

Refugee Contribution to Europe

A feasibility study on the establishment of a
Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE)
in the European Union

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CHAPTER I. OVERVIEW OF REFUGEE SITUATION

1.1 Key players in Luxembourg

1.1.1 NGOs and refugee organisations

- **CARITAS:** The Luxembourg branch of CARITAS was set up in 1932 to support children, families, elderly, refugees and the homeless in Luxembourg. CARITAS Internationalis was set up in 1949 in the post-war period of reconstruction. In 1996, the network of 17 charities involved in social welfare amended its status to support the Confederation CARITAS Luxembourg to become more active in setting up innovative social projects. Its main fields of actions are currently: support to refugees, development and cooperation, and emergency humanitarian aid.
- **ASTI:** ‘Association de Soutien aux Travailleurs Immigrés’ was set up about 20 years ago to support the integration of migrant workers originating mainly from Portugal. It is involved in the protection of migrants’ interests and advocacy of non-discrimination at work. More recently, it developed integration actions taken in favour of asylum seekers and refugees in Luxembourg. It receives EU-Equal Programme funding to work with asylum seekers.
- **CLAE:** ‘Comité de Liaison Associations des Etrangers’ works closely to support migrant workers rights and their legal integration process. It receives EU-Equal Programme funding to work with asylum seekers.
- **OPE:** ‘full-employment target’. Objectif Plein Emploi is coordinating and developing a network of small local NGOs all over the national territory. These NGOs are to promote social cohesion and services to the local population in the following fields: recycling, gardening, administrative support, home support, services to the disabled, kindergartens and help reduce social exclusion through employment for long-term unemployed, low-skilled people.
- **CPMT:** ‘network for employment and human promotion’. ‘Réseau pour le travail et la promotion humaine’ was initially a project run by ICOPA, ‘Itinéraires pour la Coopération et le Partenariat’. It was set up in 1997 by a group of trade unionists and Christian. The aim is to promote local employment with the support of skilled volunteers acting as coaches for the unemployed.
- **Collectif Réfugiés:** This refugee platform was set up in 1990 and gathered 19 NGOs involved in issues related to migration, human rights, development and the fight against racism: ACAT, ASTM, ASTI, Allianz Protestantischer Kirchen, Amnesty International Luxembourg, ALNU, ARPALUX, Caritas-Service Réfugiés, Centre Chétien d’Education des Adultes, centre Culturel Islamique, CLAE, Commission Diocésaine pour la pastorale Intercommunautaire, Croix-Rouge Luxembourgeoise, Iwerliewen fir bedreete Volleker, Jesuit refugee Service, LICRA, Pax Christi, Sesopi-Centre Intercommunautaire, Vie nouvelle.

1.1.2 Public organisations

- **Commissariat aux Etrangers:** The ‘Foreigners’ Office’ was set up in the 1960s to deal with all foreigners coming as new residents to Luxembourg. It is responsible for both EU and non-EU residents. The Office’s goal is to promote integration programmes and the idea is to better ‘live together’. There are three main strands of action:
 1. Integration support via NGOs and financial support to stimulate cultural activities.
 2. At a local level, consultative committees for foreigners to protect and support non-nationals’ rights in the local communities;
 3. The ‘National Council’ (Conseil National), which is a representative of foreigners and a body elected by associations of foreigners created by the Act of 27 July 1993. This body is

in charge of overlooking and studying all issues related to foreigners living in Luxembourg.

The service is in charge of the reception scheme for asylum seekers; it provides support in various fields: lodging/ housing, health services, legal support for the asylum interview, and access to the learning centre. Access to language courses in either French or German is available to all asylum seekers.

- **Ministère de la Justice:** The ‘Ministry of Justice’ is in charge of assessing asylum seekers’ claims and granting refugee status.
- **Ministère de l’Education nationale de la Formation professionnelle et des Sports:** The ‘Ministry of Education, Vocational Training and Sports’ has set up a special refugee cell to overlook the situation of refugee children accessing education, and coordinate the work of the cultural mediators working for the Ministry in schools and colleges.
- **Ministère de la Famille:** The ‘Family Ministry’ is in charge of advising and supporting refugees once they have been granted asylum.

1.2 Influx of asylum seekers, countries of origin and refugee population in Luxembourg

1.2.1 Numbers of applications, recognition rates and countries of origin

The statistics for 2001 were provided by the Ministry for Justice.

Most claims in 2001 came from Eastern and Central Europe.

The majority of asylum claims came from former Yugoslavia nationals (Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia): a total of 206 claims were lodged, representing 52% of the total number of claims in Luxembourg.

Other claims from the same region:

- Bosnia: 87 applications (22% of the total)
- Macedonia: 68 applications (17% of the total)
- Albania: 34 applications (9% of the total)

The recognition rate is the lowest in Europe with only 4% of Geneva Convention Status granted. The total recognition rate is higher: 6.4% including Humanitarian Refugees (Territorial asylum).

The trend of asylum claims in Luxembourg is closely linked to the situation in ex-Yugoslavia.

In 1996: 263 applications

In 1999: 2921 applications

In 2000: 628 applications

In 2001: 686 applications and the recognition rate increased to 6.4%.

Rejected asylum seekers are therefore the majority - over 93%. Therefore a voluntary return programme has been set up. In 2001, the total number of voluntary returns was 184: people mainly coming from Montenegro (121) and Serbia, Bosnia, and Russia to a lesser extent.

1.2.2 The refugee population

CARITAS is following up about 70 families who have been granted refugee status.

1.3 Asylum procedure

All applications are assessed by a part of the Ministry of Justice. A few years ago, the ‘The Foreigners Office’ (Commissariat aux Etrangers) took an active part in the decision-making process on individual cases, alongside NGOs and lawyers. This is no longer the case; they are now in charge of the reception scheme for all asylum seekers.

- Conventional asylum status: The decision process from the Ministry of Justice is very strict and limited, based on a narrow interpretation of the Geneva Convention. Therefore, the recognition rate is the lowest in the EU.
- Territorial asylum status: Officially there is no territorial status. However, in 2001, a ‘legal integration’ with leave to remain was granted to many illegal foreigners in Luxembourg. Between 16 May and 17 July 2001, people who were not holding any official papers or status ‘sans papiers’ did have the possibility to be given leave to remain.

CHAPTER II. INTEGRATION PROCESS

The integration process for refugees really starts when they are looking for a job and they benefit from the mainstream provisions available for nationals as well. In reality, as asylum seekers, they have had the opportunity to start learning one or more languages, and in some cases even to take part in a training course.

2.1 Education

In October 2002, the Minister of Education issued a rule stating that “all children (aged 4–15) should go to school”. This is compulsory even if the parents are asylum seekers, or rejected asylum seekers, without official documents and are not registered with the local council. Since the end of the year 2001, it has also been acknowledged that young people are entitled to study as long as they are on national territory. This rule is also extended to adults who follow language or training courses.

2.1.1 General education system in Luxembourg

In Luxembourg, education is compulsory from 4 to 15 years old. Education is mainly provided by public schools for free. The State is responsible for monitoring and organising the education system.

- **Mainstream education system**

Early education is provided for children aged 3 years old, but it is not compulsory. One important characteristic of the education system in Luxembourg is the multilinguism of the education system; children speak the national language, ‘Luxemburgish’, in kindergarten and pre-primary school and then in primary schools they are also taught in German while in secondary school they simultaneously use French and German. This system is very demanding for any child, but even more so for foreign children. Many foreigners living in Luxembourg do not speak the national language, and it is very difficult to learn two other languages at the same time, ‘Luxemburgish’ and German, which are so close to each other. It is important to keep in mind that 40% of the children are alien, mainly with Portuguese origins.

A total of 11 years of education is divided as follows: 2 years of pre-primary school, 6 years of primary school and 3 years of secondary school. The primary school level is divided into 3 sub-levels (inferior/ intermediate/ superior). Access to secondary school level is based on an on-going assessment of the level and motivation of the pupils for specific topics. Approximately 50% of the time spent at school is geared at improving the three languages. As a consequence, there is a high rate of education

failure, despite the possibility given to repeat one level. It is a highly demanding education system, even for the native people, and perhaps too challenging for foreign children.

- **Provisions for foreign children**

The Ministry of Education set up a cross-services coordinator to deal with the education of foreigners. In 1998, a working group drafted a paper: '*a school for integration*' assessment/ questions/ orientations. The paper was presented to Parliament who then voted a recommendation paper addressing all issues from pre-schooling to university level.

- For all foreigners (EU and non-EU nationals), there is the possibility to go to a reception classroom, especially if they arrive in the middle of the school year. These classes are usually open if there are enough foreigners to attend.

- Cultural mediators' actions are coordinated by the Ministry of Education; they serve as facilitators, intermediaries and translators within the education system either within the classrooms or with the parents. They cover all issues related to education and training, including sport, health related to schools. At the moment, they are able to work in the following languages: Serbo-Croate, Russian, and Albanese.

- **Higher education system**

Secondary school diplomas, equivalent to 'A levels' give access to university studies. There is one general education and one technical education option.

Usually, all for students with language difficulties, the technical studies are more accessible and flexible. The three strands of the technical studies are:

1. technical strand giving access to university studies;
2. professional strand;
3. technician strand.

Higher education is very limited in Luxembourg; therefore students are encouraged to go abroad to carry out their studies mainly in Germany, France and Belgium.

There are only five Higher Education Institutes in Luxembourg; in most cases only the first year of university can be carried out in Luxembourg. Also both the University Centre and the Higher Technology Institute offer 1-year post-graduate degrees.

1. Luxembourg University Centre (Le Centre Universitaire de Luxembourg) provides only the first year in human sciences and scientific courses or 2 years for management.
2. International University Institute (Institut Universitaire International) provides some university level courses in compared law and European studies. No diplomas are delivered, only certificates; the teaching languages are German and English.
3. Higher Technology Institute delivers one engineering diploma.
4. Social and Education Institute (L'Institut d'Etudes Educatives et Sociales) gives training courses for qualified teachers.
5. Teachers Institute (L'Institut supérieur d'études et de recherches pédagogiques: ISERP) gives training courses for pre-primary and primary schools.

A numerus clausus exists for teachers only. The selection process is based on language skills: German, French and Luxembourgish.

- **Study grants available for all**

State grants are available, at all levels and accessible to all. No children or youth are prevented from studying in Luxembourg because of a lack of financial support. Indeed, the State supports access to higher education, inland but mainly abroad in France, Germany and Belgium, either through a grant programme or a loan, which is reimbursable.

All youths receive subsidies to the amount of €1000 if they can complete the first cycle (2 years of courses) of higher education in a maximum of 3 years.

- **Future new university in Luxembourg?**

A new legislation is currently under discussion to reform completely the higher education system and to set up university level diplomas in various academic and technical fields of studies within three Faculties: Faculty of Science, Technology and Communication; Faculty of Law, Economy and Finance; Faculty of Arts, Human Sciences and Education. On 8 May 2000, the Minister for Higher Education and Research introduced the White Book on Higher Education Reforms looking at ways to develop the sector in an efficient and cooperative way with other European universities. The key concept remains that the university is international before being national, and is open to the rest of Europe. One idea is to set up a University Foundation with the participation of prestigious universities and the setting up of a virtual university to organise distance-learning courses for all topics. Another idea is to set up post-graduate degrees in various topics and to restructure the existing institutes. The focus is clearly to deepen cooperation with other universities and the development of high-level post-graduate courses and to support research in Luxembourg.

2.1.2 Recognition of qualifications for education

Due to a lack of national higher education degrees and diplomas, no comparative process can be undertaken. Therefore, since the 1950s a specific procedure is applied in Luxembourg for all university diplomas from inside or outside the EU. It is understood that this procedure is also mostly applied to nationals who have had to study abroad. The administrative procedure, under the Act of 17 June 1963, registers the diplomas in the 'Book of Titles' (Registre des Titres). The procedure is simple and accessible to all; the graduate needs to send a request for registration at the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The Minister will make a decision based on the Commission's opinion. All registrations are then published in the Official Journal (Journal Officiel du Grand Duché du Luxembourg). The main goal is to protect the higher education degrees. This registration is free of charge. In 2001, about 1200 files were processed.

Third countries' diplomas (non-EU) are recognised under certain conditions based on bilateral agreements between Luxembourg and the countries of origin. One condition is to have leave to remain in Luxembourg.

2.1.3 Access to higher education

Recognition of secondary school diplomas is under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training. The only requirement is to hold an 'A level' equivalent, giving access in the country of origin to the higher education system. Given the fact that only the first year of university studies can be done in Luxembourg, most higher education studies are done abroad.

In order to access universities abroad the student must register with NARIC and provide the following documents:

- certified photocopy of the diplomas with grades;
- official translation of all documents;
- photocopy of ID card or birth certificate;
- CV and a covering letter.

Usually EU exchange programmes facilitate the mobility of students coming from Luxembourg. The Ministry of Education provides study grants.

2.1.4 Learning the three official languages: French, German and 'Luxembourgish'

All asylum seekers have open and free access to language courses, either French or German, and even 'Luxembourgish', the national language. Most courses are run by the National Language Centre (Centre National des Langues), but in general language courses are run everywhere, in most towns and villages. Language courses are widely available all over the territory; they are not always free of charge but reduce fees are applied to asylum seekers amongst others. They are open to all whatever the

status (asylum-seekers included). Experience shows that French is considered as a useful language to learn.

2.2 Social integration

In Luxembourg the number of recognised refugees is not very high. CARITAS proposed to a number of them who regularly use its services to set up a small charity, but the idea was not followed up due to a lack of homogeneity in the refugee community. The main difficulty with the integration process is to find a job equivalent to their original qualifications and skills.

Once they get refugee status, refugees are issued an identity card for foreigners, except that ‘Sans’ (‘Without’) nationality is written instead of the nationality. This can create some difficult situations for the card holder, such as when looking for a flat or a job. As soon as they get the status, social assistants in the social medical centres guide refugees towards language courses in either German or French initially and then eventually Luxembourgish, the national language. In Luxembourg, refugees have access to the mainstream provisions and are taken care of by the social medical centres in the local councils (under the responsibility of the Family Ministry). The administration applies on their behalf for minimum income support (Revenu Minimum Garanti: RMG), and registers them with the Employment Office (ADEM). A follow-up is done in the various fields: employment, health care, language courses, housing. After registration at the Employment Office, the Employment Officer (le placeur) is supposed to inform and advise them on the possibilities of training and job vacancies. However, many NGOs criticise the lack of dialogue and awareness of the situation of the refugees, and not always take into account previous qualifications and professional skills. As an example reported by an NGO: a Peruvian woman, qualified as an engineer, keeps being oriented towards cleaning jobs. One drawback of the system is that the Employment Office runs a compulsory system of public utility job vacancies (ATI: Activités d’Insertions Professionnelles) to be filled usually by low-skilled staff. Refugees are often oriented towards such jobs regardless of their skills and experience.

2.3 Employment (official statistics provided by ADEM)

Luxembourg has a very specific situation regarding employment. In 2001, the non-national employment rate (38%) was higher than the national one (36%); this was due to a large number of French, German and Belgium nationals working Luxembourg and remaining residents in the different countries on the other side of the border. This worker mobility is also due to the very dynamic economy and a very good progression of job creation: +5.4% in 2001 (+13,610 jobs created). Luxembourg has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the EU: 2.6% in 2001 (average total of 4927 people). The need for skilled staff is very high and often not all vacancies are filled with nationals; so the pressure is high to recruit abroad. The conditions for employment are better than anywhere else in the EU; this is the privilege of one of the richest countries in the world.

2.3.1 Exceptions in delivering work permits

In Luxembourg, there are various types of work permit:

Type A: valid for maximum 1 year; valid for one employer only and for one job only. The worker should hold a valid residence permit.

Type B: valid for maximum 4 years; valid for one kind of job only with any employer.

Type C: without time limit; delivered after 5 years’ residence in Luxembourg.

Type D: for vocational training - work experience during training.

One limitation is that refugees are given the Type A permit once granted asylum in Luxembourg, and this work permit is very restrictive, as it is the employer who requests it from the administration and it is renewable only twice (up to 3 years). The restriction is mentioned in the Geneva Convention, where it is stipulated in the ‘restriction section’ that Luxembourg is not obliged to apply to refugees the best

possible rule available for foreigners resident on its territory. Luxembourg is even condemned by the European Commission for its restricted policy with community border workers who have to be issued a work permit, delivered only after assessment of the job-market.

2.3.2 Job-search support: mainstream provisions and good practices developed by the NGO sector

A) Good practices set up by NGOs

ASTI: One tailor-made job search course has been provided recently by ASTI (migrant support Charity) for refugees within the objectives of the EQUAL EU funded programme. The programme is not very successful due to a lack of beneficiaries in the refugee population, and no cooperation with the Employment Office (ADEM). Therefore the impact is very limited, and refugees are not motivated by this stand alone initiative, which does not really help them finding a job matching their skills and experience. They still have to accept Employment Office (ADEM) assignments to job vacancies.

CARITAS: No job-search courses are provided by CARITAS. An original project: 'Passepartout' was set up to promote integration of youths in the labour market. A total of five youth advisors support the integration of young people aged 16–22 years old who are not entitled to work because of their status (asylum seekers, rejected asylum seekers, people with no valid papers). A special partnership between a school, the employer, CARITAS and the young man or woman is agreed and signed to allow some limited access to the job market. No work permit is required and the youth can combine 4 days at school and 1 day at work.

CPMT (Centre de Pastorale en Monde du Travail) for the Project RTPH (Réseau pour le Travail et la Promotion Humaine) - 'Network for work and humankind development':

The aim is to develop individual job-search support at a local level open to all, with the help of a network of professional, skilled volunteers. The national coordination organises coaching and training of the volunteers and consultants within local networks and works in close cooperation with the local Employment Agency, ADEM, and regional social services. The work will involve even more training/nurturing programmes to support jobless people in obtaining employment.

The methodology is based on a Canadian method set up by the sociologist, J. Limoges, in which four elements have to interact: the environment, the self identity, the location, and the approach. The consultants support an individual approach to the job-market needs, through assessment of skills, know-how and the study of these four elements.

The results are very good and the network is growing all over the national territory. The project was initiated in June 2000, and in 2001 about 319 files were dealt with, representing over 25 different nationalities, and a total of 70 non-EU nationals. Some refugees received job search advice, but no specific data is available.

OPE: Objectif Plein Emploi: 'Full employment Target' is based on a strategy of cooperation between various local and national stakeholders in order to promote services of proximity and create employment at a local level. Some activities and services sectors are potentially creating jobs to serve the needs of the population, in the fields of gardening, childcare, environmental and recycling activities, support to elderly, housework, IT services etc. OPE supports the creation of new local structures, over 25 'Centres d'Initiatives et de Gestion Locaux' (CIGL), mostly in the southern part of the country, in close cooperation with the social services sector, and recruits and trains the new staffing according to the needs and objectives of the new organisation. The job creation benefits socially excluded people, with a low level of qualifications and/or integration difficulties. The new structures are integrated within the 'OPE network' and the staff benefits from the advantageous training schemes and skills upgrade policy of the organisation. The great success of this initiative is the close partnership between the three sectors: the voluntary sector (the Third sector), the public and the private sectors to promote the so called third sector and sustainable market (économie solidaire). These newly created jobs might benefit the refugee population in Luxembourg, but no such examples have been recorded so far.

B) Mainstream governmental support

- ADEM

The National Employment Agency (ADEM) organises mainstream job-search seminars for registered unemployed people. There is no special attention given to refugees or non-EU job seekers. However, close monitoring occurs with employment officers to assign most people into job vacancies, these assignments are compulsory and unemployment benefits can be withheld in cases of refusal. Unfortunately, these assignments do not always match the job seeker's skills and wishes.

- The Family Ministry

The Family Ministry is in charge of the refugee integration scheme, once refugee status has been granted. All refugees receive the minimum income (Revenu Minimum Garanti, RMG); the amount varies according to the composition of the household and its income. However, the average benefit is € 1184.47 and for two adults is € 1775.01. Each local authority has a health centre attached to it. All beneficiaries of minimum income have interviews with the social services (under the responsibility of the Ministry) there in order to support the integration project. In most cases, the social services officer suggests that the unemployed person should benefit from the national plan to promote employment (PAN) and therefore registers them in the scheme (Activités d'Insertions Professionnelle: ATI), for which no work permit is required. Most positions are low qualified, manual jobs in public services, hospitals, or NGOs. The social services officers carry out individual meetings with the beneficiaries in order to assess the skills and experience and draft a professional project. However, the flexibility is limited and trying to match the original skills and profession with the jobs offered in the scheme is very difficult. As an example, one Iranian doctor is working in a pharmaceutical company, but in most cases even the field of expertise is not always respected.

Indeed, the first limitation for qualified jobs is the language barrier as the three national languages are requested. There are also many administrative constraints and difficulties to have the original qualification and skills assessed and accredited and very often managers have prejudices towards non-EU employees.

The lack of cooperation between the various Ministries, both among themselves and with the NGOs, is a big limitation to taking into consideration refugees' special needs. It is to be criticised that the social services officers who are advising refugees together with other beneficiaries do not have a proper training to better understand the trauma and the special needs a refugee population might have. The service is a mainstream service for all unemployed, the beneficiaries of the minimum income. As a consequence, there are no official data to assess the number of beneficiaries with refugee status or coming from another country; there is no field to enter nationality details in the database.

2.3.3 Limitation for foreigners to access certain public sector jobs

All public sector jobs are restricted to non-EU nationals and entry exams are always applied. The following sectors are concerned: police, justice, ministries, local and regional administration and army. One huge limitation for any candidate to public sector jobs is the language barrier; in order to access all public sector employment, fluency in French, German and 'Luxembourgeois' is required.

2.3.4 Recognition of qualifications for employment

- Policy and rules for regulated professions

Under the 18 June 1969 Act on higher education and accreditation of diplomas, an accreditation of all diplomas is compulsory for the following professions: medical doctor, dentist, pharmacy, veterinary, and professor of philosophy, physical sciences, mathematics, natural sciences and law. All accreditation requests should be sent to the administration in charge by sector (legal, administrative, fiscal, accounting/ medical/ socio-cultural sectors); i.e. usually the various Ministries.

The documents required by the appropriate administrative authority are:

- original title or diplomas (or a certified copy);
- photocopy of the ID card or passport;
- an original certificate issued by the Ministry of Education of the country where the diploma was gained;
- a certificate of solvability and morality delivered by the professional association;
- proof of professional experience of between 2 and 10 years depending on the sector;
- a medical certificate for some professions (nurse);
- an official translation if the documents are not in French or German;
- the leave to remain for the applicant.

In some cases, language tests are organised or there is a requirement for a minimum number of years of professional experience in the same profession. The rules vary according to the field of studies and it is to be noted that the rules do not apply for EU diplomas, but only for holders of non-EU diplomas from third countries. In such cases, access to employment is limited and is under the rules of bilateral agreements.

There are very few examples so far in Luxembourg of refugees holding non-European diplomas who have been able to work in the same profession in the country of asylum. The only example is a brilliant young doctor from Albania, who was able to take additional exams in Germany and was given authorisation to work as a doctor. There is another example of an Iraqi woman qualified as a doctor in Iraq who did not receive the agreement by the Ministry of Health despite the fact that she followed courses in Belgium at the ULB Faculty of Medicine.

For teachers, the major barrier is not being able to speak the three official languages. One refugee from Albania qualified as a scientist has been able to teach in a private school, where the requirement to be fluent in the three languages does not apply.

- Policy for non-regulated professions

The principle of equal treatment with nationals applies, and the only requirement is to register in the Registre des Titres. For non-EU residents, a professional ability test is often requested. It is, however, sometimes difficult to assess someone's level and skills, although information centres on countries of origin can provide useful information.

2.3.5 Professional skills assessment and recognition

In Luxembourg, assessment and recognition of professional skills is very limited.

2.3.6 Small business start-up

In Luxembourg, there are few special provisions from the employment services to support small-business start-up for the long-term unemployed. Very limited individual actions have been taken by CARITAS, but usually, all requests are oriented towards 'Etika' NGO. However, many initiatives have failed unfortunately.

- Mainstream provisions: very few provisions are available to support small business start-up; one initiative, '1, 2, 3 GO', was launched by the Ministry in 2000 in cooperation with big businesses, and ADEM facilitates the ongoing payment of unemployment benefit during the first period of the business creation.
- ETIKA: This was created in 1996, by a group of NGOs: Action Solidarité Tiers Monde, Cercle de Coopération des ONGD, Confédération Caritas Luxembourg, Stéftung Oekofonds, Veräin fir biologesch-dynamësch Landwirtschaft, Haus vun der Natur, SOS Faim-Action pour le Développement.

This is an initiative of alternative saving funds supporting sustainable projects with the support of the Luxembourg Savings Banks (BCEE). Alternative savings accounts constitute a base to support financially some sustainable development projects aiming at developing social ecology, cultural ideas, and international solidarity. The basic rule is solidarity and transparency for both sides. ETIKA has developed an alternative savings account system, where investors know that their money will be used to support sustainable development initiatives either in Luxembourg or in developing countries. The project holder benefits from the solidarity action of the investor who gives up about 1.5% of its interest. The savings contribute to a funding base used to support credits. All credit requests are first assessed to look at their social and sustainable viability according to certain rules.

The selected projects should be innovative, should create employment, and should belong to the non-governmental sector, to social economy and promote social and human rights or ecology. The applicant should demonstrate that they have difficulties in accessing mainstream loans and financial support.

Various solutions are available:

1. Investment loan that covers an important purchase; reimbursement can be carried over a few years.
2. The bridge credit, that is based on the principle of future income.
3. The treasury line that supports an organisation with periodical financial gaps.

Projects are assessed both by ETIKA and the Saving Banks (BCEE) assessing economic viability of the projects. ETIKA can support project holders when approaching the Bank. Once the credit is agreed, a convention is signed and the Savings Banks propose credit at a reduced interest rate (by approximately 1.35%). In general, the maximum loan is accepted up to 75% of the total project budget and the length is 10 years.

At the end of 2001, over 60 projects had been supported with a total credit amount of € 6.122 millions. Most projects have been developed in the recycling branch or health shops, and only 5% in integration and employment projects. The total alternative accounts were 438 and the available funds up to €9.544 million, including the Saving Banks' contribution to the fund for a total of €1.239 million. A few refugees have approached ETIKA to set up their own business, but either did not follow up their application or were not selected by ETIKA. The reasons for the failure are not very clear, but it might well be they suffered a lack of support in drafting a proposal fitting the criteria.

2.4 Vocational training

All training courses and language courses are available for asylum seekers; however, vocational training courses are not open to asylum seekers, because a work permit (Type D) is required for all work placements. Under the remit of the Ministry of Education, some vocational courses are made available for asylum seekers as well, through the Ministry's vocational training centre (Centre National de Formation Professionnelle Continue - CNFPC). The contents of the training courses change from one year to another; mainly technical specialities are taught together with the languages.

The professional skills are very much valued, as there is a lack of qualified staff in the country. Life-long learning is taken very seriously, and measures facilitating IT training have been taken. The Act of 4 September 1990 set the objectives for vocational training, giving the opportunity to workers and the unemployed to upgrade and follow IT training and undertake business training.

The Adult Training Services (Service de la Formation des Adultes - SFA) and Vocational Training Offices (service de la Formation Professionnelle - SFP), part of the Ministry of Education organises various courses.

There are courses (so called of 'second qualification') offering adults help to prepare the final exams of secondary school, equivalent to 'A levels' and secondary technical track. There are also other various courses in languages, IT, Arts, etc.

Some other initiatives have been taken to facilitate integration via employment for long-term unemployed and those with a low level of qualification. The national action plan to promote employment (Le Plan National Luxembourgeois en faveur de l'Emploi - PAN) was set up under the Act of 12 February 1999. Its goal is to facilitate temporary contracts with combined training and work experience. However, this type of initiative does not support the upgrading of people with low qualifications and very often it has been criticised by NGOs working with refugees having to follow this path with little benefit.

2.5 Matrix of barriers and needs for integration of asylum seekers and refugees

Target group <i>Topic</i>	Asylum seekers		Refugees	
	<i>Barriers</i>	<i>Needs</i>	<i>Barriers</i>	<i>Needs</i>
<i>Language provisions</i>	None except that bilingual system and 3 official languages: German, French, Luxembourgish	–	None except that bilingual system and 3 official languages: German, French, Luxembourgish	–
<i>Access to higher education</i>	Limited to youths aged 16–21	Increase access for adults	None - free access	–
<i>Access to vocational training</i>	Only access to selected courses where no work permit (permit D) required	Open access to all courses	None - free access	–
<i>Recognition of qualifications for education</i>	No national equivalence system, just a registration in the 'Book of Titles'	University abroad, no access	No national equivalence system, just a registration in the 'Book of Titles'	A national university
<i>Government funded training schemes</i>	Few initiatives from the Ministry of Education without work permit needed	Free access to vocational training with a work permit	None - free access	–

<i>Entitlement to work</i>	No	Work permit	Limits of the work permit Type A	No restrictions in the type of permit
<i>Changing of careers and transferring of skills</i>	Few initiatives from the Ministry of Education without work permit needed	More initiatives, no restriction of work permit	None - free access	–
<i>Recruitment process/ job search</i>	No access	Access to employment	Lack of flexibility, compulsory assignments/ little consideration skills and past experience	More cooperation between Ministries, Employment agency and NGOs
<i>Setting up businesses</i>	Not possible	–	More specific support	Funding
<i>Government job schemes for the unemployed</i>	No access	–	Exist, but often assigned to public utility low skilled jobs	More open and flexible system of assignments/ specialised approach to refugees' needs
<i>Social benefit system</i>	Good access to benefits	–	Good access to benefits	–

CHAPTER III. OVERVIEW OF ORGANISATION INTERESTED IN FREE IN LUXEMBOURG

3.1 Businesses approached about FREE

In Luxembourg, most meetings to present FREE were held with representatives of Ministries, public administration and non-governmental organisations. Only three private businesses agreed to discuss FREE.

3.1.1 Organisation supporting small business start-up

ETIKA in cooperation with the Luxembourg Saving Bank-BCEE. (*see above*)

3.1.2 Business supporting training programmes

- TDK's main office in Europe is based in Luxembourg. They do not have a Corporate Social Policy, and only sponsor some occasional cultural events or give donations in certain situations such as the war in Kosovo, or the 11th September in New York. They are about to close one branch in Germany and are entering a recession phase, therefore no financial contribution can be made to FREE at this time. They have a very open attitude towards recruiting non EU-nationals and have employed three refugees from Romania. They also took part in the training scheme set up by the government, '123GO', in 2000–2001 to advise on small business start-up, and would be ready to offer some training to refugees in Luxembourg as part of a programme involving local NGOs.

3.1.3 Businesses and Foundations supporting access to education

- Banque Générale du Luxembourg/ Alphonse Weicker Foundation

The General Bank of Luxembourg (BGL) set up a Foundation, the Alphonse Weicker Foundation, to promote scientific research and the debate on scientific future issues for the interest of society. They do not support individual projects but NGOs or university centres; for example, they are sponsoring the seminar organised by ASTI on ‘Migrations: the challenge for economy and social cohesion’ with famous guests and keynote speakers including the Commissioner: Antonio Vitorino. The Foundation might be interested eventually in taking part in FREE, depending on the actions and structure of the FREE fund.

BGL is less involved in CSP, and has only developed a sponsorship programme for cultural and artistic events. However, some training could be possibly organised with refugees living in Luxembourg; some examples in the past include a group of Russians who received the logistic support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

3.2 Conditions and limitations of potential donors to support FREE

3.2.1 Reactions about the beneficiaries and their needs

As the recognition rate is very low in Luxembourg, many organisations stressed the need to support also asylum seekers, or rejected asylum seekers with no papers and often no leave to remain, but this is another debate. The need for specific action in favour of refugee integration is important as there are no special provisions for refugees and the integration scheme tends to put them into mainstream provisions, available for all nationals, EU nationals and non-EU nationals, without really taking into consideration the special needs that refugees have. However, one must admit that the mainstream provisions guarantee access to education for all, at all levels, the learning of the three national languages has free access for all and higher education grants to study abroad are available for refugees. However, there are limitations not in the recognition of qualifications, but in the accreditation of non-EU diplomas and access to requalification. Above all, it seems that no refugees have really successfully set up a business in Luxembourg, and this is not only because of lack of funding. Some support is needed to meet this gap.

3.2.2 The themes supported

The only theme, which does not get much support from the government, is small-business start-up. It seems it is not very easy to set up a business in Luxembourg, mainly for financial reasons and also lack of appropriate advice.

3.2.3 The structure for FREE

A favoured structure would be a federal one, with a network of local NGOs working at a grass-roots level.

3.2.4 No financial commitment for FREE

Although money is not a problem in Luxembourg (the researcher was told several times), no financial contribution was secured for FREE at this early stage.

3.3 Conditions for the creation of a fund and next steps for FREE

STEP 1: Need to investigate further the **legal possibility** to set up a European Foundation, or a fund. Look also at a national option such as setting up a Foundation under the auspices of big national Foundations.

STEP 2: Need to **draft a complete proposal**, with aims, mission, structure, functioning, financial plan and possible NGO/national partners to be presented to all businesses already contacted.

STEP 3: Need to **meet again** some potential partners and others in order to gain their support and get more substantive financial contributions.