and requirements are a strong deterrent from the outset. Citing the complexity of employment law and confusion about immigration law, many felt unsure of the legal feasibility of employing refugees.

Barrier 2: Finding suitable candidates

The next vital barrier for employers is the difficulty of finding candidates for open positions. This barrier has many causes, and can relate to:

- **Problems reaching refugees:** Many employers noted that once an opportunity became available, they had difficulties advertising the position and ensuring that refugees would apply. Employers perceived either a lack of strong networks with refugees in their regions for them to access, or a confusing proliferation of refugee support services which made it difficult to disseminate information.
- **Finding candidates who meet the criteria:** Many employers with a desire to recruit refugees express a difficulty in finding candidates meeting their criteria. Whether these be vocational qualifications necessary for the role (or professional standards), skills relevant to the host country market, academic qualifications, or certain language requirements, some employers have experienced difficulties finding candidates who meet the job description. Some of the participants at the seminar questioned to what extent this situation related to perceptions about the skills of refugees and the types of roles that are appropriate for them (see section below on perceptions).
- **Difficulties assessing qualifications and experience:** Employers also experience complications when attempting to assess whether the candidate has adequate qualifications for the role. Not only are refugees

less likely to be able to provide documentation for their skills, but also may possess qualifications which are not easily comparable with those recognised in the host state. As such, this is often uncharted territory for many employers, who do not feel equipped to understand these qualifications.

The issue of finding suitable candidates can be explained by the various barriers in the job market from the **perspective of recently arrived migrants**.

RISE study: Barriers to employment and skills gaps for refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany⁴

- Language (including literacy), especially vocational (major priority)
- Lack of work experience in host country
- Lack of host country references
- Lack of appropriate training or unrecognised educational and professional qualifications
- Lack of access to networks which would strengthen employment prospects and knowledge of recruitment methods
- Lack of knowledge/awareness of fitting current experience to the roles applied for
- Lack of understanding of host country employment culture and job application procedures
- Cross-cultural misunderstandings causing suspicion or hostility
- Lack of awareness of cultural nuances and etiquette in the host country
- Racism and negative stereotyping
- Uncertainty (caused by a lack of life and work perspectives)
- Boredom and frustration leading to loss of self-esteem (caused by the lack of meaningful occupation, especially work)

Barrier 3: Lack of experience dealing with challenges specific to refugees

HR experts highlight a general lack of expertise in dealing with challenges specific to the recruitment and management of refugees. Such challenges include many of

⁴ RISE (2013) Refugee Interactive Skills for Employment, Leonardo da Vinci – Transfer of Innovation.

those listed above concerning lack of documents, unfamiliarity with the new country context, cultural differences and perhaps long periods of inactivity during the asylum process.

One particular challenge is the social awareness required when working with those with experiences of trauma relating to the forced migration context, and the specific vulnerabilities many refugees face. This can be particularly so for those with experience of torture, women and those who have not yet attained refugee status and documents.

Barrier 4: Perceptions, discrimination and racism in the workplace

Although difficult to prove, an important barrier to the effective inclusion of refugees into the workplace are generalised perceptions about refugees and their suitability for work. It is clear that discrimination against refugees (whether on the basis of a 'foreign-sounding' name, perceptions of cultural difference/incompatibility, or appearance) plays a role in the generalised exclusion of refugees from the labour market in many European states.⁵ Discrimination and perceptions are likely to perpetuate the general exclusion of refugees and the over-representation of refugees in jobs in the lower rungs of the labour market.⁶ Discrimination is holding employers back from realising potential and accessing certain talents.

Some employers in the seminar noted experience of resistance to the inclusion of refugees from the wider workforce. Media and political discourses claiming that migration harms the local labour force and wages for 'native workers' can trigger hostility from other staff to the inclusion of refugees. When employers are willing to go beyond such barriers, they have to factor in the cost of training and raising the awareness of their staff about the added value they see in hiring refugees.

Even in the absence of explicit racism and discrimination, many employers in the seminar highlighted the need to overcome presumptions of cultural inferiority of migrants, namely that those migrating from outside of Europe would necessarily be less educated, work less efficiently and be unable to relate to other workers.

b. Structural and institutional barriers to refugee inclusion

Many of the difficulties cited by individual employers stem from structural barriers in the form of laws and policies governing migration management in Europe. Such barriers either directly limit the options available to employers when seeking to employ refugees, or create practical barriers rendering it more difficult to offer or access employment opportunities. Some of these limitations and barriers are outlined below.

Recognition of qualifications and skills

Systems of skills and qualifications recognition present ongoing challenges for employers seeking to recruit migrants and refugees. Particularly for refugees fleeing conflict, there is a difficulty providing evidence and documentation of formal qualifications. Even when such documentation is provided, vocational systems differ hugely by country and as such many refugees find it difficult to have their skills recognised in their host state.⁷ Many vocations require certain qualifications as legal pre-requisites. This causes uncertainties on the part of employers who are often unwilling to trust foreign qualifications and are deterred from recruiting those who do not meet formal requirements. Further, in many states, systems of skills recognition are highly focused on the transferability of qualifications rather than the assessment of practical skills.⁸ In addition, a number of studies have noted that qualifications and skills assessments are occurring too late and should be integrated into the asylum process.⁹

Restricted access to the labour market

The capacity of refugees to access employment must be seen in the context of the wider process of accessing asylum. The asylum process is often long and difficult for recent migrants, and a number of studies have noted that periods of economic inactivity during the asylum process have a detrimental impact on the ability of migrants to find employment after they have been granted refugee status.¹⁰

5 ENAR (2017) Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-16; IZA (2010) Ethnic Discrimination in Germany's Labour Market: A Field Experiment.

6 Meghan Benton, Madeleine Sumption, Kristine Alsvik, Susan Fratzke, Christiane Kuptsch, and Demetrios G. Papademetriou (2014) Aiming Higher: Policies to Get Immigrants into Middle-Skilled Work in Europe.

7 OECD (2016) Making Integration Work – The Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications.

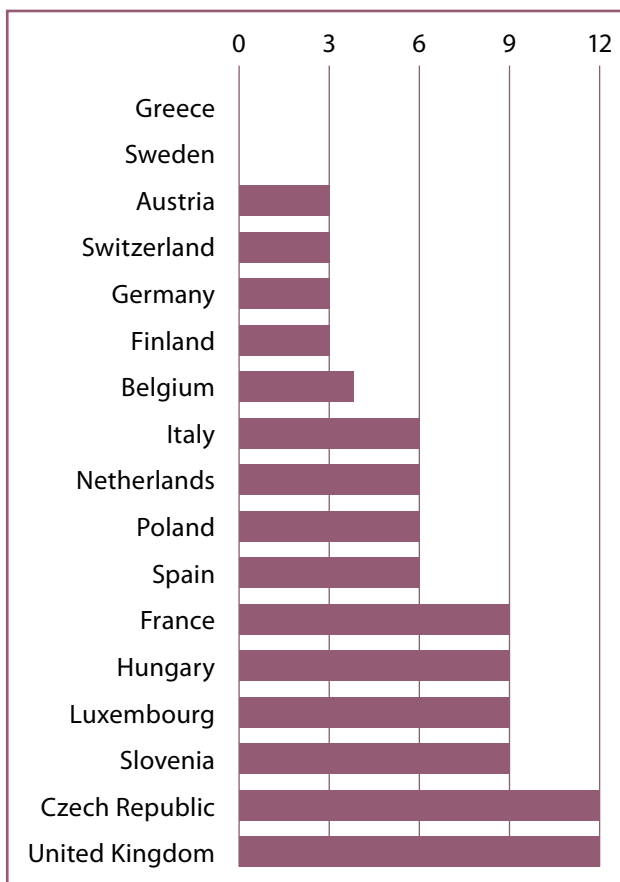
8 UNHCR (2013) A New Beginning. Refugee Integration in Europe.

9 Bertelsmann Stiftung (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.

10 European Parliament (2016) Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices; OECD (2016) Making Integration Work: Refugees and Others in Need of Protection.

Access to the labour market for asylum seekers is to some extent regulated by EU law. Directive 2013/33/EU¹¹ requires Member States to ensure that asylum applicants have access to the labour market from a maximum of nine months after the request for asylum has been made. However, EU Member States still have varying approaches to when asylum seekers are able to legally access employment whilst their asylum claim is pending.

Waiting period for access to the labour market (months):



Source: European Parliament (2016) *Labour Market Integration of Refugees: strategies and good practices*; OECD (2016).

Member States also impose different **conditions on access to the labour market**. Many countries (Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Hungary, Greece, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) impose **labour market tests** which limit access to the labour market to roles that have been proved impossible to fill by domestic workers and/or EU migrants. Further, some countries go further and

limit labour market access to **certain sectors**. For example, in Austria, asylum applicants may only work in tourism, agriculture and take apprenticeships in shortage occupations. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, an asylum applicant can only apply to work after 12 months of lodging their claim, and even then they may only work in shortage occupations published by the UK Immigration Service.¹² Lastly, some countries, such as Germany, limit the right to work to asylum seekers depending on the country of origin. The **safe country of origin** principle presumes that some asylum claims are unfounded, and as such for these people there is no access to the labour market. Such measures are designed to protect the 'native' workforce, however, in the process, increase the complexity of the system, limit the economic inclusion of migrants and severely affect the ability of employers to recruit in a non-discriminatory manner.

Fragmented immigration status

Another related barrier to employers wishing to employ refugees is the fracturing of immigration statuses in many countries. EU Member States operate systems of immigration status simultaneously, many of which carrying different capacities to access the labour market. This creates an increasingly complex web of obligations for employers to fulfil when wishing to recruit a recent migrant.

Firstly, as noted above, asylum seekers may have different rights to access the labour market depending on the duration since their claim, their country of origin, and the sector they are being recruited into. Employers must be aware of these distinctions to avoid violating the law.

In addition, there exist different forms of humanitarian immigration status. 'Refugee' status is the most common and by international law the recipient must have equal access to the labour market as citizens for the duration of the status. For those not qualifying as refugees, other forms of humanitarian protection are available, with implications for duration of protection and in some cases access to the labour market. Forms of temporary protection are increasingly used in a number of countries (Austria, Estonia and Sweden), limit the ability of refugees to find long-term substantial job opportunities, and may deter employers from offering employment to recipients due to increasing complexity.¹³

¹¹ Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 Laying Down Standards for the Reception of Applicants for International Protection (recast) – Article 15.

¹² See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-2-shortage-occupation-list>.

¹³ ENAR (2017) *Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-16*.

Dispersal policies

Numerous countries implement policies of dispersal - allocating migrants to different local authorities and locations - in order to evenly distribute responsibilities and the cost of housing. Often migrants are penalised in their social welfare entitlements if they move from their allocated regions. However, in many cases dispersal policies are not aligned with the availability of employment positions and as such do not facilitate the economic inclusion of refugees into the labour market. It has been noted that due to dispersal policies in Germany, Denmark and Austria, there is a general mismatch between the geography of labour market opportunities and where refugees are sent for accommodation.¹⁴ Such a situation does not help employers or refugees seeking to offer and find employment.

Structural discrimination

Discrimination is both an issue relating to individual employers, and a structural issue. To some extent, discrimination against refugees is facilitated by the functioning of the EU migration system, which is inherently based on the exclusion of migrants from outside of Europe. Refugees, when entering this context, formally have the right to receive equal treatment in the labour market. However, migrants in general do not have this right; **EU law does not require Member States to legislate against discrimination based on nationality.** As such, the EU system is not firm in its commitment to anti-discrimination when it comes to migrants. The likelihood that employers may exclude migrants on numerous grounds can have an onset effect on refugees and ethnic and racial minorities. For example, in a large scale survey of migrants and minorities in Europe, many migrants reported experiences of discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin or religion.¹⁵ This was confirmed by consultations of stakeholders working on refugee inclusion in the labour market in European states, who noted that racism and discrimination, such as that targeting Black people, women wearing the hijab and those with 'foreign sounding names', impacted the ability of refugees to access employment.¹⁶

Segregation of the labour market

The combined results of these barriers are (a) the generalised under-employment of migrants in most EU Member States - when compared to nationals; (b) segmentation of the labour market so that migrants are over-represented and locked into sectors offering temporary, precarious, low paid and informal work, and therefore (c) refugees are more susceptible to exploitation and have less opportunities to gain economic independence.¹⁷

As stated above, in many countries there are restrictions on the conditions in which refugees can access the labour market. Such policies are influenced by the idea that refugees should only be given access to the labour market insofar as they fill a 'skill gap' and do not jeopardise the employment prospects of the 'native' workforce. However, the real effects of these restrictions are to limit the capacity of employers to recruit according to their own criteria, and to suggest that the only real value of the employment of refugees is an economic one, to fill a gap, rather than fulfil their potential.

For migrants, such policies exacerbate a situation of structural inequality in access to the labour market. The European Commission's Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals notes the scope of this problem: "third-country nationals' employment rates remain below the average of host country citizens in most Member States".¹⁸ This is particularly the case for women. For refugees in particular, it can take up to 20 years to have similar employment rates to the native born populations.¹⁹ Further, when migrants are employed, they are heavily over-concentrated in low-skill, low pay, precarious work with fewer chances for progression and worse working conditions. Such restrictions on employment also mean that many migrants accept positions which do not correspond to their aspirations or their qualifications, and increase the likelihood that refugees will enter the unregulated, informal sector, with a greater risk of exploitation and discrimination.²⁰ Female migrants in general are over-represented in informal care and domestic work, and risk exploitation and abuse.²¹

14 Bertelsmann Stiftung (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.

15 EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2009) EU MIDIS Report.

16 UNHCR (2013) A New Beginning. Refugee Integration in Europe.

17 ENAR (2017) Racism and Discrimination in the Context of Migration in Europe: ENAR Shadow Report 2015-16.

18 European Commission (2016) Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals - COM(2016) 377.

19 OECD (2016) How are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe? Working Paper 1/2016.

20 IZA (2011) Informal Workers across Europe; EU Fundamental Rights Agency (2017) Together in the EU - Promoting the Participation of Migrants and their Descendants.

21 European Network of Migrant Women and European Women's Lobby (2012) "Equal Rights. Equal Voices" Migrant Women's Integration in the Labour Market in Six European Cities: A Comparative Approach.

2. SOLUTIONS

This section outlines general approaches to facilitate refugee inclusion into the labour market. It also presents three main ways employers can play an active role in the process of including refugees into their workforce: providing opportunities to refugees; creating 'refugee-friendly' workplaces; and influencing wider change.



2.1. Principles informing inclusion of refugees in the labour market

Many studies and policy reports on the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the labour market recommend overall principles and approaches to facilitate refugee inclusion into the labour market. The table below briefly summarises these principles. Although focused on the role of the state as a coordinator for the integration process, these principles should also inform the approach of employers as active agents of inclusion.

Principle	Source(s)
<p>1. The benefits of refugee inclusion are not limited to economic gains</p> <p>The grounding of efforts to include refugees in the labour market for the sole purpose of economic advantages for the host society is counter-productive to the process of inclusion. This approach risks jeopardising inclusion efforts of migrants and refugees with less recognised skills. Policies restricting the access of refugees to certain sectors or roles limit the ability of employers to uncover potential and recruit freely. The economic argument prioritises the needs of the labour market over the right of migrants to pursue their own life projects. We must challenge this and move toward a refugee-centred approach.</p>	Caritas (2016)
<p>2. Labour market inclusion is not separable from broader access to rights, goods and services</p> <p>Initiatives for labour market inclusion cannot be viewed in isolation. Broader inclusion in society impacts on the ability of migrants to access job opportunities. This includes cultural acceptance from wider society, equal access to rights, goods and services, and ensuring practical needs are met. Considerations of accommodation, transport, welfare, family needs should be included in labour market initiatives for refugees. Ensuring equal access in law and practice is necessary to empower migrants and counter the risk of exploitation.</p>	Caritas (2016); Council of Europe (2015);
<p>3. Successful inclusion requires respect for non-discrimination and human rights</p> <p>The principle of non-discrimination must be upheld by individual employers and institutions. This is not only an issue of fairness, but a pre-requisite for successful inclusion. Discrimination based on nationality limits the ability of employers to find the best employees. Further, human rights principles must be applied to refugees in the labour market, including access to health care, social protection, training, prevention of exploitation, and the principle of equal rights for equal work.</p>	FRA (2017); Council of the EU (2004)
<p>4. Labour market inclusion should start as early as possible</p> <p>Some of the greatest barriers for employers and refugees are institutional barriers preventing asylum seekers' access to employment. Measures which restrict employers from recruiting prior to receiving refugee status are likely to hinder the inclusion process. It is also important that schemes designed to assist refugees do not become a barrier. For example, language programmes should not delay labour market entry. Programmes which incorporate language learning with work experience are most successful overall.</p>	Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016); ECRE (2013); IMF (2016)
<p>5. Inclusion policies must be tailored to the specific needs of refugees</p> <p>Policies and schemes designed to further inclusion of refugees should be cognisant of the challenges faced by refugees, and insofar as possible refugees should be consulted and participate in the design of programmes. Further, refugees are not a homogenous group, and approaches which can be customised to different needs and vulnerabilities (such as gender, age, education and family status) are necessary for successful integration.</p>	Bertelsmann Stiftung (2016); ECRE (2013)
<p>6. Refugee inclusion requires a collective coordinated approach between many actors</p> <p>Integration is a 'two way process' between the migrant and the receiving society. Beyond this, it is important to recognise that for refugees to have access to substantive and empowering employment, a range of different actors must collaborate. This includes government agencies, civil society, trade unions and employers themselves. Inclusion is a multi-stakeholder process requiring a collective, coordinated approach.</p>	Benton, Sumption, Alsvik, Fratzke, Kuptsch, and Papademetriou (2014); European Parliament (2016)

2.2. What can employers do?

Recognising the range of individual and structural barriers to refugee inclusion, the section presents ways employers can play an active role in the process of including refugees into their workforce. Although the primary focus is how employers can provide employment opportunities and make their business practices more inclusive, employers also have the ability to influence change beyond their immediate workplaces. Good practice examples are referred to throughout.

a. Developing opportunities

The primary way employers can act as agents of inclusion is to offer substantive opportunities for employment to refugees. However, for many without experience of recruiting refugees and the specific challenges that come with this, this can be a daunting task. Below are some steps to follow for employers at the beginning of the process.

Step 1: Understanding the barriers, the benefits and the system

Gaining an understanding of the refugee system, the reasons people move, and immigration policy in the country is an important first step to providing real employment opportunities to refugees. This is necessary so that employers understand the context in which they are developing any new employment scheme; the barriers, but also the opportunities. A greater understanding of these factors is necessary in order to make a realistic assessment of whether to set up a scheme to employ refugees. As stated above, the institutional context surrounding the employment of migrants can be complex, changing, and is likely to differ from one state to another.

The resources section of this toolkit (see page 24) lists some resources which detail the basics of immigration law, and studies into the potential contribution of migrants to the economy and workplace. There are also guides designed specifically for employers in different states.



“Migration vers l’emploi” Guide for employers - IMS Luxembourg²²

In September 2016, IMS Luxembourg launched the project “Migration vers l’emploi” to encourage the employment and integration of third country nationals in the Luxembourgish job market. This project is funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and aims at:

- **Informing** all employers interested in the process of employing third country nationals;
- **Raising awareness** among employers on advantages and limits of the employment of third country nationals;
- **Showing good practices** in terms of employment and integration of third country nationals.

Improved knowledge of the specific barriers and benefits of employing refugees is important for employers to decide whether, how and to what extent they will take steps to include refugees. Some relevant considerations might be:

- What specific benefits could employing refugees bring to the business?
- Which skills would potential employees need to join as a minimum? Do I need to see a formal qualification to demonstrate this?
- What is the legal situation on hiring refugees in this country?
- What changes would I need to make to employ refugees?

Often, the answers to these questions will not be clear cut and the enlistment of partners with expertise will be the next step.

Step 2: Seeking partners with expertise

Due to the many barriers outlined in section 1, developing practices inclusive of refugees requires more than just posting a job advertisement. As such, it is important to seek out partners with specific expertise of working with the immigration system and refugees directly. As discussed above, inclusion is a multi-stakeholder process and requires a collective, coordinated approach.

²² See <http://imslux.lu/fra/nos-activites/publications>.



The "At Work in Finland" project²³

The "At Work in Finland" project focuses on work-related immigration to metropolitan areas in Finland, on harnessing international talents for companies and on helping immigrants to enter the labour market. It is run by the City of Helsinki, with partners across Finland. It brings together authorities, employers, professional networks and service providers that promote the integration and employment of immigrants. The aim is to build a new partnership model between the public, private and non-profit sectors.

The establishment of International House Helsinki (IHH) is one of the main goals of the project. When opened, IHH will gather all foreign labour related services and service providers into a 'one stop shop' facilitating counselling services for immigrants, authorities and employers.

In the barriers section we noted that refugees face a number of institutional barriers to entering the workforce, and as such providing opportunities is not solely an economic exercise. Rather, offering opportunities to refugees requires an awareness of many socio-economic and political issues, including the complexity of asylum process, access to social welfare, and housing. All such factors influence access to the labour market for refugees and the availability of candidates for employers.

The collaborative approach demonstrates the need for multiple partners to work together to tackle many of the challenges providing and accessing employment opportunities for refugees. Employers benefit from working with such collaborative services by learning, using the platform to disseminate employment opportunities, and seeking out candidates.

In the same way, employers have a lot to offer those services seeking to assist refugees. For example, employers could exchange with and provide advice to public or NGO-led services which provide information to refugees

about the labour market, or assess skills.²⁴ Employers may also be able to provide financial support and sponsorship to refugee services. Mutual exchanges and collaborations of this kind have the potential to drastically improve refugees' access to employment on a local level.

Step 3: Deciding which opportunities to provide

The next step is to assess which form of employment opportunity individual employers could provide refugees. Depending on employment law, the sector, the need for candidates, and resources available, employers could:

- Develop a tailored employment scheme for refugees
- Offer work experiences to refugees
- Encourage refugees to apply for existing positions

In deciding which opportunity to provide, employers should consider:

Consideration	Recommendation
Can we offer formal, paid opportunities?	Consult employment law; explore financial support; consider challenges for refugees with unpaid opportunities
Will it be a short-term or long-term opportunity?	Use internship matching services; opportunities for future progression
Will we design a specific scheme for refugees?	Skills and qualifications assessment; consult employment and equality law; find partners to develop social aspects of the scheme; sustainability of scheme; financial support

All options for including refugees will present numerous challenges for employers. It is therefore important that this commitment is long-term, subject to continuous approval, and aligned to the general diversity strategy of the organisation. In all cases employers should consider the impact of their employment and immigration law when recruiting. Further, for all options employers should consider financial barriers to work experience for refugees. Even with paid opportunities, many factors impede the access of refugees to such opportunities, such as the proximity to refugee housing centres, transport costs and access. As such, these issues should be considered when unpaid roles are offered.

²³ See <http://come2.fi/>.

²⁴ UNHCR (2013) A New Beginning. Refugee Integration in Europe.

Step 4: Explore incentive schemes

Although employing refugees can present many benefits, it is recognised that it may also present a number of additional costs and specific challenges. Employers should explore all options for financial and other support, particularly for the development of pilot programmes. Direct financial incentives, such as **wage subsidy** schemes, exist in some countries and could be used to offset costs of developing new systems, or to ensure access to roles and opportunities for refugees. Other incentives, such as offers for funding for language services should be sought and integrated into employers' programmes for refugees.

**Wage-subsidy programmes²⁵**

The "Step-in jobs" programme in Sweden combines language training with subsidised jobs. The programme aims to promote the integration of newly arrived immigrants into the labour market. Jobs in the public or private sector are subsidised and designed with part-time work and a special language learning component. The employer receives a 75% subsidy for salary costs for a duration of 6 to 24 months.

In Denmark, the 'staircase' (or transitional) model aims to introduce refugees to the Danish labour market in a step-by-step process. The first step (4-8 weeks) is to identify the competencies of the individual refugee, combined with Danish language tuition. The second step is a trainee placement in a company without expenses for the employer, followed by more Danish language courses. At this point, the refugee is ready to start a job with a wage subsidy (duration 26-52 weeks).

Step 5: Designing opportunities tailored for refugees

Creating and participating directly in employment schemes is the most substantive way employers can work to include refugees in the labour market. Such schemes could consist of (a) work experience placements and training schemes, or (b) direct employment

opportunities. Employers wishing to develop their own scheme should consider the following.

Combining education, language and work:

Many good practice studies have noted that the most successful models of refugee inclusion have been schemes which combine training and work to ease newcomers into the labour market. This model has been seen to provide a degree of autonomy whilst also accommodating the needs of many refugees to adjust to the new working context. Such training could be vocational, practical or language focused.

One particular example of good practice is when language learning is incorporated into work experience, rather than seen in isolation from substantive employment opportunities. As noted above, often preconceptions that refugees can only enter the workforce after long language courses has hindered their likelihood of becoming employed. Language learning should be integrated and concentrate on practical usage in the working context.

Addressing practical barriers:

Recognising the range of barriers faced by refugees seeking employment (section 1), any scheme employing refugees should acknowledge and take steps to address practical barriers to work. This includes when housing facilities are located too far from employment centres, the lack of affordable and regular transportation, the absence of affordable child care for single parents (in particular mothers) and the general lack of information about job opportunities available to refugees. These barriers can be addressed by seeking partners to develop solutions, such as refugee support services, employment offices and other civil society organisations. Under no circumstances, however, should access to housing for refugees become dependent on the existence of an employment contract.

Ensuring progression and individual development:

The key focus of many large-scale employment initiatives for refugees has been to fill skills gaps. Although a strong benefit to employers, such schemes are rarely concerned with personal and professional development from the perspective of the refugee. In order to make use of the full potential of their employees, employers designing schemes should consider from the very beginning

²⁵ See <http://www.oecd.org/sweden/41706122.pdf>.

how they will ensure that the roles they offer have realistic opportunities for progression. Employers should think strategically about how to integrate refugees in various roles and levels - not just low pay employment.



Refugee inclusion programmes at Siemens, Germany

The holistic programme offered by Siemens in Germany consists of:

- Pre-classes: 6-month courses to prepare refugees for apprenticeships during 3.5 years at Siemens (apprentices are selected from the classes)
- Internships: 3-month internship programme in many Siemens locations

The pre-class is staggered into three sections according to learning objectives and includes a mixture of theoretical and practical components. All three stages have a substantive language component so that work is combined with language learning. Further, Siemens builds in training to prepare refugees to apply for jobs to improve their likelihood to be accepted onto the formal apprenticeship, and also offers social support to those on the programme through a mentoring programme with apprentices.

One way to ensure progression for refugee employees is to provide for professional, personal and practical support to address the extra challenges experienced by refugees entering the labour market. Such plans should also consider challenges faced by refugees external to the workplace and have an ultimate view to securing independence of refugees. Candidates should have access to mentoring and pastoral care support.

Step 6: Recruitment

Even after designing a plan, many employers face difficulties in the recruitment process, whether it is in terms of accessing refugees for positions, or filling the positions with appropriate candidates.

Reaching refugee candidates:

In order to ensure that opportunities are accessi-

ble to refugees, employers may need to take extra steps to advertise their positions. As outlined above, this can be done in conjunction with partners, such as public employment services and refugee support NGOs. Employers should also seek out online portals and matching services which seek to link employers with migrant candidates. They can use these services to upload opportunities and seek out potential candidates.



Welcome Talent - LinkedIn, Sweden²⁶

In 2016, LinkedIn launched the Welcome Talent App, an initiative designed to connect refugees with internship opportunities in Sweden. Developed with a range of partners, including Spotify, Äntligen Jobb, Stockholm University and the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce, the app allows employers to post opportunities specifically for refugees and migrants.

The aim of the app is to use the general LinkedIn platform to create a meeting place for companies and refugees, and to make it easier for refugees to access the job market. The app comprises a list of available opportunities and resources guiding refugees on how to create successful profiles.

Alternative skills recognition:

Employers highlighted the lack of systemic skills and qualification systems as a barrier to their recruitment, creating uncertainty about the skill level of candidates. Recognising the deficiencies of these systems and the inevitable difficulties refugees face evidencing skills and qualifications, there are a number of steps employers can take to recognise skills in alternative ways. Employers must adopt an open approach to skills recognition in their recruitment drives for refugees, with an awareness that refugees may not always be able to provide documents, or that such documents may not be easy to decipher by individual employers. This includes recognising the broader range of skills offered by refugees (such as languages, cultural knowledge, global perspectives). Due to restrictions on the right

²⁶ See www.welcometalent.se.

Resource: Portals and matching services

Portal	Country	Description	Link
DRC StepUp - Danish Refugee Council	Denmark, worldwide	Platform connecting Syrian refugees worldwide with employers. Available languages: Arabic, English and Turkish.	https://drcstepup.org/en
Workeer	Germany	Training and workplace exchange focused on jobs for refugees. Options for filtering by location and industry.	https://workeer.de
Migrant Hire	Germany	Profile matching service between refugees and employers, with option of personal support for refugees through German NGO Jobs4Refugees	https://migranthire.com
Welcome Talent App - LinkedIn	Sweden	App linking employers and refugees through the LinkedIn platform, with a technology focus. Resources in Arabic and English.	www.welcometalent.se
Join	Germany	German Ministry of Interior initiative matching employers and migrants for internships.	http://www.join-now.org
Refugees Work	Austria	Matching service which also provides information about the asylum system. Works directly to pre-select candidates and helps to prepare for interviews. More comprehensive service and charges fee.	https://refugeeswork.at
Refugee Start Force	The Netherlands	Creates networks for the purpose of language learning, and to advertise opportunities for volunteer work, internships and jobs.	https://refugeestartforce.eu
Refugee Company	The Netherlands	Matching service but also support community for migrants looking for work. Also advertises opportunities for work experience.	https://www.refugeecompany.com
Hi app - VDAB	Belgium	Network support app for refugees. Employers can connect with asylum seekers and refugees that are attending integration courses and offer opportunities.	http://hiapp.be/en
Breaking Barriers	United Kingdom	Service matching refugees with placement opportunities. Offers a range of employment support to refugees.	http://breaking-barriers.co.uk
Palkkaus.fi	Finland	Job matching service. Also provides a guide for asylum seekers to the Finnish system (English) and a guide for employers in Finnish.	http://www.refugeejobs.fi/Refugee
Action Emploi Réfugiés	France	A service matching refugees with job and placement opportunities, and help with CV writing.	http://www.actionemploi-refugies.com

to work for many claiming asylum, many candidates' experience will be in informal work. As such, skills are difficult to evidence with documentation and diplomas. Employers must develop methods of assessment which emphasise experience over documents to avoid underusing potential and funnelling refugee candidates into low-skill positions.



EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals²⁷

The European Union is developing a tool for services supporting refugees and assessing skill levels with a view to facilitating access to employment opportunities. The tool is a resource designed to support those working with refugees to better understand the individual, their skills, qualifications and experiences.

The tool guides case-workers to develop skill profiles of refugees which look beyond formal documentation to incorporate aspiration and practical experiences. Although intended for refugee support services and intermediaries, this tool could be useful to employers in the interview process to navigate gaps in information due to lack of documentation.

Try-out periods:

One other way to assess experience in the absence of formal documentation of qualifications is to offer try-out periods. Both serving as a recruitment process and a form of work experience for refugees, try-out periods give refugees the chance to verify their experience. This is an excellent way to address the ongoing under-utilisation of skills of recent migrants; however employers should only use this option if they intend to eventually employ people in the long-term.



DRC StepUp - Danish Refugee Council²⁸

DRC StepUp was launched in 2017 by the Danish Refugee Council as a website and app to connect Syrian refugees with employers across the world. Alongside its purpose as a matching service, the platform seeks to put a focus on the skills and experience of many Syrian refugees by emphasising their work history prior to the conflict to avoid skill under-utilisation. The platform therefore focuses on finding jobs for refugees which are appropriate to education and experience, encouraging employers to make full use of the potential of refugee candidates.

Employers can advertise jobs to target Syrian refugees who can register with the platform with their resumes and cover letter. DRC StepUp is available in Arabic, English and Turkish, with resources on how to write CVs, cover letters and prepare for interviews. It provides legal updates regarding new laws and work regulations both for employers and candidates specifically for each country in the MENA region.

Developing opportunities - Recommendations:

1. Seek out guides informing of the basics: the law, the benefits and the challenges of employing refugees. Employers' associations, NGOs and trade unions have been developing a number of tools in most European countries.
2. Build partnerships and exchanges - employers should seek to form mutual exchanges and coordination with support services assisting refugees with labour market information, support, or skills assessment.
3. Seek out employment services, refugee support networks, community groups and NGOs for partnerships, sharing of information and for accessing talent pools.
4. Search for incentive schemes for employing refugees.

²⁷ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&intPagId=5019&langId=en>.

²⁸ See <https://drcstepup.org/en/>.

5. Seek to incorporate business or other technical language courses into employment and training schemes.
6. Seek partners to help eliminate practical barriers to accessing the scheme.
7. Develop individual work plans for refugee employees considering issues such as progression, training, and personal and psychological support.
8. Seek out matching services between employers and refugees and advertise opportunities.
9. Apply flexible skills assessment and recognition procedures and emphasise a broad range of experience.
10. Use try-out periods for refugees to prove skill levels.

b. Creating a 'refugee-friendly' workplace

Successful programmes including refugees in the workplace do not end at the point of recruitment. Rather, there are a range of considerations to be addressed to make such initiatives sustainable and to ensure they offer meaningful opportunities and fair conditions. How can employers ensure that their workplaces are 'welcoming' to refugees?

Step 1: Combatting racism and discrimination

A major step to creating a safe and welcoming working environment is maintaining a space free of racism and discrimination. Building understanding amongst fellow workers is an important first step toward this goal, and can be achieved through training and awareness raising activities. An ultimate goal is to build communities amongst workers in which divisions on the basis of 'citizen' or 'migrant' are no longer relevant. Trade unions and NGOs can be useful partners in such activities.

Step 2: Creating structures of support

Another barrier identified by employers to employing refugees is a feeling of incapacity to work with those in vulnerable situations. Indeed, many refugees will have had direct experience of violence, be in trauma, or face multiple and intersecting discrimination. One way employers can handle this is to build structures of support for recent migrants in the workplace. This could be through mentoring schemes and partnering, also presenting development opportunities for other employees. Partnering employees

with recent migrants as a form of pastoral care or informal support can be one simple way to make the environment more welcoming and inclusive. Training should be provided for the mentors.



Project InCoach - DGB Bildungswerk, Germany²⁹

DGB Bildungswerk, a German trade union, has developed educational training programmes for workers on receiving refugees in the Ruhr District. Trade union worker councils and staff committees are trained through workshops on how to include refugees in the workplace and combat racism and discrimination within the wider workforce. Workshops are bespoke and tailored to the needs of the workforce (which can differ according to location and industry). However they comprise core educational elements on:

1. The German asylum system
2. Legal frames of labour migration
3. Strategies combating discrimination in your own workforce

Worker representatives are encouraged to use this information in their own workforce. They are provided with resources to help implement these strategies, as well as practical information, such as potential partners in refugee support and employment offices. This programme is combined with refugee support services which include job search help, application and access to German language courses.

The project is funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund within the framework of the "ESF Integration Guidelines of the Federal Government".

Step 3: Developing formal structures to address discrimination

Employers must also take formal steps to prevent and combat discrimination, whether it be from colleagues or management. This means addressing individual cases of discrimination or harassment, but also ensuring that systems and policies do not directly or indirectly discriminate

²⁹ See https://www.migration-online.de/beitrag_aWQ9MTAyNTQ_.html.

against refugees. This is not just a matter of law; but aims to create a fair and productive workplace without divisions. Examples of structures which may discriminate against refugees could include structures of pay and limitations on progression.



City of Vantaa Immigrant Services, Finland

The City of Vantaa Immigrant Services is tasked with support for refugees in all fields, including employment, housing and welfare. As an employer itself, the City has made a concerted attempt to ensure that its workplace is inclusive, and recruits employees and volunteers from refugee, migrant and ethnic minority backgrounds. Approximately 50% of the staff are migrants. This, alongside a mentoring system, has meant that new employees are able to relate to staff and also to clients.

In general, employment and anti-discrimination laws should provide refugees redress from discriminatory practices. However, employers can take preventative steps to ensure that discriminatory practices do not occur.

One step would be to establish dialogues with equality bodies, trade unions and civil society for migrant and ethnic minority workers. This could be for the benefit of management as an advisory role, but also for workers to have a contact person to consult on matters of discrimination.

Resource: Networks of civil society organisations, trade unions and equality bodies

Civil society	European Network Against Racism (ENAR): http://www.enar-eu.org/ for access to anti-racism organisations across Europe
Trade unions	European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC): https://www.etuc.org/ for contact with national trade unions
Equality bodies	European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet): http://www.equineteurope.org/ for access to national equality bodies

Creating a 'refugee-friendly' workplace - Recommendations:

1. Implement training sessions informing staff about migration and refugees to combat racism.
2. Create formal structures to address discrimination, including dialogues with trade unions, equality bodies and civil society organisations to advise on discrimination; internal structures such as complaints mechanisms for discrimination; and points of contacts for support in case of discrimination.

c. Influencing wider change

There are many ways employers can influence the agenda on the inclusion of refugees in the labour market in addition to their role as direct employers. Employers are powerful social actors in their localities, regions, countries and international contexts, and can influence change in broader ways.

1. Changing the narrative: taking a public stance against xenophobia

One way employers can use their capacity to influence change is to use their public voice to contribute to a narrative change on the role of migrants in society. Powerful, moneyed actors have helped perpetuate xenophobic discourses, and employers can play a role in countering this. Many employers, large and small, are taking a stance against xenophobia in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) and marketing capacities. Employers could sway narratives towards more positive perceptions of migration with relatively little resources and potentially large benefits.

2. Advocacy: influencing national policy

Employers, particularly when acting in concert or with partners, can be powerful lobbying and advocacy actors with capacity to influence national policy. International institutions and national governments have sought the opinions of employers through surveys of the most effective ways to include refugees in the labour market. Employers can provide valuable knowledge about the main barriers, and how government policy has most impeded or helped the inclusion process.



Business and Human Rights Resource Centre³⁰

In 2016, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre called for companies to make statements in support of refugees and the need for a welcoming environment for refugees in Europe. 15 companies made statements on the importance of giving direct support to refugees during the crisis, and also working on measures to improve their access to employment with long-term job prospects in a sustainable way.

One example of such advocacy is the work of Germany's chambers of commerce, a grouping of employers which has voiced to the German federal government the need for rights to stay for asylum seekers completing apprenticeships, to increase certainty for employers, and to protect refugees from deportation threats. These calls have been at least heard by the German government and may in the future contribute to policy change. Employer federations in France such as MEDEF³¹ similarly have called for the government to welcome refugees as a benefit to the French economy.

3. Contributing resources to support initiatives for refugees

Employers also have some capacity to contribute time, resources and knowledge to existing change-makers working toward the effective inclusion of refugees into the labour market. This could be by contributing financial resources to initiatives directly aiding refugees. One such way to do this is to contribute via scholarships and grants for the education of refugees to increase their chances of accessing employment that meets their aspirations.

Another way to help is to identify and support civil society working on the inclusion of refugees. If not in financial contributions, this could also be with providing expertise, labour market information, and allowing employees to volunteer in mentoring schemes.

³⁰ See <https://business-humanrights.org/en/how-are-companies-responding-to-the-refugee-crisis-in-europe>.

³¹ See <http://www.medef.com/en/>.



Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF), The Netherlands³²

Founded in 1948, the UAF supports refugees with grants and loans so that they can attend a higher education course. These funds are intended only for tuition fees, language courses, books, a computer, travelling expenses and other costs related to their studies.

The foundation also advises refugees on their choice of study and guides them during their studies and when they apply for jobs. In the initial phase, UAF helps them while they learn the language and develop learning skills. UAF organises training courses and networking meetings for refugees who are studying and those who have graduated.

Influencing wider change - Recommendations:

1. Contribute to positive narratives of migration in CSR and marketing.
2. Inform and lobby governments on improvements to employment policy for refugees.
3. Contribute time, resources and knowledge to support initiatives for refugees.

³² See <https://www.uaf.nl/english>.

Checklist: Assessing refugee inclusion in the workplace

Principles	Practices	Implementation			Notes
					
Developing opportunities	a. Developing opportunities				
	I. Seeking out guides informing of the basics: the law, the benefits and the challenges of employing refugees				
	b. Seeking partners with expertise				
	I. Seeking out employment services, refugee support networks, community groups and NGOs for partnerships, sharing of information and for accessing talent pools				
	II. Building partnerships and exchanges with support services assisting refugees with labour market information, support, or skills assessment				
	c. Deciding which opportunities to provide				
	d. Exploring incentive schemes for employing refugees				
	e. Designing opportunities tailored for refugees				
	I. Incorporating business or other technical language courses into employment and training schemes				
	II. Seeking partners to help eliminate practical barriers to accessing the scheme				
	III. Developing individual work plans for refugee employees considering issues such as progression, training, and personal and psychological support				
	f. Recruitment				
	I. Seeking out matching services between employers and refugees and advertising opportunities				
II. Applying flexible skills assessment and recognition procedures and emphasising a broad range of experience					
III. Using try-out periods for refugees to prove skill levels					
Creating a 'refugee-friendly' workplace	a. Combatting racism and discrimination				
	I. Implementing training sessions informing staff about migration and refugees to combat racism				
	b. Creating structures of support				
	c. Developing formal structures to address discrimination				
	I. Dialogues with trade unions, equality bodies and civil society organisations to advise on discrimination				
II. Internal structures such as complaints mechanisms for discrimination					
III. Points of contacts for support in case of discrimination					
Influencing wider change	a. Changing the narrative				
	I. Contributing to positive narratives of migration in CSR and marketing				
	b. Advocacy: influencing national policy				
	I. Informing and advocating to governments on improvements to employment policy for refugees				
c. Contributing resources to support initiatives for refugees					

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The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) stands against racism and discrimination and advocates equality, solidarity and well-being for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racism NGOs throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.

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