



Roundtable Event

“The Business Case for Diversity – local, regional and national partnerships for the labour market integration of refugees”

3-4 October 2013

The Hague, the Netherlands



This event was co-financed by the European Commission and organised by UNHCR under the SHARE Project.



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Introduction

On 3-4 October 2013, 26 representatives of international and national migrant and refugee organisations, local and regional employment services, governments and professional or specialised recruitment agencies came together in The Hague to discuss business engagement for the labour market integration of refugees. With 11 different countries represented, including Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Ireland, The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, the UK and the United States, **the aim was to draw out how organisations working for and with refugees in Europe can improve their engagement with businesses and other employment stakeholders to improve this important integration area.** The group looked at differences and similarities between the job placement of resettled refugees and refugees in general in contrast to other migrant or national groups of unemployed. Discussions were also held concerning engagement at the local, regional and national level.

The event was organised by UNHCR in the context of the SHARE Project. SHARE is led by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) and co-financed by the European Commission. The SHARE Project has, since March 2012, built towards a network of European regional and local authorities and their civil society partners who are committed to refugee resettlement, protection and integration. An integral part of the European Resettlement Network (www.resettlement.eu), SHARE facilitates the inclusion of local and regional actors in the wider network, and ensures the visibility of the local and regional dimension of resettlement in European and global resettlement discussions and developments. More information on the SHARE Network can be found at: www.resettlement.eu/page/welcome-share-network.

The roundtable was organised in follow up to a previous roundtable event held by the European Resettlement Network in Brussels on 12 December 2012. In the December event, there was a focus on sharing good practice between employment services, NGOs and private businesses that support refugees in finding employment or starting their own business. Examples from more than ten initiatives and projects for the employment of refugees were shared and these are drawn on for this note where they relate to a topic discussed (for more information, please see www.resettlement.eu/page/roundtable-private-business-engagement-integration-refugees-december-2012).

The roundtable event of 3-4 October 2013 thus builds upon the exchange of good practice that developed in December 2012, and engaged local and regional input to crystalize the elements for a business engagement strategy for refugee organisations.

Purpose of the roundtable:

- To introduce the **SHARE Project** and its aims in building local capacity to receive and integrate resettled refugees in Europe.
- To provide information about the overall refugee and resettlement situation in Europe and the outcome, in particular in relation to employment, of a 2012-13 UNHCR-led research project *Refugee Integration: Capacity and Evaluation* (RICE) on **refugee integration in select European countries**.
- To exchange information and hear practical arguments and experiences about making “**the business case for diversity**”.

- To discuss and exchange good practice regarding **refugee organisations' engagement of and with business communities** and to set out how to structure a business engagement strategy.
- To discuss and exchange good practice on how to **support refugees in finding employment** and how to engage with the labour market, and in particular, local and regional employment strategies and initiatives.
- To discuss and exchange good practice on what **role mentors and social or professional support networks can play**, including through volunteering.

That employment is one of the most important aspects of refugee integration was confirmed in the RICE project. Through this research, UNHCR met with more than 300 refugees in Austria, France, Ireland and Sweden, and spoke with stakeholders who are involved in refugee integration. It was noted that while employment provides income and economic advancement, it can also provide a sense of security and independence, as well as help restore self-esteem for persons who have had to leave their country of origin. In the case of refugees, employment also offers an opportunity to learn the language of the receiving country and to make contacts with others. Employment alone however does not ensure integration, with other integration support often needed both to ensure employment and to assist in integration more broadly.

Employment is therefore a key indicator of integration in most EU Member States and is a component of measuring integration included in the EU *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy*, amongst others. Governments consider employment as an important indicator of successful integration and therefore focus strongly on it when measuring and assessing integration outcomes

Resource Box:

Common Basic Principles

The *Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy* in the EU were adopted by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004 and form the foundations of EU initiatives in the field of integration. http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/EU_actions_integration.cfm

Despite this clear focus on employment as a component of refugee integration and of their desire to work, the RICE research shows that, compared to native populations, refugees are more likely to be unemployed, have temporary jobs and have lower income. While little statistical data is available in many countries on refugee employment, the little data that is available and analysed shows that refugees often have more difficulties in, and structural barriers to, finding work compared to other migrant groups. For resettled refugees, a similar situation emerges. And while this group may have more support in most countries than refugees in general, they often have other and sometimes more complex challenges based on their vulnerabilities or previous life experiences.

Outcomes and next steps

While it was not for the roundtable participants to formulate policy or other recommendations, the discussions did crystalize some principles on how to engage more effectively with refugee integration in the labour market through a focus, *inter alia*, on business engagement. This roundtable event therefore contributes to the development of a body of good practice on how to engage businesses strategically for refugee labour market integration. It is hoped that it will inspire refugee organisations, employment

services, recruitment agencies and local and regional authorities to develop clear strategies in this important area so that those who receive protection from war and persecution in our societies are given “a fair chance” to rebuild their lives and to contribute to the societies who have offered them this protection.

These principles and the main outcomes of the discussions are summarised below in a checklist format. More information on each point is also provided under the overarching headings of:

- ✓ The business case for diversity and how to structure a business engagement strategy;
- ✓ How to support refugee integration into the labour market; and
- ✓ Good practice for engaging volunteers in support of refugee employment.

The SHARE Project, through ICMC and partners of the project, including UNHCR, recommend that refugee organisations and governmental authorities incorporate these elements into their work with, and programming for, refugees. Through the European Resettlement Network and the SHARE Project (SHARE I and SHARE II, with the latter to commence in March 2014: www.resettlement.eu/page/european-commission-continues-support-share-network-during-2014-15), ICMC, UNHCR and IOM continue to develop this area, linking it in particular to engagement with local and regional authorities. The roundtable identified a number of areas in which more cooperation and dialogue around good practices will be particularly relevant. These include how to better assess qualifications; good practice for support to refugees as entrepreneurs; and engagement with the media.

Summary conclusions and suggestions

- ✓ Organisations who work on refugee issues and integration should engage with the question of employment.
- ✓ While linkages to employment services, recruitment agencies and other mainstream services are essential, refugee organisations have a particular knowledge and can bring significant added value to this field when professionally engaged in it.
- ✓ Any engagement must be based on a clear vision and multi-faceted strategy concretely aimed at employment, engaging business on the premise of economic growth and taking account of the opportunities offered by existing local and regional employment strategies.
- ✓ A business and growth-focused strategy may require a change of mentality within refugee organisations, including skills development and different staffing profiles.
- ✓ Before employment is considered seriously for refugees, basic integration support needs should be met, such as health services, housing and language training.
- ✓ Considering the different capacities among refugee populations, three avenues for refugee employment should be considered depending on this capacity:
 - support to refugees where **employment is unlikely**;
 - support to **refugees who can enter the labour market** as employees; and
 - support to **refugees who can become self-employed**.
- ✓ A business engagement strategy should be part of employment support for refugees.
- ✓ Life-long learning should be factored into the business strategy looking at, for instance, competencies assessment, skills development, language learning and formal up-skilling through cooperation with universities or other educational institutions.
- ✓ Market analysis and analysis of the migrant population, including their purchasing power, are the foundation of a good business engagement strategy.
- ✓ In a business engagement and refugee employment strategy, different target audiences must be addressed, including local and regional authorities.

Identified target audiences

Larger businesses may have Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and/or diversity focal points. For them, engaging refugees may form part of profiling their business. Knowing their needs and approach to CSR is essential (experience of ManpowerGroup and Max Burger).

Small and medium sized businesses are the largest employers and drivers of national economies. In general, they do not have time to be trained or to be engaged in diversity and integration discussions. Another approach, based on growth and economy, is therefore necessary. However, this group can play an important role for refugee employment (experience from Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Scotland and the US).

Business leaders and mayors can be a core group to engage and can open doors (experiences from the SHARE Project and The Hague Process (<http://thehagueprocess.org/>)).

Universities and educational institutions are key partners for refugee employment. Up-skilling, further education and life-long learning are essential components of good refugee employment policies and programmes (experience of the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) in the Netherlands: <http://www.uaf.nl/home/english>).

Cities, local authorities and employment agencies more broadly are important players to include in the strategy (experiences from SHARE, The Hague Process, the UK and Sweden).

Refugees are the main clients and they are central to the strategy. Refugees are also a target audience for the communication strategy and they can be partners in the development of a strategy. Expertise on matching skills, training and communication with refugees is essential (experience from Sweden, the Netherlands, Scotland, and the UK more generally).

Your own organization should be considered in your strategy. Review whether you have the right staff for the job; whether you have the skills to make a market-based analysis, and to assess, or to have assessed, refugee competencies and build an individual plan (experience from Sweden, Denmark and the UK).

Media outreach as part of a communication strategy. Reaching out to businesses can successfully be done through financial magazines, local and national media, etc. Place not only the refugees but also the receiving populations' engagement at the heart of communication, and focus on communicating images of 'good news stories' about refugee employment, skills and self-sufficiency.

Volunteers and/or mentors can network to support integration efforts – including for employment. Volunteers can play a pivotal role in the support for refugee labour market integration (experience from Denmark, Austria, the Netherlands and others).

Presentations, discussions and examples

Refugee Integration in Europe and Resettlement – Some Key Points

Senior Policy Officer to **UNHCR's Bureau for Europe, Emilie Wiinblad** gave an introduction to resettlement and the background and aims of the roundtable. She recalled that, while meeting the integration needs of refugees is important, there are only some 1.34 million refugees in the EU and therefore their particular integration needs are at risk of being lost in mainstream integration efforts. This is even more so for resettled refugees, who comprise only a very small part of the refugee population. Currently, there are between five and six-thousand resettled refugees coming to Europe each year under the established national programmes.

One of the main findings from the research done on refugee integration in the context of the RICE project was that employment is an important aspect of integration not only for refugees themselves, but also for society. This is reflected in national integration policies where employment is often one of the central areas of focus, with quite well developed indicators. Despite this, there is very little refugee-specific information, with the statistical data that is available varying significantly from country to country.

Refugee integration in the labour market is obviously significantly influenced by the national economic situation at any given time. However, there is evidence that it is generally more difficult for migrants than nationals to find employment, and it is even more difficult for refugees. There seems, however, to be good evidence to suggest that support to employment has a significant impact. This point was further emphasised throughout the discussions of the roundtable, with many organisations noting that quality and targeted support aimed at empowering the individual refugee for employment can make a difference.

Some of the barriers noted in the RICE research for refugees to find employment include: insufficient language skills, difficulties in getting recognition of previous qualifications and competencies, poor housing conditions, and health concerns. It was also noted that family separation and the time spent in the asylum process had a significant impact on refugees' well-being and ability to make use of dormant skills within the labour market. Furthermore, there are indications that women have more challenges than men in finding employment. This may be due to difficulties in finding child care, to cultural barriers, and/or other family obligations. Women wearing head-scarfs felt this to be a potential barrier to employment.

Resource Box:

UNHCR, *The labour market integration of resettled refugees*, Eleanor Ott, PDES/2013/16 November 2013, www.unhcr.org/5273a9e89.pdf

UNHCR, *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe*, September 2013, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/522980604.html

UNHCR, *Facilitators and Barriers: Refugee Integration in Austria*, October 2013, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/5278dc644.html

UNHCR, *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in France*, September 2013, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/524aa9a94.html

UNHCR, *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Sweden - It's about time!* September 2013, available at: www.refworld.org/docid/5295a60e4.html

UNHCR, *Refugee Integration and the Use of Indicators: Evidence from Central Europe, Findings from the RICE project in Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovenia*, available at: <http://goo.gl/Gxt9Mq>

On resettlement in Europe see also: www.resettlement.eu/

Panel 1: Business Engagement for Refugee Labour Market Integration - Making “The Business Case for Diversity”

*In this first session, we heard from project leader **Rina Näslund** of the entrepreneurship programme “Open Doors” in Gävleborg (Sweden); **Finn Rasmussen** from the Confederation of Danish Employers (Denmark); and **Frans Bouwen**, Director of External Relations of The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (the Netherlands). They spoke of their experiences in how to engage business in support of labour market integration and how to make the business case for diversity.*

Rina Näslund gave an inspirational presentation on how a change in mentality and approach to immigrants and integration can make good economic sense and lead to significant growth. Based on her successful experiences as project leader for the entrepreneurship programme “Open Doors”, developed by the County Administrative Board of Gävleborg, she spoke on how to make diversity a business asset.

It was noted that looking at migration and integration with a focus on overcoming challenges and finding solutions to problems may lead to the loss of the importance of diversity as a driver for economic growth, and of migrants as a potential new consumer group as well as an entry point to new markets. However, to tap into this potential, it is important to have a clear vision and strategy on diversity that aims to also overcome prejudice and unconscious negative attitudes.

“Open Doors” vision statement

“Our vision is that the business sector in Gävleborg and in Sweden will be in the forefront when it comes to benefit from the growth opportunities that are hidden in our multicultural society”

In “Open Doors”, the starting point is the needs of the employer; the primary objective is growth; and the task begins with understanding the companies and their needs before identifying immigrants with the matching competencies. Placing diversity in the context of profit and innovation speaks better to business, and with this approach “integration” becomes the spin-off, not the main aim. This approach has proven to be more appealing in particular to medium sized businesses who may not be able to

afford to have a diversity strategy or diversity training, and who do not see integration as their responsibility.

From the experiences of the “Open Doors” project, which includes undertaking company visits and growth potential reviews, it has transpired that there is a clear need for assistance to companies on how to assess their future needs and how to find solutions to the changing situation. Most businesses perceived their future customer to be white and with a Swedish background, but the reality is very different. As such, there is often the perception that immigrants do not have money and are not therefore potential clients. However, immigrants' purchasing power in Sweden was SEK 208 billion in 2004 and is increasing faster than the purchasing power of the ‘native’ Swedish population. “Open Doors” helps businesses to see this and to understand the potential for growth in catering to this consumer group; for including innovation in diversity in the products on offer; and by maximising global opportunities through immigrant recruitment.

Concretely, the project assists in matching the skills needed with the skills available through employment for a minimum of six months. It began in 2009, in the middle of the economic crisis, but companies have shown great interest and the project has, so far, sourced work for 40 people, while 20 more have had the opportunity to interview. The project builds on four working methods: networking, market knowledge, company visits, and marketing. Networking is crucial and the customised service a central element in its success. Likewise, the marketing element is very important for reaching businesses and creating an interest in the project. The project also cooperates not only with the employment service, but also with educational institutions, including the University of Gävleborg and vocational schools. This is important as the aim is to look to the future. Understanding the labour market demands of the future can assist projects and services to place immigrants in the right type of training and to develop the skills most in demand. According to various forecasts in Sweden, the labour market needs will be for engineers, the health care sector, global sales and skilled trades. Another aspect influencing the labour market is that of demographics and an ageing population, which will mean that many companies, particularly in rural areas, will phase out unless a solution to the generational changes is found. Migrants can play an important role in such situations, as this project has shown.

Resource Box:

For more information visit: www.oppnadorrar.eu/cms/ (or see brochure in English www.oppnadorrar.eu/cms/files/project-in-english.pdf)

For links to “Diversity” work in the context of the EU, please visit:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/search.jsp?advSearchKey=diversity+awards&x=17&y=15&mode=advancedSubmit&langId=en>

Finn Rasmussen from the **Confederation of Danish Employers** in Denmark spoke of their experience of an integration project developed by them, which aimed at getting young immigrants into the labour market. The Confederation of Danish Employers has traditionally considered that integration was achieved when a job was secured. However, over time, this perspective has developed and their understanding of integration is broader today, including also the notion of participation in Danish society. Employment is one important aspect of this and it is acknowledged that it is often through a job that a person learns, grows and develops networks and acquires language skills. The Confederation has

also seen an overall shift in attitude among members. While it is acknowledged that there probably was some prejudice towards immigrants at one time and, as such, having a foreign name could affect your job prospects, there is now a broader recognition amongst most companies of the benefits of a diverse workforce. As part of these efforts, the Confederation aims at establishing a new set of educational measures that will allow for prospects of a job upon attainment of these measures. As such, the Confederation's approach confirms the need to keep strong links between employment and education.

The integration project is carried out within the framework of an agreement with other labour organisations and the government. Finn Rasmussen confirmed that for their members, i.e. businesses and employers, integration is not the main aim while "diversity", as a concept, is not a selling point for the majority of them. However, businesses can play a very important role in the integration of an individual and, if engaged correctly, can be motivated to take an active role in individual support.

The project is implemented in close cooperation with municipalities and assists the individual with a tailored plan aimed at either further education and/or concrete labour market experience. It utilises the existing offers for employment support and benefits for employers. Many companies have already been willing to take immigrants on so that they can see what the job entails and what skills are required. This helps to develop their networks, including guiding them to educational opportunities. This experience confirms many of the points raised by Rina Näslund, including the importance of having a professional approach and understanding the labour needs of individual businesses and employers when reaching out to businesses and in assisting refugees in finding employment. Equally important is the ability to match the labour market needs to individual candidates. This is best done through an empowering process in which the individual's skills, qualifications and experience are assessed and matched with a job or placement requirement. In this process, "selling" the individual's competencies is key to success, without of course over-selling their profile. Approaching business from a point of charity, solidarity or social responsibility is less compelling and should be avoided. What is of interest to companies is whether a person has the potential to become a good employee, i.e. will the person bring benefits to the company.

The project uses the mentor model, which provides a 'go-between' for the individual and the business or employer. In larger businesses, the mentor can be an employee within that company. The mentor role is very important also in contacts with municipalities, which often have a follow up role in other areas of the individual's life. In this way, Finn Rasmussen confirmed a point also raised by other participants; namely, that while companies and employers can play a crucial role in the integration process, employment alone cannot achieve this, with other integration support necessary from the municipalities, whether this relates to issues of health, housing, family or language.

The key learning that emerged from the project has been the importance of the individual plan and direct contact with businesses to achieve success. If this approach is taken, it shows that a company or a mentor can play a crucial role in labour market integration. Sometimes the placement is for a short period; sometimes over a longer period. However, irrespective of the timeframe of the job placement, it provides the migrant or refugee with an opportunity for language learning and a better understanding of a country's work ethics and culture.

In concluding, Finn Rasmussen reminded us that "*Solutions are not made for the individual, but with the individual*" and the individual plan must show and support this.

Resource box:

For more information about the project, please visit (in Danish): www.vip4u.dk

Frans Bouwen, Founder and Director of External Relations with The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (THP), gave an introduction to The Hague Process and shared his views and experiences from bringing different actors together, from amongst others, the business world and municipalities, through this process. THP is an independent, not-for-profit organization with a global network of over 4,000 individuals, public and civil society organizations, and institutions that seek policy solutions to migration and refugee challenges. THP attained formal recognition in 2002 from Kofi Annan and the United Nations General Assembly upon their endorsement of the 'Declaration of The Hague on the Future of Refugee and Migration Policy'.

Among the ongoing THP projects are the following:

- A Global Forum for Migration and Development-commissioned mapping survey that aims to provide insights into how the private sector positions itself in relation to national policies on migration;
- A research project done in collaboration with Maastricht University's Graduate School of Governance to study the role of the private sector and cities in the integration of migrants and refugees in eight global cities: Auckland, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Kuala Lumpur, Lisbon, Nairobi, Rotterdam and Sao Paulo;
- Research into the connection between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and migration. The purpose of this research is to better understand the historical and current connection, or the lack thereof, of CSR and migration through a review of literature and a survey of a large sample of published CSR policies of private firms; and
- A business-city partnership pilot project with the city of Rotterdam. Building on THP's experiences in conducting Expert Consultations with the private sector and cities in The Hague, Johannesburg, Toronto, Manila and Istanbul, THP identified the need to form partnerships between the private sector and cities to address migration challenges specific to the city in question.

Frans Bouwen elaborated how THP brings together unlikely actors like Mayors, Alderman, Business CEOs and Representatives, academia, (international/regional/national) governmental and non-governmental organisations, migrants and refugees. In this way, it seeks to 'normalise' the migration and integration debates by bringing the different discourses together to meet the varied challenges.

In Frans Bouwen's experience, business representatives are engaged with the issue of labour migration, though not refugee protection, because of labour market needs. Business leaders do gather to discuss refugees or migration, but they are concerned with the impact on global markets and, as such, there are mutual interests between them and refugee and migrant organisations. THP attempts to bring the key players in both fields together and see where the different discourses have common aims or interests. One such forum is the World Economic Forum, where three considerations have been mentioned when discussing refugee and migrant labour. Recognising the global impact of conflict and forced

displacement, the issues raised concerned their relation to: 1.) Profit; 2.) Sustainability; and 3.) Stability and Security Measures.

In the business-migration dialogue, data and research is essential in making the case to business. As such, investment is needed in research and to develop a business case, which represents a good opportunity for actors in this field. THP has a strong research and data collection focus and has established business-local authority dialogues in several cities, including Den Haag, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Enschede, Groningen, Copenhagen, Barcelona, Lisbon, Geneva, Lyon, Nantes, Toulouse, Berlin, Stuttgart, Birmingham, Istanbul, Toronto, Los Angeles, Chicago, Johannesburg, Nairobi, Kampala, New Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, and Auckland. In these cities, THP has brought businesses together and identified the need to consult and to incorporate all, including migrants and refugees, in the discussions. THP is also currently undertaking a mapping exercise to see how businesses see their role in migrant integration. What can already be observed is that there is different terminology in the business world related to migrants, which means that many of them are unaware that they may already be involved in 'migrant' work. Another project is a pilot partnership in Rotterdam with the university, the harbour authorities and the Mayor's office to see how this partnership could work, with Shell and Siemens keenly interested in this process.

One observation drawn from these dialogues is that while the national political discourse in Europe may be focused on tackling unemployment among its own nationals first and foremost, this does not echo the approach of business. Many CEOs do not like this approach, with business seeing discrimination as a significant problem. They see migrants and refugees as part of their societies and therefore part of the workforce and human capital, which needs to be activated to the benefit of growth. In this regard, they observe the role of the media to be sensationalist and very negative.

In the most recent event of THP on the occasion of the second Global Hearing on migrants and refugees at the Peace Palace in The Hague, one-third of attendees were from the business community, and the remainder from cities, municipalities and international organisations. Five major themes were highlighted: 1.) global demography; 2.) changes at the political and social level; 3.) the global economic and financial crisis; 4.) urbanization; and 5.) climate change.

As concrete suggestions, Frans Bouwen stated that, in consideration of the challenge in finding employment for refugees, it may prove to be a better approach to present migrants and refugees as human beings with different life experiences and therefore human capital, rather than "sell" the refugee or migrant discourse to businesses.

Resource Box:

To learn more, visit The Hague Process website at: www.thehagueprocess.org and hear views from participants at the Global Hearing on migrants and refugees at the Peace Palace: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ut8EyW3e0Ik

TIPS from this session

- Businesses play an important role in the employment of migrants and refugees, and must be engaged strategically and professionally by those working on refugee integration.
- The engagement of businesses should be done on the basis of economic growth and business needs, not integration and diversity.
- Discrimination and prejudice play a role in relation to the employment of migrants and refugees.
- How the media portrays this group can have a negative effect. Communication must be part of an employment strategy, as must a good understanding of the issues so that clear messages and good approaches can be applied.
- When engaging with the employment of refugees, cooperation with educational institutions is central to success. Universities and other education facilities can play crucial roles in different areas, from research, to providing bursaries and course places for individual refugees and migrants.
- Engagement and cooperation with local and regional authorities at all levels pays off.

TIPS from the plenary discussion

- A business engagement strategy should keep in mind that it is the small and medium sized companies in most countries that are the main drivers of the economy. The establishment of a good working relationship with Chambers of Commerce should be considered.
- The financial sector is noticeably absent from the discussions, though it was stated that the financial sector was the first to take the dialogue seriously in 2004. Indeed, quite a lot of banks have been established by migrants, while there is real interest in this topic from the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank. This could be explored further.

Example: Diversity in Banking: the Febelfin project

Anneleen Huysman, who works for the Brussels government as a Diversity Consultant, presented the “Febelfin project”, which promotes greater diversity in the banking sector through a training programme designed for highly skilled migrants, and addresses the shortage of qualified employees. For more information see: Note from Business Roundtable December 2012 at: <http://www.resettlement.eu/page/roundtable-private-business-engagement-integration-refugees-december-2012>

- NGOs working for refugees can play an important role as a ‘go-between’. They have the refugee knowledge and, if they professionalise their approach, they are rightly placed to take a lead role. For instance, in the **Bridges Programmes** many of its staff has a business background, and that makes a big difference. Business listens to business – this can be used in the strategy.

- Having a continuing professional development programme in your company or organisation should be considered as, additional to staff, this can also help the mentors and others working for you. Giving business awards every year is another good idea and businesses are often very eager to get involved.

- Divergence in skills among different groups of migrants and refugees must be taken into consideration. Among resettled refugee groups in particular, the skills level may be much lower than that of other migrant groups. Often this goes beyond the employment or skills issues, but concerns support to enter a highly competitive 21st century labour market. One way of tackling this is to focus more on the competencies of refugees rather than their qualifications, particularly with forced migration. This also requires flexibility in projects and support to be able to meet the different needs, while it also highlights that employment is only one aspect of integration. Other integration related support is therefore often required.

Panel 2: Mainstreaming Refugee Employment into Local and Regional Employment Strategies

*In this panel, we heard from **Maggie Lennon** from the **Bridges Programmes**, a specialist agency that helps refugees, asylum-seekers, and third country nationals living in Glasgow gain meaningful work experience within their field of competence. We also heard from **Henk Nijhaus** from **VluchtelingenWerk Nederland**, who spoke about their refugee employment programme – **Emplooi**; from **Jeffrey van Meerkerk** from the **ManpowerGroup (The Netherlands)**, which has been at the forefront of raising awareness, developing skills and finding employment for those in need, including refugees, and who is a long-term partner to UNHCR; and from **Christine Johansson** from **Arbetsförmedlingen**, presenting “**Step-in-jobs**” (Sweden), which is a specially subsidized employment scheme aimed at faster entry into the labour market and better language learning for newly arrived migrants.*

The panel spoke about their experiences in supporting refugee integration into the labour market; how to develop a strategy in this area, including outreach to businesses; and how refugee agencies can work closely together with employment services and/or employment and recruitment agencies, thereby complementing mainstream employment services.

The Bridges Programmes offers a flexible “menu” of engagement with employers, with the starting point premised on asking employers both what they want and what they need. In providing this support, they help them develop internship, mentoring and coaching skills, with a valuable by-product of supporting anti-discrimination in the workplace. However, for the sake of the client, Bridges Programmes does not allow placements to continue indefinitely as there needs to be the prospect of an interview or a job following a placement. With this in mind, **Maggie Lennon** emphasised the importance of preparing the workplace for the client, and that employers must be involved at every stage of that process. For example, it is important to include employers in the development of material that is subsequently shared with clients.

From experience, Maggie Lennon highlighted that refugees and asylum-seekers are often eager to work and do not wish to stay in the employment trap; employers are impressed with this attitude. It was also emphasised that employers are key to the process and, as such, strong, targeted links with them should be built. It is further recommended to use employers from certain sectors to act as ambassadors to

others, as well as to reward employers and recognize their contribution, which serves as a good incentive for their continued engagement, i.e. positive public image.

On making initial approaches to employers, as a first step, it is advisable to conduct research and to take note of who is recruiting. It is also advisable to start small, e.g. a local authority, though it is good to get a private sector partner involved as soon as is possible. As a further step, it is also recommended to send questionnaires to employers.

It was emphasised that the Bridges Programmes seeks to match skills with skills requirements, asserting that pairing low-skilled clients with low-paid jobs is not the answer. Moreover, for social cohesion, it is important for the community and society more broadly that their clients are matched to their actual skills-set. Reconnecting asylum-seekers and refugees with their skills also helps to restore their dignity. It is important to acknowledge this added value so as not to consider simply that 'a job is a job'.

This is particularly relevant as competency recognition represents one of the biggest barriers to employment next to language skills. To address this issue, the Scottish Government is looking to establish a recognition centre in the coming years. In the interim, the Bridges Programmes uses a skills audit as well as reflection toolkits for their clients alongside four programmes to assist them in recognizing and articulating their skills. The results of this exercise are improved confidence, motivation, networks and knowledge for the client.

This is particularly relevant as, often, it is your knowledge that gets you your job, not your competencies. Refugees and asylum-seekers may not be able to demonstrate a comparable level of knowledge and consequently, they need to demonstrate what they have done in their own country or as refugees and how this can be applied in a European context. For asylum-seekers and refugees who do not have experience of the European job market, this can be particularly difficult without assistance. The Bridges Programmes seek to provide their clients with the ability to effectively recognise and communicate their skills to potential employers.

The Bridges Programmes offers, amongst other life skills courses, employability support courses, vocational ESOL language, and other job support. On average, the Bridges Programmes succeed in getting 35 per cent of their clients into jobs (over double those without support), while 50 per cent of those who have had a placement find work. For those who had a placement and vocational language support, the placement rate was 85 per cent. Maggie Lennon stressed however that employment support cannot stand alone and other integration support, including language learning, must accompany any labour market integration efforts.

In short, refugee employment requires a holistic approach. It is not and cannot be a *one-size-fits-all* solution, which is something that the mainstream agencies tend to struggle with. Moreover, at least in the context of the UK, large statutory agencies do not always have the right knowledge. The Bridges Programme, as a social enterprise that assists refugees and asylum-seekers in getting into employment, has therefore recognised the importance of having a 'sales' team on staff, e.g. people with a business background. This is also particularly helpful as Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) do not have the time or the resources to review different policies and papers. The Bridges Programmes therefore helps to address this gap and seeks to 'sell' the client and their skills-set to prospective employers. The Bridges Programmes also works very closely with colleges of further education in this process.

Resource Box:

For more information on the Bridges Programme, please visit: www.bridgesprogrammes.org.uk/

ESF-Learning Network IMPART, *Increasing the Participation of Migrants and Ethnic Minorities in Employment*, Final Report and Tool Kit

The IMPART Learning Network was formed under the European Social Fund in 2009, bringing together 12 partners from seven Member States, and ran for three years. It aimed to find out how ESF support can most effectively be targeted to secure long-term results from projects on the employment of migrants and ethnic minorities. For more information, please visit: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=56>

The KIM Project

KIM's main aim is to promote social inclusion, active citizenship and participation in the learning of migrants. Among the expected outcomes are: a handbook for assessing and validating informal competences of migrants and for implementing individualized plans for social inclusion (access to training, job placement); a handbook and training course to train educationalists and other personnel working directly with migrants; and the KIM Individual Social Inclusion Plan (ISIP) to assess the key, the informal and non-formal competences of migrants to foster their active citizenship and entry into the labour market. For more information, please visit: www.kimllp.eu/kim-en.php

Henk Nijhaus began by drawing attention to the current fragile financial environment related to this field. Nevertheless, **VluchtelingenWerk Nederland** has been able to initiate a number of new programmes for the next two and a half years, including *Job Start* and *Women at Work in the Care Sector*. Both were made possible through fundraising, with EUR 1,000 available per client for on the job coaching or training.

Through its work, VluchtelingenWerk Nederland has succeeded in developing close cooperation with ManpowerGroup and Accenture in the Netherlands, providing good links to a range of companies. However, it can be a challenge to determine under what conditions employers are willing to see refugees as a solution to their needs.

They are also now cooperating with the agricultural sector and the meat industry, which is particularly important as 25 per cent of their refugees/clients have very low skills. However, again, there are certain challenges associated with this sector, including whether employers are willing to employ low skilled refugees as opposed to migrants.

One of VluchtelingenWerk Nederland's flagship programmes is *Emplooi*, which was first established in 1989 and has had the direct support/involvement of the national government, the national employment service and the UAF, and has thus far succeeded in helping 10,000 refugees find work or to gain access to training programmes with job guarantees. Around 50-60 per cent of those involved managed to secure sustainable jobs, with 3-4 per cent of their clients starting their own companies. Eight per cent of those placed were placed in SMEs, with these companies typically looking for a specific talent or skill at the moment when the refugee is introduced.

It was concluded that the success of the *Emplooi* programme has been based on the following factors:

1. The current economic situation;
2. Support from the local government;
3. The Dutch language skills of the client;
4. If they attended the Dutch educational system; and
5. Qualifications recognition, amongst other areas.

In addition to the above, there is a need for the coaching of clients on the work floor, with diversity policies tied into this. It is also advisable that the access of refugees to the workforce is structured and communicated within the company. However, the main principles are to have access to employers, to 'speak their language', and to build networks. And while the latter can take some time, it will hopefully bear fruit in the long run.

Resource Box:

For more information about *Emplooi* (Dutch), please visit: www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/werk-voor-vluchtelingen/informatie-voor-emplooi-adviseurs-en-job-coaches-mv

See also related work of the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) in the Netherlands. UAF provides financial and other support to refugees and asylum seekers who plan to study in the Netherlands. The UAF supports more highly educated refugees with their studies and with finding appropriate work: www.uaf.nl/home/english

The **ManpowerGroup** is considered a world leader in innovative workforce solutions, with the objective to connect human potential to the power of business. In this process, as highlighted by **Jeffrey van Meerkerk**, it has developed strategic partnerships with the World Economic Forum and UNHCR, while they have observed four global trends that are influencing the modern and ever-changing workplace:

1. The talent mismatch is widening as the working age population declines and the nature of work changes;
2. Individual choice will be exercised by those with the skills that are most in demand;
3. Technological revolutions have the power to change where and when we work;
4. Rising customer sophistication requires businesses to deliver greater value and efficiency through diversity.

ManpowerGroup stated that stretching business principles is a positive development and that companies are responding in kind with the introduction of new models. However, it was added that they have a responsibility to ensure that refugee's talents meet the current skills shortage/gaps. Indeed, globally, employers are reporting the highest talent shortages in five years, which is holding them back from innovation and progress. More specifically, on average, 35 per cent of companies globally are having difficulty in filling vacancies (based on a global survey that ManpowerGroup conducts on an annual basis). For ManpowerGroup, the business is their client and they therefore want to meet their client's needs.

Based on these observations, there are opportunities to access the talent and skills of refugee populations, though none, i.e. the companies, proactively think of this. In this effort, ManpowerGroup does not present the refugee as a refugee, but as a potential employee. Moreover, if clients have the proper paperwork, they are introduced to a prospective employer as they would any other potential employee, i.e. not drawing attention to the fact that they are a refugee.

A discussion ensued as to how to make the right connections between organisations and business. In this regard, ManpowerGroup stated that it is important to find the right person/contact person and to build a business case together. Companies want to align their workforce more and more with the local labour market environment. In advocating with companies, we need to meet businesses demands, i.e. right candidates with the right backgrounds. It was added that several studies show that there is bias towards, for example, the name of an individual, reflecting perhaps a need to change attitudes. However, it was countered by ManpowerGroup that companies simply want specific skills and the right candidates. It was also noted that just because you have commercial interests does not mean that you cannot have humanitarian interests. The example of A&L Goodbody in Ireland was highlighted by the Irish Refugee Council. More specifically, they are doing pro-bono work on asylum applications, which has created an extremely positive response as, it is suggested, they feel greater value in their work. The hook that has emerged from this is that those doing pro-bono work are then invited to engage in additional activities such as CV writing. In short, A&L Goodbody wants to be the 'best at everything', including pro-bono work.

It was concluded that we should not lose sight of refugee self-employment and their role as potential employers. Indeed, the role of entrepreneurship is important and should be explored further.

Resource Box:

2013 Talent Shortage Survey, ManpowerGroup:

www.manpowergroup.com/wps/wcm/connect/587d2b45-c47a-4647-a7c1-e7a74f68fb85/2013_Talent_Shortage_Survey_Results_US_high+res.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Christine Johansson of **Arbetsförmedlingen's** (the Swedish Public Employment Service) **Entry Recruitment Incentive ("Step-In Jobs")** programme relayed how Arbetsförmedlingen is the largest placement service for work in Sweden. In 2007, the government introduced the Entry Recruitment Incentive, combining jobs with Swedish studies. It offers many programmes, including training, and contains elements on guidance in the workplace (mentor-like). They also pay a proportion of costs related to employing an individual during a placement period, and have an online tool for an employer that allows them to calculate how much it would cost them to hire an individual when this incentive payment is provided. This same tool can also be used by those seeking work. Importantly, this programme helps job-seekers and employers to find each other, and prioritises people who have difficulties in gaining access to the labour market. It therefore promotes the fast and effective establishment of the client in the labour market. In this process, it also strengthens the incentives for employers, while they link employment opportunities to participation in Swedish language programmes.

Placements are for a maximum of 24 months, with the target group representing those with a residence permit not older than 36 months, or those holding a residence card and with a family member who is a

citizen of the EU/EEA. Candidates also have to be over 20 years of age to participate. Should they meet these criteria, clients are registered as a jobseeker at Arbetsförmedlingen.

On the benefits for the employer, 80 per cent of the wage cost (maximum 800 SEK/90 EUR per working day) is provided, while compensation is also provided for any guidance given in the workplace during the first three months. However, all wage and other employee benefits are in accordance with the collective agreement of the industry itself.

Approximately 6,500 individuals participated in the programme in 2012, with over 50 per cent securing employment 90 days after completing the programme. In essence, it provides a better chance for those without high-level skills to enter the job market.

It was noted by ECRE that women face additional challenges, for example, in accessing childcare. We therefore have to avoid the scenario of women being gender-stereotyped in the job market. Rina Näslund also commented that if a local (in Europe) speaks more than one language, it is considered noteworthy/advantageous. However, if a foreigner has 3-4 languages, it is not as highly prized or respected.

Resource Box:

For more information about job support in Sweden, please visit:

www.arbetsformedlingen.se/Globalmeny/Other-languages/New-in-Sweden.html

For more information about the *Special Recruitment Incentive in the shape of Entry Recruitment Incentive*, please visit:

www.arbetsformedlingen.se/download/18.5673ff2e11fd0ca559b8000170010/insteg_eng.pdf

TIPS from this session

- **Create close cooperation and complementarity amongst actors** as this can make a significant difference. Government programmes and support, such as the Step-in-Jobs programme, is one element; the expertise and job-creation programmes of employment services, local/regional authorities and recruitment agencies are others; refugee agencies have specific knowledge and added value in the “go-between” role, and educational institutions are essential in complementing skills for the labour market.
- **Aim at programmes that provide individual, targeted support.** Experience shows that while the economic situation of the country matters, targeted support makes a difference and leads to improved success-rates in getting refugees into work.
- **Consider establishing a “go-between” role for refugee agencies in facilitating business and refugee contact** as this can be decisive for success. On the one hand, this includes outreach to businesses and creating a network of contacts; on the other, it means concrete support to refugees in preparing them for the work place. Recruitment agencies, like ManpowerGroup, can create an important entry point for such contacts.

- **Ensure that the outreach to business is based on an understanding of the companies' needs and target programmes in dialogue with them.** Supporting them to have a diversity strategy may be one such element, but often more support around an individual placement is required. Rewards can be an incentive, including monetary incentives, as seen in Sweden. However, irrespective of the incentive provided over time, the support must end. Combining language learning and job-placement seems a particularly good practice. The key to outreach is building contacts and networks – there is no “easy” way, it is based on making contact.

- **Ensure good preparation of the refugee** as this is essential for success. This includes preparing them for the workplace and assessing their competencies and skills. It is important to match skills with skills and not just to find a job.

Examples of diversity awards and labels to businesses and municipalities

Denmark

The Institute for Human Rights has, since 2004, issued the MIA award to businesses that are pioneering work for diversity and equal opportunities. The MIA Award is an initiative supported by the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity - PROGRESS (2007-2013).

Belgium

In 2005, the Minister for Employment and the Minister for Equality developed a labelling system for private enterprises as a preventive approach against discrimination. The general objective is to promote a diversity policy and fight against discrimination and stereotypes in the labelled companies. The **Label Egalité Diversité** encourages employers to introduce diversity policies in their economic, social and commercial strategies. For more information, please visit: www.emploi.belgique.be

France

In France, there are two different labels - one is a **Professional Equality Label** and the other is the **Diversity Label**. Both labels were created in December 2008 to promote diversity and prevent discrimination in human resources management.

AFNOR-Certification (Association française de Normalisation) is the independent body in charge of evaluating the label. To obtain the label, **the company has to demonstrate that they have an exemplary diversity policy**. The label reflects a company to be socially innovating; affirms its link to the territory; that it facilitates social dialogue within the company; that it improves its volume of activities; and implements innovative methods in human resource management. For more information, please visit: www.afnor.org

Other Initiatives

Several other countries have initiatives to promote diversity, such as the diversity charters in Spain, Germany and Italy.

- ✓ Germany - Charta der Vielfalt (www.diversity-charter.org)
- ✓ Spain - Charter de la Diversidad España (www.fundaciondiversidad.org)
- ✓ Italy - Carta per le pari opportunità e l'uguaglianza sul lavoro (www.cartapariopportunita.it/contenuti/home.aspx)

Panel 3: Professional and Social Mentoring and Engaging Volunteers in Support of Refugee Employment

*In this session, we heard from **Frederik Pretzman Bøcher** from the **Danish Refugee Council** about their employment and volunteering experiences; **Rachel Siddall** from the **Northern Refugee Centre (UK)** about their experiences in building refugee support networks; and from **Bahar Nassiri** from the **British Refugee Council**, which is engaged in assisting refugees to re-qualify to UK standards and secure employment appropriate to their professional qualifications.*

The focus of the presentations and discussions were on how to build a volunteer network and what role volunteers can play in refugee integration broadly, and employment more specifically. We also heard about experiences in having both professional and volunteer mentors for refugees.

Frederik Pretzman Bøcher from the **Danish Refugee Council** spoke to two activities of the DRC in support of refugee integration: the “IntegrationsNet” and the “FriviligNet” (VolunteerNet).

Refugees in Denmark, like other migrants, are obliged to follow a three year integration programme, which is defined in the Danish Integration Act and implemented by the municipalities. The course offers language training and aims to assist refugees in finding employment and to integrate more broadly in society. The Danish Refugee Council offers support to this process both through the “IntegrationsNet” and the “VolunteerNet”.

The “IntegrationsNet” activities include support to employment, internships, education support, chit-chat groups to support language learning, leisure guidance and support, building social capital, and support to youth. Working with volunteers is an integral part of this work and the DRC has an expansive volunteer network which offers support to refugees in these integration areas. The volunteers offer a wide variety of support, from helping with homework for children, to organizing excursions, providing insights into Danish life and society, and some very concrete activities like lessons in riding a bike. There are more than 5,000 volunteers in the DRC volunteer network throughout Denmark. Many of the volunteers are organized in independent organizations and networks, which have a framework agreement with the DRC. This obliges the volunteers to work in compliance with a set of ethical standards and, in return, they are given support and advice, and have access to seminars and information material.

Frederik Pretzman Bøcher shared his experience concerning the importance of placing communication around Danish culture at the centre of the integration work. In the Danish context, this is often about explaining that “trust” is one key component of Danish society, which impacts on many levels of society and guides expected behaviour. From his experience, cultural orientation or “cultural knowledge learning” are essential to integration support. This can be a target subject in its own right, or be built into other integration support, such as employment or language learning. Work internships can also play an important role here.

One challenge when working with volunteers is to find a balance for when to “let go” of the support and when to engage. Often there is a need to provide close guidance for considerable time, as also reflected in the three year integration courses; however, this can be frustrating for refugees as they want to get ahead as soon as is possible. Another consideration when working with volunteers is the recruitment strategy. It is important to have a large variety of volunteers (different ages and from all walks-of-life) to

have an effective network, which requires a good outreach strategy.

While the structured integration support provided by the municipalities, and the volunteer support provided by the DRC are essential components in integration support, some refugees have special needs often linked to their difficult past. Therefore, the DRC also works with a team of psychologists and therapists, and they take the time to become aware of personal issues that refugees may have. For example, approximately 40 per cent of their clients suffer some form of traumatization, which is extremely important to address.

Another target group for DRC engagement is youth. DRC's youth branch, DFUNK, is an organisation of youth who work to improve the situation of refugees in Denmark and internationally. Among the activities done by young volunteers in DFUNK are: Youth-to-Youth groups, leisure activities for asylum-seekers, Refugee-to-Refugee support, and a youth Summer Camp. See also the DFUNK website for more information: www.dfunk.dk

Resource Box:

For more information about the volunteer project of the Danish Refugee Council and how to become a volunteer, please visit:

www.resettlement.eu/sites/icmc.ttp.eu/files/netvaerksfamilie_2012%5B1%5D_EN.pdf
www.frivillignet.dk/

The Dutch Refugee Council (VluchtelingenWerk) also has experience in this regard, having launched 'Wanted: Part-time Hero' in 2011, more information of which is available at the following link:

<http://parttimeheld.nl>

Additionally, the European Resettlement Network has compiled a web resource on volunteering in refugee resettlement, accessible at:

www.resettlement.eu/page/volunteering-refugee-resettlement-0

Another refugee organisation with a long tradition in working with volunteers is the Northern Refugee Centre, whose activities are based in the Yorkshire and Humberside regions of the UK. **Rachel Siddall** spoke about their experience in working with more than 21 dedicated volunteers, mainly refugees, who provide a wide-range of services to support refugee integration. The main areas of support are for employment and education, and the activities include assisted CV writing, vocational training, apprenticeships, work experience and voluntary placements. Rachel Siddall mentioned the need to have a professional approach to volunteers and to ensure co-ordination and training.

The NRC uses many of those principles and practices already highlighted by other speakers. They have a client outreach approach and play the "go-between" role in supporting refugees in finding work. They specialise in providing individual support based on creating a personal profile and tailored employment plans to each refugee. This includes assisting refugees in identifying their strengths, their relevant work or life experience, in identifying job/career goals, and in writing CVs. The aim is to empower their clients to overcome their own barriers and to realise their life and work goals.

Like other organisations, they found that work placements can be extremely beneficial as a stepping stone into employment, although they have to choose their employers very carefully. Once a placement

has been secured, the NRC offers regular follow up work and can assist in adjusting expectations between the refugee and the employer, which supports in building trust.

Resource Box:

For more information about the Northern Refugee Centre, please visit: www.nrcentre.org.uk

The Refugee Council (UK) also assists refugees in finding employment. They have a large volunteer network and mentor programme. *Bahar Nassiri* shared experiences and good practices from these programmes.

Their programme, “Refugees into Jobs”, reflects a holistic and realistic approach, including managing the expectations of their clients (refugees). In this programme, 70 per cent of their clients are in the professional category, and the Refugee Council therefore works with ‘NARIC’, the National Agency in the UK responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on qualifications worldwide, for qualifications recognition. The Refugee Council has a clear strategic aim “of empowering refugees into employment through learning and a dedicated careers information, advice and guidance service”. On the basis of this, they support refugees with many of the aspects also highlighted as good practice from other speakers, such as advice, guidance, employment “brokerage”, and job search training. To meet the needs of a very diverse group, a separate project for Refugee Health Professionals has been set up to support refugee doctors to re-qualify to UK standards and secure employment appropriate to their professional qualifications..

Concretely, once a refugee joins the “Refugees into Jobs” project, they meet with qualified Advice and Guidance advisors and develop an Action Plan. In developing their Action Plan, they discuss their past experience and qualifications, their aspirations and goals, and the actions to be taken by both parties, step by step, to achieve their goals. In these sessions, the advisors discuss clients’ options and show them the realistic ways of achieving their goals. They will also be referred to other services and external training providers where necessary. After the initial assessment and action planning session, they will be referred to volunteers for one-to-one support, and to follow up on their Action Plan. The Refugee Council runs Employability Workshops, which is also run by volunteers. This six session workshop covers all aspects of a job search. There is no limit to the support provided and, according to the refugee’s needs, they will be supported throughout the lifetime of the project. The Refugee Council’s volunteers come from many different backgrounds, such as university career advisors, teachers, consultants, Deloitte Master Trainers, and others.

As an integral part of the support provided, the Refugee Council has a volunteer network comprised of representatives from the private sector, the public sector, employers, individuals/professionals, and charities, amongst others. They rely heavily on their volunteers, including former refugee doctor clients. The volunteers offer a number of services and support, such as tutors in employability workshops, language, and IT courses.

The Refugee Council also has a mentor scheme developed in partnership with the UK Department of Work and Pensions, the Fawcett Group for women with companies, and others. Based on this, the Refugee Council shows the importance of building confidence and establishing a rapport with the mentee. The mentor can assist setting SMART goals, and share knowledge and experience from work

and life. Through active listening, a mentor can assist the mentee to also overcome barriers and assist with contacts and information. While this benefits the refugees, mentors often also find it satisfying to be able to put their knowledge into practice and support an individual's development. The Refugee Council has similar experience to other organisations reaching out to the private sector, in that the level of knowledge about refugees is often very limited. However, once this information is shared, many feel enriched and express that they were unaware of the hardship many refugees face.

Resource Box:

For more information about the Refugee Council's volunteer programme, please visit: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/how_you_can_help_us/volunteer

Practice example:

Amir's Volunteering, *Guide on involving young asylum seekers and refugees as volunteers:* http://newtimes.dk/nt/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/VSI-Guide-endelig_EN.pdf

The background for this guide was a cooperation project between the Danish Red Cross and the British Red Cross, supported by the EU. The project, which ran from 2011 to 2013, looked at young asylum seekers' and refugees' participation in volunteering, and studied why it does not appear to be widespread among this group, and what the benefits of such participation might be for both the young people and the volunteer organisations.

TIPS from this session

- **It is a good practice to have a volunteer network to complement employment support.** While mainstream services such as the employment services play a central role, refugee organisations can play an important complementary role not only because they are well placed to support refugees and to make contact on their behalf in some instances, but also because organisations often have the ability to mobilise the public and create a volunteer network.
- **Volunteers can often offer an "additional" and personal touch to integration support, which makes other efforts come to life.** Volunteers have typically assisted with language learning, providing opportunities to practice what is learned. They often also assist with home-work and use their life experience and cultural knowledge to provide guidance to refugees about their daily life experiences in their new country.
- **Ensure that you have good outreach when recruiting volunteers to get more diversity in the group and be sure to provide training and support to the network.** While volunteers can provide important complementary integration support, it is necessary to invest time, efforts and funding both to build and sustain the network, and to ensure high quality support.

- **Consider supplementing your employment support with a mentor network. Mentors can be both professional and private and can be on volunteer basis or part of a job placement.** The role of a mentor is often more established and engaged with specific aims than simply volunteer work. A mentor can be linked to a work placement, and can assist the refugee with reaching set targets and development goals. The mentor can also be a volunteer who meets the refugee outside the work environment, but brings his or her own life and work experience to bear in the guidance provided to the refugee.

- **As part of the volunteer efforts, it is good practice to have a specific youth focus.** While your volunteer network should ideally be diverse and represent different ages and walks-of-life, it may be useful to have a specific group aimed at youth and youth support.