

**Report from WAPES/NAV Conference:**  
**“Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market”**  
**Oslo, 15-16 November 2017**



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## General remarks

**Themes, aims and objectives:** The conference focused on the themes of integration of refugees into the labour market.

The aim was to give a good overview of today's refugee situation, discuss important elements in the integration process, as well as give insight and showcase measures into ways of dealing with this from a public employment service (PES) point of view.

The objective of this conference was to exchange the best practices in integration of refugees among WAPES member countries, and to raise awareness of integration of refugees into the labour market.

**Target audience:** WAPES representatives, PES member representatives, national policy makers in the field of employment (representatives of responsible ministries), representatives of international organisations and NGOs.

## DAY ONE: 15 November

### Welcome and Opening Remarks

Master of ceremony **Nassima Dzair** opened the conference. She is the founder and CEO of InterBridge, a social entrepreneurship that educates youths from different social and geographical backgrounds into becoming impact agents. Dzair works to bridge the gap between sectors, cultures and individuals, to create and implement solutions for more inclusive and sustainable communities.

Cafer Uzunkaya, President of WAPES, Turkey, Iskur

- Thank you on behalf of 3,4 million refugees hosted in Turkey.
- The goal of WAPES is to be a global reference point for employment policies and to provide a platform to discuss and solve problems.
- PES play an important role in providing work and counselling in matters of employment and integration.
- It is important to keep in mind the burden sharing principle in terms of refugee protection.

Annie Gauvin, Vice President WAPES Europe Region, Pole Emploi, France

- The main theme of this conference is the matter of PES' role for the integration of refugees
- Summary of three conclusions drawn from the Malmo conference in 2016:
  - PES in different countries are in different situations and socioeconomic and political contexts when welcoming migrants and refugees.
  - Quick and early intervention is key in order to realise good integration, early diagnosis, state of play, skills assessment, and health.
  - PES has a significant role to play in this regard with early intervention organised through different players linked to Interior and Immigration ministries.
- Working with individuals is a key factor in the context of large influx
- Language learning and language training is central for good and efficient integration
- Employers also have a key role in terms of integrating refugees
- 23 countries are represented in this conference

Hege F. Hildrum, Director NAV Oslo

- From a Norwegian perspective, the crisis in 2015 and 2016 resulted in a relatively small number of migrants and refugees compared to other countries' experience, but we felt the crisis nonetheless

- Integration of refugees into the labour market is crucial for the Norwegian welfare system
- The most difficult groups to integrate are the ones with low level skilled refugees, low or no language skills – or both.
- We can better ensure good living conditions through employment.
- 53% of poor children in Norway are from immigrant families.
- The keys to success are language and job training, and both skills combined in fast track projects where refugees are employed and learn job skills and practice language at the same time and in the same place.

## Setting the Scene: Overview of Refugees Situation Today

Eva Pons, International Organization of Migration (IOM), Belgium

- 65,6 million people are displaced worldwide
  - If the number of displaced people constituted a country, it would be the 22<sup>nd</sup> largest in the world.
- Third country arrivals are at higher risk of exclusion.
- Refugees do integrate into the labour market, but it takes more time.
- After 10 years, refugees score on par with other social groups
- Refugees are seen as a *risky hire* due to for instance:
  - Refugees do not always know which country they will end up in, and it is therefore difficult to prepare for the eventual destination's labour market organization
  - The specific nature of migration varies among refugees – family versus humanitarian grounds for migration.
  - Many refugees suffer from trauma, and cannot enter labour market immediately
- Aging population in Europe: refugees can offset labour shortages and enter new jobs
- Important factors to consider in terms of integration of refugees:
  - Pre-departure integration
  - Early skills assessment
  - Job matching
  - Facilitated process for documents and qualifications
  - Language training and job training compatibility
  - Integration with local population/local community
  - Private sector a key partner – how to best assess skills?

- The 1948 Declaration of Human Rights – reminder of what Article 13 and 14 says about the refugee context:
  - Article 13: “Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.”
  - Article 14: “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.”
- Employment is a key factor for integration of refugees
  - In the Refugee Convention of 1953 – Chapter Three entitled “Gainful Employment”
- 65,6 million people displaced worldwide at the start of 2017
  - An increase of 300,000 people from 2016
  - 40,3 million are internally displaced within their own countries due to the changing nature of wars – from external and global to regional and contained within a country (Syria prime example).
- Poor countries are hosting the most refugees
- Two reasons for the high number of displaced peoples:
  - 1. Continued displacement
  - 2. Unable to place refugee at home or elsewhere
- Europe was overwhelmed in 2016, but the numbers were on par with the norm seen in a global context
- A political solution is needed to solve the refugee crisis closer to where home is, and importantly, countries cannot evade responsibility based on “out of bounds” arguments – results in failure to provide support locally.
- The right to seek asylum is central, but it is being undermined – how?
  - The focus on building walls and fences – physical and rhetorical – is harmful signal politics
  - Need a better EU response
  - Need agreement on international burden sharing – reinforcing this principle
- Common experience for nearly all refugees is the loss of normalcy in life. Work and integration into destination country’s labour market is a powerful tool to get back in control of one’s life.
  - Realistic approach to these issues: many small steps and not one giant leap.

# Comparative Analysis of Integration in Selected Countries

Thomas Liebig, OECD

- Refugees have lower language skills than other migrant groups
- Language is normally key for employment that matches qualifications
- Link between language skills and work outcome:
  - Big boost from LOW to INTERMEDIATE (basic functional skills) in terms of employment
- PES has a very important role for refugees – Why?
  - Refugees lack networks or modes of connecting to labour markets in their host country
  - National service with strong ties to the local level – similar standards and common offers
  - PES is the main coordinating actor for labour and integration
- Challenges:
  - High number of refugees
    - Capacity of system put under stress
  - Lack of language
    - Long and protracted crisis
    - Trauma
  - Large diversities in skills and qualifications
    - No one size fits all
    - Within origin countries and outside
    - Skills gap – bridging the gaps takes time
  - Insecure legal status
    - Lack of knowledge in terms of duration of stay
  - Coordination with other services
    - Health, education, employers
- False equivalency = “Doing more for the refugee than disadvantaged native born.”
- Common for many nations to undervalue the experience and work competence of refugees – Why?
  - Educational documentation and certification is often missing
  - Many have vocational skills (i.e. Syrians)
- Need more flexible levels of integration programs
- The most effective form of language training is offered in conjunction with a job
- Unaccompanied minors are eager to work, but they lack education. This is one of the costliest groups – yearly rate of 4-5 times more expensive than an adult refugee
- Civil society: EU should look to Canada – building on civil society to help integration efforts
- PES and employers key to integration on a global scale
- Some challenges for employers investing in refugee employment:
  - Low initial productivity – but it evens out after some time



- Job matching: how can employers *meet* potential hires among refugees?
- PES could provide testimonials/references/referrals
- Mobility issue: car pool
- German example: PES should provide vocational language training and have a dedicated contact person at employments service office
- Broader picture: Adopt an investment approach to integrating refugees into the labour market

## Country Representatives on the Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market

### Germany – Anita Renusch, Employment Agency Berlin South

- Two big groups:
  - Recognized refugee with permanent residence and no restriction to work
  - Asylum seekers with temporary residence, temporary suspension of deportation (called “Duldung” in Germany)
- Refugees in Germany may get temporary suspension of deportation by gaining vocational training
- Developing early intervention approach
- More than 1 million refugees in Germany
  - Not all have registered with the federal employment agency
- Similar challenges as with other countries, i.e. lack of language skills and trauma.
- Lack of formal qualification complicates integration process
  - However, lack of documentation of skills does not mean they lack formal practical experience or training
    - Paperwork and documentation standards vary in-between countries
    - Lost potential for work force and sectors that are in need of skilled workers

### Canada – Louisa Taylor, Refugees 613

- Caveat: Canada has a long history of immigration
- Canada is a nation of immigrants welcoming immigrants
- *Refugee 613*:
  - Innovation and mobilization hub created by a network of community partners in Ottawa (zip code 613)
- Funding from federal and provincial sources

- Service provided by non-state actors and with nonpartisan communication
- Canada's three main sources of refugee influx:
  - Government assisted refugees
  - Privately sponsored refugees: civil sponsor for one year per refugee
    - Crowd funding a refugee for the first year – eligible for benefits after 12 months
  - Refugee claimant (asylum seeker)
- “Whole of Society” approach to refugee settlement integration:
  - Should not be left to government alone
  - 1 billion dollars a year dedicated to resettlement by the state, but 95% of services made available are delivered by non-governmental actors
  - Community: volunteers, culture, faith, sports – everyone has a role to play
    - Medical professionals
    - Housing
    - Language training
    - Teachers
    - Private sponsors – i.e. neighbourhoods can join into same sponsorship group
    - Municipal staff, federal and faith leaders
    - Lawyers
    - Language teachers
    - Philanthropists
    - Small business owners
- Refugee 613 use technology and age appropriate apps to reach young refugee population
  - Questions and answers via WhatsApp: moderators engage refugees and answer questions related to refugee situation in Canada.
- Refugee 613 provides information and training to the public, volunteers and private sponsors of refugees, fosters collaboration between service providers and develops pathways for public engagement in refugee support.

#### Norway – Kristian Tronstad, Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research

- Two developments in the past years:
  - Enlargement of EU in 2004 and 2007 (Poland and the Baltics)
  - 2015 migration crisis
- Context for Norway: highly skilled labour force, the norm is to be highly educated (multiple degrees) for both men and women
- Challenges for Norway:
  - Influx of young people is potential for offsetting aging issues in the labour market. Expensive, but an investment.
  - 2004: change of direction for implementing integration services

- Goal to provide the individual with basic skills in the Norwegian language
- Fundamental insight into Norwegian social conditions
- Prepare the individual for education and/or work
- Target group for integration in Norway (source: regjeringen.no):
  - People between 18 and 55 years:
    - Granted asylum and status of refugee
    - Resettlement refugees
    - Granted residence permit on humanitarian grounds
    - Family reunion
- A right and mandatory obligation to take part in introduction program
- Important actors: NAV, refugee office, adult education centers
- Language is key to integration into labour market – needed to match competence with an employer.

## Turkey – Damla Taskin, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- What UNHCR does in Turkey:
  - 3,4 million refugees
  - Provide information, technical solutions
  - 21 refugee camps run by Turkish government across 10 provinces
  - Currently (Nov 2017) working to identify refugees
    - 3,2 million Syrians
    - People in working age and youths are the biggest groups
    - Istanbul has the largest concentration due to better work opportunities
- Less than 10% of refugees live in camps
- Important distinction between migrant and refugee:
  - Migrant = has a choice to relocate
  - Refugee = forced to relocate
- Goal: to be free from aid dependency
- Turkish employers who hire refugee gets incentives
- Employment campaigns to raise awareness about refugee and labour market possibilities and matches
- Lessons from Turkey:
  - Lack of awareness from employers (private sector) about the possibilities and social benefits refugee work-integration offers
  - 6,500 businesses started by refugees

## What is Integration on the Labour Market Really About?

Haakon Hertzberg, Directorate of Labour and Welfare, (working paper)

### Key considerations...

- Language learning and practical implementation
  - Language training ideally tailored to refugee's skills and personal situation
  - On-the-job training
- Skills and qualifications – recognize refugee skills
  - Recognizing and assessing qualifications correctly – which institution? What level of education?
  - Cooperating with PES and vocational systems
  - Employers, in cooperation with PES, can assess qualification, adopt on the job training schemes
- Partners and institutions
  - How and when services are provided determines when a refugee is integrated into the labour market
  - Information sharing, social networks
- Employers – social responsibility
  - Helping refugees become self-reliant and directs away from dependency on PES aid (for basic livelihood)
  - On-the-job skills enhance insight into working culture and working language

## Piloting New Methods for Labour Market Integration in Norway: Kristiansand Pilot Project

Morten Lauknes, Project Manager, Kristiansand Municipality

### Summary of main lessons from the integration project so far:

- First task: set goals in order to locate pathways
- Each participant must formulate their goals
  - Build confidence and motivation to reach goals
- Learning by doing – and failing
  - Start walking the walk
  - Projects accepts new refugees every 2 weeks
  - Weekly tests of language skills
  - Individually designed program – so participants can reach new level when ready and sidestep waiting period due to bureaucracy

- Job matching: pitches participants to local businesses
- Participants start right away working according to a Norwegian standard work week (37,5 hours per week)
  - Signs in and out as incentive to keep up with the program

Mohammad Mohammad, refugee from Syria, participant in program

Joined the project in Kristiansand August 1, 2017 – “Refugees are not just numbers in statistics, they are each a human being.”

Brief background: University education, job in private business sector before relocation. Spent 3 months in refugee camp – volunteered as language teacher for Save the Children.

## **DAY TWO: 16 November**

### A Good Story – Syrian Cooks at Vippa in Oslo

Ragnhild Slettner, Mestringsguiden, Norway

- Mission: to empower refugees to become financially independent and socially included
- Not dependent on NAV (Norwegian PES)
- Change through meaningful interactions and narratives
- Vision: to include refugees and help them in the early stages of being settled
- Ragnhild Slettner: started volunteering in a refugee reception center working to help find housing for newly arrived refugees
- Partnered with Vippa Oslo to establish a Syrian food stall
- Work philosophy: “Action Reaction”
- Crowdfunded almost 90,000NOK in three weeks to establish the Syrian food stall
- Grand opening within 6 weeks
- “Aleppo Bahebek” (Aleppo, I love you) opened April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017
- After 5 months: sold food for 3 million NOK
  - Branched out with a women-run Ethiopian eatery at Vippa
- Who needs qualification? Employers, too. Many refugees are already highly qualified to work on arrival in Norway.

# The Importance of Sustainable Integration – Why is the PES Role Important?

Andreas Mångs, Arbetsförmedlingen (PES), Sweden

Broad overview of situation in Sweden:

- 8 out of 10 jobs in Sweden to foreign born
- Employment rate among foreign born rising twice as fast compared to native born
- Focus on skills rather than formal training
- Past 10 years: rising number of refugees outside EU registered in the introduction assignment program
  - Syrians, African Horn, Somalia, Eritrea
- 70% of participants in introduction program are younger than 40 years
  - This is positive in a labour market perspective – good that a lot of young and productive people are coming to offset aging population
  - Negative aspect: lack of education
    - One third lack primary education
    - Half of those who register with the introduction program lack secondary education
- Central for PES Sweden: matching and guiding education that leads to work
  - Extensive long term education and training efforts are crucial
    - Study start support: financial incentive
    - Educational duty
    - Sharpened labour market training
  - Combination of action and policy reforms
    - Especially for low education and productivity individuals
  - Cooperation between stakeholders are important
    - Trade unions, PES, private businesses, municipalities, employer associations

## How Can Better Integration of Refugees be Achieved?

Anne Britt Djuve, Head of Research, FAFO Institute of Labour and Welfare Research, Norway

Norwegian introduction program – 27,000 participants in 2017

- Program sketched out in cooperation with participants

Who: Target group:

- Newly arrived refugees and family
- 18-55 year old
- In need of qualification

What:

- Full day program – 2 years, some longer
- No fixed curriculum, but at least some language training
- Typical content: language classes, on-the-job training, language oriented on-the-job training

Effectiveness of main measures:

- Employment oriented on-the-job training
- Language oriented on-the-job training
- Language training
- User involvement

Challenge: Difficult to compare municipalities due to differences in ability to implement program

Solution: Employ Norway's rich data registry to access statistics about programs effectiveness in terms of demography, age, gender, situation.

Language classes – three tracks based on level of education

- Track 1 – No education
- Track 2 – Little or some education
- Track 3 – High level education

Important findings:

- Aspects like age, gender and education level impact outcome of program for participants
- Example 1: Male gender and age – Being a young male has big impact for work outcome
- Example 2: Female gender and education level – Education level more important for rate of positive program outcome for women (age not as big of a determiner as for males)

Characteristics of the individual participants a big determiner for employment probability:

- Age
- Country of origin
- Gender
- Education level
- Married/Unmarried
- Children (young) / No children

## Working Together for Labour Market Integration – Learning from each other

Nouredine Benkhalil, ANAPEC, Morocco

Main highlights:

- Morocco a transit – situated on African continent but only 14km from EU

- High level of diversity in race and religion
- 1957: Royal decree to ratify Geneva Convention of 1951
- Ecosystem for refugees: refugee in center approached from different organizations, institutions and partners with different expertise
- Measures taken to benefit refugees:
  - Expectations form activity certificate issues by ANAPEC to foreigners (national preference)
  - Opening up for employment benefit incentive services

Magdalena Gustavsson and Jennie Åström, Project Mirjam, Arbetsförmedlingen, Sweden

Project Mirjam – Targets women participating in introduction program

- More than 700 women
- Usually low level of education – maximum 10 years
- Goals: more women finishing program

Method: group guidance, study visits, mentors

- Discuss work/life balance, labour market, paid/unpaid labour – focusing on gender equality a foundational aspect

Project Mirjam works to broaden the scope of suitable jobs – restaurants, bus drivers, nursing, industry – coupled with study visits

- Employs specific example from women who share their experiences with women in program – shows that they also can gain an education or employment no matter their age – provides a roadmap for participants.
- Study visits have also resulted in employment for participants – visit a work place they wish to work in and receive internship and training there (and a job in the end).
- Group sessions: talk about different aspects of the labour market, health and education.
- Participants share their experience with family and friends and provide hope, self-confidence and will power for themselves

Question Antoine, Partnership Relations, Pole Emploi, France

“Actions launched with the French Office of Migration”

- Pole Emploi (PE) – French PES – twofold:
  - Spread out on a national level
  - Dynamic implementation in different regions

PE is the main actor for employment in France:

- Many agencies
- 54,000 agents in France
- 900 local agencies

2016 law for foreigners: set up an individual-based program for integration

- Contract with French state



- Contract opens for 2 modules: civic training and language training
  - Goal: to reach level A1 in French, 200 hours training
- Operator during follow-up is FOII (French Office for Immigration and Integration)
  - Personal interview
  - Worker collects information about education, professional experience, expectations
  - Worker surveys challenges for newcomer
- Program is for any foreigner admitted for the first time and seeks permanent residency
  - 2016: 106,000 signed contracts

Concrete actions launched:

- Deepen partnership between FOII and Pole Emploi
  - Joint forces between different agencies
  - Data sharing, language training
  - Contract with employers
- Rolled out specifically for refugees in response to crisis
  - Language a big barrier
  - Lack of knowledge about French labour market and legal aspects
  - Lack of certification
  - Lack of stable housing
- Group preparation for employment modules
  - Better coordinated employment, housing and professional training
  - Spread integration effect more efficiently
- Skills training
  - Help to find work and housing

Results of this project will be presented in 2018.

## Haakon Iversen, So Central, Norway

So Central an incubator program for social entrepreneurs

Special integration measures for refugees

- Engage the civil sector
- 10 million NOK spent on a variety of organizations
- Need to promote innovation

Objectives:

- Social impact
- Social entrepreneurs become financially sustainable
- Employment possibilities
- Social responsibility

Results: Since February 2017, 500 refugees have received qualified assistance, 200 have been to job interviews, 46 employment offers, 48 have secured work

Method: work side by side, not in isolated sectors, more collaborating across sectors

## Talking to Employers

### IKEA Fast Track

#### Comprehensive qualification course for newly arrived refugees

- 14 newly arrived immigrants joined project
- Teaching takes place at the work place
- 600 hours of language training and civic training
- Digital learning platform (“Appear.In”)
  - Gives teachers insight in progress
  - Mentors are more involved
- Refugees in program are highly motivated

#### Lessons:

- Communication between the collaborating partners key (IKEA, NAV)
- Motivation for both participants and project managers
- Involvement – employers have to be involved from the start
- Set high goals

### International Sandwich Brothers

- Norwegian start-up
- 12 refugees and 6 nationalities
- Produce and sell ice-cream – building a business
- Exchange language and culture while making ice cream and working together to build the business and gain experience
- Message to PES: Financial help/investment necessary to be sustainable, need better information resources for support services

### Mester Grønn

- Norwegian flower shop franchise
- “Green Inclusion” – offers on-the-job training
- Goal: to make it easier for companies to accept refugees as employees
- Message to PES: Better information to employers about the benefits and possibilities for hiring refugees/giving them opportunities in the work place

### DNB, In:Progress

- Startup – collaboration with Norwegian bank

- Entrepreneurs with experience in social innovation, recruitment, competence development
- Message to PES: hard to locate talent (refugee candidates) so want more collaboration

## Innovation in Tools to Ease Refugee Integration: Smart Moves

Marius Jensen, NOKUT, Norway

NOKUT – European Qualifications Passport for Refugees

Challenges:

- Number of refugees a challenge to the system
- Level of language skills
- Lack of documents
- Demand for mobility and portability

NOKUT functions as content coordinator – works closely with Norwegian education institutions

Marlies Gatterbauer and Muna Hamoud, AMS, Austria

- PES Austria
- Certificate of competency offered in every local PES office in federal provinces
- Overview of participant profiles:
  - Men over 25
  - Men between 18-25
  - Women over 18
- Biographical interviews
- Workshops – introduction to society courses
- Practical training – people with competence but lack formal documentation

## Wrapping up and Conclusions

Annie Gauvin

Identify approaches that seem useful:

- Testimonials – work is essential
  - Has to come quick in the integration process
- Take the individual into account – “Refugees are not numbers.”
  - Qualifications
  - Language

- Experiences
- Facing large influx of refugees – need to respond appropriately
- Norwegian example: mandatory to provide services to refugees
  - We have seen this be put into effect in different ways
- Important takeaways:
  - Updated examples of countries
  - Mobilization of research studies
- Keep in mind employers' point of view
- WAPES will continue effort to share information among our own and to other partners
- What the role of PES is:
  - French example: without being on the front line, still an important role to play
  - Moroccan example: results in different contexts – more than one possible solution to the integration challenge
  - Canadian example: WhatsApp and innovating tools for communication
- Need to create networks for integrating partners
  - Act quickly, sustainability, actions to help
- Approach to PES: investment, not one single action short-term – underscored by both public and private players
- PES must train workers in diagnosis and language training – need to develop approach with mentorship, personalised service – tailor made approach
- Need to cross-think: cross cutting issues and cross curricular approaches