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## **RESOURCE Project**

Refugees' contribution to Europe

Country Report: **Germany**

By René Hohmann

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from the  
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By René Hohmann

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### **ProAsyl**

[www.proasyl.de](http://www.proasyl.de)

Kopenhagener Str. 73

Telephone: 0049-(0)30-44034143

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University Assistance Fund (the Netherlands) – [www.uaf.nl](http://www.uaf.nl)

Overleg Centrum voor Integratie van Vluchtelingen (Belgium) – [www.ociv.org](http://www.ociv.org)

European Training and Research Centre (Austria) – [www.etc-graz.at](http://www.etc-graz.at)

Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland) – [www.ihmisoikeusliito.fi](http://www.ihmisoikeusliito.fi)

France Terre d'Asile (France) – [www.france-terre-asile.org](http://www.france-terre-asile.org)

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Social Work Foundation (Greece) –

Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (Ireland) – [www.spirasi.ie](http://www.spirasi.ie)

Italian Consortium of Solidarity (Italy) – [www.icsitalia.org](http://www.icsitalia.org)

ASTI (Luxembourg) – [www.asti.lu](http://www.asti.lu)

Portuguese Refugee Council (Portugal) – [www.cpr.pt](http://www.cpr.pt)

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## I Introduction to RESOURCE

This report will illustrate the positive contribution that refugees can make to current and projected labour market needs. Most refugees come from urban settings and have a good level of education. Many hold academic or professional qualifications and have considerable work experience. They are highly motivated and employers who recruited refugees report being very satisfied with their work performance.

The report is part of a European wide research project called RESOURCE (Refugees' Contribution to Europe), carried out by a partnership of fourteen agencies<sup>1</sup> and funded by the European Refugee Fund. The project analysed elements, practices and policies, which have contributed to refugees' participation in the European labour market from refugees' point of view. It focussed on how refugees' prior skills, qualifications and working experience are being utilised in sectors of the labour market that are currently experiencing skills shortages.

Through desk research and in-depth interviews with employed refugees in EU member states<sup>2</sup>, the project gives insight into the various factors that have contributed to (or obstructed) refugees' integration in Europe. Considering the high levels of unemployment and under-employment among refugees, it is clear that refugees' potential is at present under-utilised by employers. To tackle this waste of human resources the project will describe successful pathways to employment and show how the many barriers refugees encounter can be overcome.

The results are presented in fourteen country reports and one overall publication. We hope that our findings will be an inspiration for:

- Employers to recruit refugees and to take into account the skills, qualifications and work experience they brought with them in exile.
- Refugees to take initiative, build their confidence, and find suitable employment.
- Educational institutes to improve refugees' access to their programmes and develop tailor-made programmes that take into account refugees' prior learning.
- Registering bodies to adopt more flexible rules for recognition of refugees' qualifications.
- NGOs and mainstream organisations to provide better support for refugees.
- Policy makers at national and European level to implement more successful integration policies that will create real opportunities for refugees to become self-sufficient.

Because of demographic developments Europe will increasingly be in need of foreign labour to sustain economic growth. Across Europe employers are experiencing difficulties recruiting staff at both skilled and unskilled levels. At the same time the European Union receives over 350,000 asylum applications per annum. It makes good economic and social sense to better utilise this huge potential.

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<sup>1</sup> RETAS (UK), UAF (the Netherlands), OCIV (Belgium), ETC (Austria), Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland), France Terre d'Asile (France), ProAsyl (Germany), Social Work Foundation (Greece), SPIRASI (Ireland), ICS (Italy), ASTI (Luxembourg), Portuguese Refugee Council (Portugal), CEAR (Spain), CARITAS (Sweden).

<sup>2</sup> The RESOURCE project is funded by the European Refugee Fund. Denmark does not participate in this programme.

## 2 Refugees and the demand for skilled labour in Germany

In a society characterised by relationships of economic exchange, employment is a main stage of integration. It both secures an existence in terms of income and furthers basic social relations. Nevertheless, refugees encounter a great variety of structural barriers when entering the labour market.

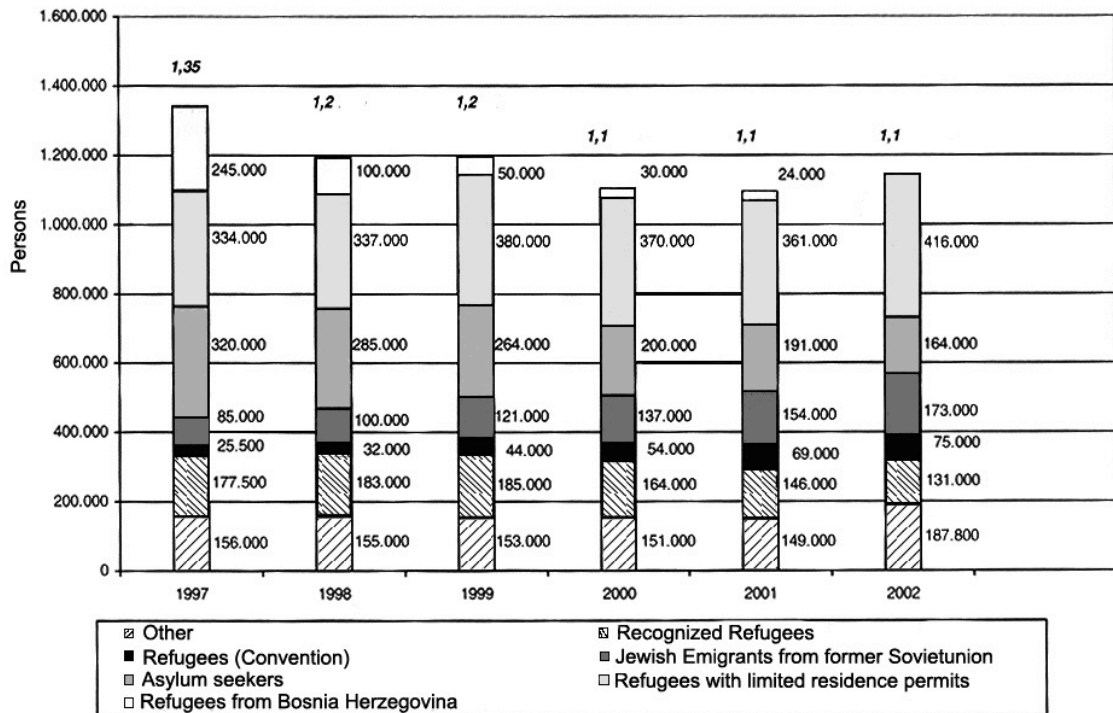
In order to find employment, refugees are faced with different requirements than all other jobseekers in Germany. Taking up employment is dependent on the existing residence permit. The majority of refugees staying in Germany, however, are not in possession of a secure residency status. The most frequent result of this precarious situation is social isolation and economic dependence on state maintenance. Furthermore, the inflexible tie between work permits and residence permits increasingly irritates businesses in branches troubled with an urgent shortage of skilled labour. Notably, in the Health and Social Care and in the information and communication technologies (IT) sector there is a constant demand for skilled staff in spite of economic ups and downs. In the meantime, so called 'headhunters' are being sent abroad to recruit staff for outpatient treatment and the nursing sector. The Green Card Initiative, which aims to attract specialists in the IT sector, has ailed to live up to expectations. Meanwhile, qualified workers who have fled to Germany are attempting to come to grips with the local labour legislation (*Arbeitserlaubnispflicht*). Lack of qualifications is not always the biggest obstacle for refugees finding work in Germany, but rather work prohibition, waiting periods, priority investigations and 'de-qualification', to name but a few.

How the different restrictions and special legislation affect the biographies of refugees and their integration into the labour market and which strategies they have chosen to overcome these obstacles, will be examined in the following chapters. To do so, Chapter 3 will describe the general situation of refugees on the German labour market. In Chapter 4 the focus will be on those sectors in the economy that suffer from a constant shortage of skilled labour, namely, the Health and Social Care and the sector of information and communication technologies. Chapter 5 will look into the experiences of refugees who have applied for, or found employment on the German labour market. Here, the results of interviews with refugees, that have been led in the course of this study, who possess special field qualification or experience in the above-mentioned fields of work, will come in. On order to conclude, the most important results will be summarised in Chapter 6. Also, recommendations will be given how the use of the potential in qualification of refugees staying in Germany can be optimised and how their integration into the labour market can be improved.

### 2.1 A note on groups of refugees in Germany

In Germany there is no consistent practice in the use of the term 'refugee'. This is due to the fact that refugees are categorised in different residence classes depending on the outcome of their asylum claims.

Figure 1: Refugees in Germany



Source: Bundesministerium des Innern, Referat M 5 aus: BAFI (2003:96)-changed

As can be seen in figure I, on the 31 December 2002, about 1.1 million refugees were staying in the Federal Republic of Germany. The German law concerning foreigners and asylum defines the following groups:

- 416,000 so called De-facto refugees with limited residence permits, whose claim for asylum has been denied but who are mostly tolerated because they cannot be deported for humanitarian, legal or factual reasons.<sup>3</sup>
- 164,000 asylum seekers, who cite clause 16 of the basic constitutional law (*Grundgesetz*) and whose legal proceedings have not yet been completed as legally valid.
- 173,000 Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union.
- 75,000 so called convention refugees (*Konventionsflüchtlinge*) who received protection against deportation from Germany, because their life or freedom is threatened in their country of origin because of their race, religion, nationality, membership to a certain social class or political persuasion.<sup>4</sup>
- 131,000 refugees with asylum status and accompanied by approximately 170,000 family members, who have been recognised as being entitled to asylum by the Federal Authority for Recognition of Foreign Refugees (BAFI - *Bundesamt für die Anerkennung ausländischer Flüchtlinge*) or by another law administrative authority.<sup>5</sup>
- Approximately 187,000 people who have fled to Germany. Among them are 6,800 so called quota refugees (*Kontingentflüchtlinge*) who have been received in the course of humanitarian aid (HumHAG); about 20,000 refugees from the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who either

<sup>3</sup> Section 53 of the German law concerning foreigners (AusIG).

<sup>4</sup> According to Section 51 clause 1, AusIG.

<sup>5</sup> According to clause 16a of the basic constitutional law (GG).

possess secure residence status or are considered liable to departure and the approximately 11,000 homeless refugees who possess a particular protected legal standing.<sup>6</sup>

In this study the term refugees refers to the whole group of people who have fled to Germany, independent of their current legal residence status.

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<sup>6</sup> Under the Law concerning the legal standing of homeless refugees (*Gesetz über die Rechtsstellung heimatloser Ausländer*).

### 3 The situation of refugees in the German labour market

A basic problem in the area of labour market research is lack of data. Data about the foreign workforce is particularly problematic. Many German studies focus either on migrants from former countries of recruitment<sup>7</sup> like, for example Turkey<sup>8</sup> or the foreign workforce in general.<sup>9</sup> Further distinction or even segmentation into groups of refugees is almost impossible to find.<sup>10</sup> Representative statements about employment levels for refugees can be found in official statistics, but only to a very limited extent. For this reason the following will describe the situation for the whole foreign workforce in Germany. So EU-citizens and people from third countries will be included as well as refugees.

The total number of people available to the labour market is established in terms of a so-called workforce potential. This includes all the people who want to work, who are both able to work and allowed to work. In this context a distinction is made between employees with compulsory social security contributions (*sozialversicherungspflichtige Beschäftigte*), the registered unemployed, the self-employed, those relatives helping the self-employed and part-time low-income employees (*geringfügig Beschäftigte*). As can be seen from table 1, the number of the potential foreign workforce in the year 2001 was 3,616,000, which is about 8.9% of the total workforce in Germany. Of these 2,008,062 were employees with compulsory social security contributions, 464,739 were registered as unemployed. On top of these part-time low-income employees, the foreign self-employed and their helping relatives, must be added, who comprise approximately 500,000 people.

**Table 1: Workforce Potential in Germany 2000 and 2001**

	2000		2001	
	Germans	Foreigners*	Germans	Foreigners*
<b>Workforce potential</b>	40,326,000	3,823,000 (9.1%)	40,550,000	3,616,000 (8.9%)
<b>Employees with compulsory social security contributions</b>	27,824,486	1,963,620	27,817,114	2,008,062
<b>Registered unemployed</b>	3,888,652 (10.7%)	470,994 (17.3%)	3,851,636 (10.3%)	464,739 (17.4%)

\* incl. EU-Citizens

Source: BA (2002c: 1135) and BMWA (2003)

How many refugees and migrants are temporarily or permanently working without legal work permits is not known. Indeed, there is still speculation about the number of the illegally employed in Germany, but often these numbers are 'political numbers' without any empirical basis. All that can be shown is the number of judicial inquiries that have been initiated or the number of cases of suspected crimes concerning illegal employment of foreigners that have been uncovered. Thus, in 2002, departments of the Federal Institute of Employment (*Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*) initiated 57,306 judicial inquiries: 25,805 cases against employees and 31,501 against employers. Altogether it can be presumed that illegal employment of foreigners has been constantly rising since the 1990s.<sup>11</sup>

Since most statistics about the labour market make no distinction between groups within the foreign workforce, the proportion of refugees is hard to determine. There are only estimates and presumptions to go on. According to Kühne the only possibility would be an interpretation of the data about employed foreigners from flight relevant countries of origin.<sup>12</sup> This category contains all employed people

<sup>7</sup> Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, Former Yugoslavia.

<sup>8</sup> cp. *Ausländerbeauftragte des Berliner Senats* 2002.

<sup>9</sup> cp. Werner/König 2002.

<sup>10</sup> cp. Gruber / Rüssel 2002, Kühne 2000, Blahusch 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Lederer 1997: 42.

<sup>12</sup> Kühne 2002: 314.

who are not from EU countries, the New Member States or from former countries of recruitment. There are about 400,000 such people in employment.<sup>13</sup> Since the reasons for immigration are not considered in this category, an assertion solely about the refugees in employment cannot be made.

### 3.1 The work permit system

If refugees and migrants wish to work in Germany they need permission from the Labour Exchange of the Federal Institute of Employment (BA). This does not apply to EU citizens. But also a minority from the group of refugees can take up employment in Germany without possessing a work permit. On 31 December 2001 166,000 came under this category.<sup>14</sup> Refugees entitled to asylum based on Article 16 of the basic constitutional law (GG), their members of family and quota refugees who have been accepted within the framework of humanitarian aid (HumHAG) like, for example Russian speaking Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union are counted to this group.

All others are required to get work permission. Here too, the work permission law stipulates the legal instruments.<sup>15</sup> When applying for a work permit, a residence permit is presupposed.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, to a great extent search for employment is determined by residency status.

Depending on status and duration of residency, refugees are subject to two types of work permits, the work authorisation (*Arbeitsberechtigung*) or the limited work permit (*Arbeitserlaubnis*).

The work authorisation<sup>17</sup> enables unrestricted access to the labour market, that is, independent of branch or profession. Table II shows that in 2002 local Labour Exchanges granted 140,223 work authorisations. Normally, work authorisation is granted to refugees who are in possession of a residence permit or a residence authorisation<sup>18</sup>, and in addition have been employed in a job with compulsory social security contributions within Germany for five years, or have been staying in Germany for six years without interruption.<sup>19</sup> In this group are, among others, convention refugees with so-called 'minor asylum', that means refugees with an indisputable recognition as being protected against deportation.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 2: Number of work permits**

Year	Total work permits	Work authorisation	Limited work permit
2000	1,083,268	155,086	928,182
2001	1,054,526	168,530	885,996
2002	945,073	140,223	804,850

Source: BA (2002c: 1187)

In contrast to work authorisations the Labour Exchange issues limited work permits restricted to a certain profession and a certain business.<sup>21</sup> In 2002, 804,850 limited work permits were issued by the Labour Exchange (compare table II). The biggest number of refugees in Germany, that means, asylum seekers and tolerated refugees only have the chance to receive a work permit. They are allowed to apply for such a work permit only after a one year waiting period - up to that point they are not allowed to work at all. The limited work permit is restricted to the area in which the local Labour Exchange is based. It can be regionally expanded or limited. This work permit is limited to the duration of the employment and three years at the maximum. But, it can only be issued according to the situation and development of the labour market and each individual case. Since the end of 1998, some federal

<sup>13</sup> BMWA 2003.

<sup>14</sup> BAFI 2002.

<sup>15</sup> Section 284-86 of the social code book, third book 'work assistance' (Sozialgesetzbuch Drittes Buch -SGB III) and the pertaining work permission.

<sup>16</sup> That is when applying for a work permit under Section 284 par. 5 SGB III, a residence permit issued by the immigration authorities (*Ausländerbehörde*) according to Section 5 of the immigration law (*Ausländergesetz-AusIG*) is presupposed.

<sup>17</sup> Section 286 SGB III.

<sup>18</sup> Section 15 AusIG and Section 30 AusIG respectively.

<sup>19</sup> Section 2 ArGV.

<sup>20</sup> According to Section 51 par. 1 AusIG

<sup>21</sup> Section 285 Abs. 3 SGB III.

states, such as Northrhine-Westphalia, have job lists in which no further work permits are meant to be issued.<sup>22</sup> The basis of these lists is a statistical survey by the Labour Exchange about professions for which, theoretically, enough people on the labour market are available ('global labour market examination').

Apart from this global examination the jobseeker is subject to further individual examination<sup>23</sup>, which is led by employees of the local Labour Office. They examine in each individual case ('examination of preference') whether there are suitable and preferential jobseekers who do not need work permits available, locally or in the region. This examination stipulates a period of several weeks with a minimum of four. In case the refugee has already found an appropriate job by himself, it is up to the potential employer to keep the job vacant for as long as it takes for the local labour office to authorise the employment. In addition, the employer has to present a future work contract and a clear job profile for the labour exchange to examine. A clear definition of the skills required and the abilities provided by the actual applicant have to be put forward by the future employer, in particular with respect to the examination of preference. Due to this procedure the employee and the employer are facing far more preparations for employment than all other jobseekers in Germany.

### 3.2 Profession related integration assistance and qualification programmes

Generally foreign degrees and training have to be examined in Germany to determine their equivalence. Various state level institutions, such as the Administrative Presidency and Chambers of Profession are responsible for this. The Centre for Foreign Education Systems (*Zentralstelle für ausländisches Bildungswesen* - ZfaB) in Bonn is the national body responsible for the evaluation of foreign degrees. It collects information about degrees, compares them to German equivalents and recommends whether they should be recognised. However different states have different customs in following these recommendations. The biggest problem is with the recognition of foreign professional degrees. As a rule, recognition only takes place on the basis of bi-national treaties and currently such treaties only exist with Austria, Switzerland and France. Accordingly, an effective professional 'de-qualification' can be expected which can currently only be removed by repeating the training or further education in Germany.

State work related integration assistance ranges from supporting language education to further qualifying measures. Many jobs in Germany require a more or less developed level of language competence, so every professional qualifying measure begins with language education. However refugees' participation in state qualifying programmes depends on their residence status. State integration assistance is only offered to refugees with asylum status, refugees who have been accepted through humanitarian aid and quota refugees. This excludes the major group of asylum seekers and tolerated refugees. They have to take up offers from non-state organisations or make do with their own financial resources.

Refugees with asylum status and quota refugees are entitled to six months of full-time, intensive language tuition by the state<sup>24</sup> if they are without means, have held employment of at least 70 days during the last year in their country of origin prior to leaving and they declare their intention to commence work unrelated to professional training within the country upon completion of the language course<sup>25</sup>. However, many refugees don't get the costs of their language training covered, as they can't prove 70 days of employment in their country of origin or the employment authority evaluates them as

<sup>22</sup> Section 285 Abs. 1 No. 1 SGB III.

<sup>23</sup> Holders of the limited work permit have to undergo this global and individual examination by the Local Labour Office. This group mainly comprises of asylum seekers and tolerated refugees. Recognised refugees (with refugee status) have work authorisation that theoretically enables unrestricted access to the German labour market.

<sup>24</sup> Section 419 / 420 SGB III.

<sup>25</sup> Language courses paid by the government are seen as vocational training. Therefore refugees applying for funding for these courses have to hand in work references from their country of origin. This means that housewives, for example, are excluded. This prerequisite would not apply to someone who was unable to work in his or her country of origin because of political involvement, or who cannot prove his or her work engagement.

having sufficient knowledge of German. Furthermore, they can't claim if they are already integrated in the labour market and are therefore considered capable of financing language courses themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Where a language course has been attended, there are certain circumstances in which labour authority training courses of two, four or eight weeks are open to refugees.<sup>27</sup> Here, job counselling and courses on ways of finding employment are offered. If refugees are in possession of a completed professional training, which is recognised in Germany, or at least three years work experience, they can participate in specific further education in their profession. This includes courses aiming to expand knowledge in a profession, keeping up with technological developments or opening alternative ways of earning a living, such as becoming self-employed.

Other institutions offer language and qualification courses, but much of the education on offer is restricted to employees from the former countries of recruitment. This, for example, affects offers from the Language Association (*Sprachverband e.V.*), which finances language advancement courses (*Sprachkursförderungen*) through financial means of the Federal Ministry of Employment and Social Security (*Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnungen - BMA*)<sup>28</sup>. In 2002, the Language Association offered more than 5,746 German language courses for more than 81,806 participants.<sup>29</sup> Refugees can, if need be, participate as 'guests' if courses are not full.<sup>30</sup> The Otto Benecke Stiftung, which operates as a non-profit organisation for the government, offers further opportunities for qualification and language learning. These are aimed at emigrants of German origin from eastern countries (*Spätaussiedler*), spouses and their descendents, refugees with asylum authorisation, contingent refugees who have entered Germany and are under thirty when starting the programme.

As mentioned above, asylum seekers and tolerated refugees can make use of offers of education from independent institutions. Thus, some residential institutions for asylum seekers offer language courses and counselling, free of charge, by voluntary members of staff from welfare organisations<sup>31</sup> or other groups helping refugees. The EU EQUAL initiative sparked many initiatives in Germany in order to put an end to discrimination and disadvantage in the labour market. Asylum seekers are one of nine subjects dealt with by this initiative, which is headed by the Federal Institute for labour and economics (*Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Arbeit - BMWA*). From a total of 109 projects, eight were chosen to provide further education and professional qualifications for asylum seekers and tolerated refugees from numerous suggestions that were handed in. These eight projects decided co-operate in the Federal Working Team of the Asylum Development Partnership (*Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Asylentwicklungspartnerschaften - BAG*) in order to overcome financial and organisational barriers. This working team is coordinated by the bureau of the Federal Commissioner for Migrants and consists of an alliance of representatives from welfare organisations, refugee councils (*Landesflüchtlingsräten*), educational institutions, unions, communal authorities and further independent institutions for educational and refugee work. These projects, running until 2005, are trying to create perspectives for labour market integration and improvement of their life situation for refugees with an uncertain residency status.

<sup>26</sup> Kothen/Weber/Wöste 2000: 40

<sup>27</sup> Section 77-94 SGB III

<sup>28</sup> Since January 2003 the Federal Authority for Recognition of Foreign Refugees (BAFI) in Nürnberg has been officially responsible for providing these language courses.

<sup>29</sup> BA 2002c: 1158

<sup>30</sup> Language Association/Sprachverband 1996

<sup>31</sup> Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Caritasverband, Deutsches Rotes Kreuz und Diakonisches Werk.

## 4 The demand for skilled labour on the German labour-market

There is an ongoing discussion in Germany about labour market problems and shortages of skilled labour that moves in and out of focus depending on the current economic situation at any given time. In July 2003 4,351,973 people were registered as unemployed, but, despite this historically high level, a consensus exists that there is a constant shortage of skilled labour across various sectors of the economy.<sup>32</sup> Many businesses, especially smaller and middle-sized businesses (KMU), complain in business surveys about their problems in finding suitable applicants for job vacancies.<sup>33</sup> The Federal Institute of Employment reported 419,844 vacant jobs in September 2001 of which 223,046 could only be practised with specialised professional training. According to the business survey panel of the Institute for Labour Market and Profession Research (*Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung - IAB*), 64,000 vacancies in the old states and 500,000 vacancies in the new states<sup>34</sup> could not be filled.<sup>35</sup> Altogether, the fear is that the shortage of skilled labour will lead to negative effects for investment, innovation and economic growth.<sup>36</sup>

Existing studies show two sectors that, despite economic ups and downs, have a constant demand for skilled labour: information and communication technologies (IT) and Health and Social Care. The following sections will illustrate the degree of the shortage. This is succeeded by a description of the causes and the state and corporate reactions to this 'mismatch' on the labour market. Though a consensus exists about the shortages in these areas the government has remained enormously indecisive. Reactions from business and the government in attempting to solve the problem differ a great deal. They range from internal corporate flexibility measures to state urgent action programmes, such as the introduction of the so-called 'Green Card' in order to recruit foreign IT-specialists.

### 4.1 Measuring demand for skilled labour in Germany and its problems

There is no standard definition of the shortage of skilled labour in a specific profession in scientific literature.<sup>37</sup> In the following a shortage of skilled labour will be understood as an imbalance between supply and demand of skilled labour under the existing market conditions.

Basically, there are two ways of determining the demand for skilled labour.

The first is to look at the data collected by the Federal Institute of Employment about the reported number of job vacancies on the other hand via business surveys. A sharp rise in the numbers gauged by the Federal Institute of Employment (BA) can normally be interpreted as a sign of an economic upturn. A structural shortage of labour will emerge only when vacancies cannot be filled. An indication for this is the average duration of vacancies until they are filled. Nevertheless, a number of problems arise with this method. Thus, many businesses, especially in the IT sector, are switching to advertising vacancies on the Internet. So far, these job vacancies do not appear in any statistics, so it might well be that the number of vacant jobs is actually higher than reported by the Federal Institute of Employment (BA). Furthermore, a high number of vacancies can indicate a high fluctuation of staff.<sup>38</sup>

The second method of gauging demand for skilled labour is the by finding operational labour market blockages through consultation with business, by frameworks such as the annual survey of businesses by the Board of Trade and Industry (DIHK) or the annual business panel of the IAB. In these interviews businesses of all sizes and from all sectors are asked about the level and structure of em-

<sup>32</sup> Commission for the Reduction of Unemployment and Restructuring of the Federal Institute for Employment (*Kommission zum Abbau der Arbeitslosigkeit und zur Umstrukturierung der Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*) 2002: 118.

<sup>33</sup> DIHK 2001: 9.

<sup>34</sup> This refers to the division between the Eastern (new) and Western (old) Bundesländer.

<sup>35</sup> Kölling 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Haskel/Holt 1999.

<sup>37</sup> Bosch/Heinecker/Kistler/Wagner 2003: 2ff.

<sup>38</sup> ZEW 2001: 24.

ployment expectations in the short to medium term, about economic determining factors like sales, profits, investment and wages, about organisational changes and their methods of training and further education or vacant jobs and the shortage of staff within the company.

However, the usefulness of employers' assertions is limited as it can't be established what efforts they have made to find staff, or whether they have been making exorbitant demands considering the applicants' skills. Businesses tend to demand varying skills from job applicants depending on the economic situation.

In the following description of the shortage of skilled labour in the IT sector and the Health and Social Care the number of reported vacancies by the Federal Institute of Employment (BA) will be considered as well as results gained from a number of consultations with business. These numbers are supplemented by statements from the respective professional boards or chambers.

## 4.2 Skilled labour shortages in the IT and Health and Social Care Sectors

The IT sector has received more attention than any other area of the economy in recent years. Interest from employers and young people in jobs in data processing, IT and multimedia has gone up since the Internet boom in 1999 and 2000. The boom in IT specialist was a significant result of this boom. It didn't only consist of university and polytechnic graduates who had gained degrees in related subjects such as bio-, engineering-, medical- or economic-IT. Far more characteristic were the many people from different professions and backgrounds who gained their professional knowledge through further education. Due to the great number of new enterprises and start up businesses, IT specialists were desperately needed.<sup>39</sup>

Three years later, the 'gold-rush' in the new economy is over. This is mirrored in the general labour market data for IT specialists. In December 2000 the labour authority reported 9,935 job vacancies and 5,744 applicants.<sup>40</sup> Thus, about 100 applicants were facing 156 vacancies. At the end of 2002 only 1,905 vacancies were reported to the Federal Institute of Employment (BA), which registered 14,039 applicants at the same time. Consequently, 100 applicants were competing for 14 vacancies.<sup>41</sup> According to this development the demands of businesses concerning the skills of the applicants went up. Therefore, university graduates with the appropriate studies are still finding work, while those people from different backgrounds who gained knowledge through further education are finding it increasingly difficult to become integrated into this sector.<sup>42</sup> The unemployment rate in this part of the labour market is about 20%. Nevertheless, the demand for IT specialists still exists, even though the qualification level demanded has gone up<sup>43</sup> and predicted figures about the additional demand for skilled staff of 300,000 people,<sup>44</sup> can be doubted because of the economy's current weakness.

Public discussion of skill shortages in IT have quietened because of shifts in the economic situation and the focus has shifted to Health and Social Care. The Health and Social Care sector includes a great number of services, institutions and businesses. It includes jobs in hospitals and clinics, social institutions, health centres, institutions for rehabilitation and sanatoriums, residence and nursing homes, out-patient treatment, transport and rescue services and various institutions of welfare organisations.

In June 2002 a total of 4,099,598 people were employed in jobs with compulsory social security contributions across the whole sector.<sup>45</sup> Among these are, for example, doctors, pharmacists, nurses and assistants, midwives, social workers and educators. In December 2002, 188,609 people were registered unemployed in this sector.<sup>46</sup> In April 2003, the Federal Institute of Employment reported

<sup>39</sup> BDA 2000.

<sup>40</sup> On 31/12/2000.

<sup>41</sup> Hohn 2003: 5.

<sup>42</sup> Dostal 2002: 1.

<sup>43</sup> Dostal 2002: 3.

<sup>44</sup> According to Petersen (2000).

<sup>45</sup> BA 2002c.

<sup>46</sup> BA 2002d.

31,221 vacant jobs.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the rate of unemployment in this part of the labour market can be considered as relatively low. Doctors Especially are currently enjoying good job prospects. While in the 1980s there was talk of a growing rate of unemployment among doctors, at the current rate of 2% the situation can be judged as full employment.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, though, the number of graduates with a medical degree is sinking. The number of doctors in practical work (*Ärzte im Praktikum*, AIP) has fallen by an average of 13%, so in the midterm future a shortage of doctors seems likely.<sup>49</sup> Consultations with businesses suggest that doctors are not the only profession that will be threatened with a shortage of skilled staff in coming years. In contrast to official statistics of the Federal Institute of Employment (BA) many institutions predominantly in nursing care and geriatric care relating to in and out-patient treatment are claiming a shortage of skilled staff. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that local labour offices do not make a distinction between skilled and unskilled labour when establishing the number of jobseekers in nursing. All jobseekers, aiming to work in nursing are registered. No record is made of whether these jobseekers are actually qualified in nursing. Therefore, it is not surprising that businesses and institutions are complaining about shortage of staff, although jobseekers are reported in this sector.

### 4.3 The causes for the shortage of skilled labour

The current shortage of skilled labour can be explained by specific reasons within the different sectors. If, additionally, general trends in the German population are considered, predictions can be made about future developments in the shortage of skilled labour.

For some time economists and social scientists have been drawing attention to a phenomenon in German society that is causing headaches for business and politicians - the aging of the population. The age structure of the German workforce is changing dramatically. The average age is going up, the part of the younger workforce is sinking while the part of older people is rising.<sup>50</sup> Studies are predicting that without taking population movement into account the potential workforce will decline by more than half a million people by the year 2010.<sup>51</sup> Based on this demographic development a general shortage of workforce in Germany in the future seems likely. This tendency is intensified by an age specific stagnation of education. While 35-49 year olds and 50-64 year olds can be counted as those with the best qualifications, the number of 15-24 year olds without any professional training or degree who are seeking employment in the labour market is rising.<sup>52</sup> A substantial part of the qualified population is moving closer toward retirement. Calculations suggest that by 2015 the 50-64 age group will have the best qualification structure. The potential of younger skilled workers will be very low. Therefore, a future shortage of skilled labour across all sectors in Germany seems inevitable.<sup>53</sup>

According to consultations with business, the reasons for the current demand of skilled staff in the IT sector can be found in the inadequate qualification levels among jobseekers.<sup>54</sup> Thus, businesses are complaining, that applicants often cannot provide suitable qualifications. In a consultation with business carried out by the German Board of Industry and Trade (DIHK) in 2001, about 70% of businesses claimed this as the greatest barrier in employing new staff. Complaints are also voiced about a lack of flexibility by applicants in terms of limited mobility and fixed working hours.<sup>55</sup> The policy of hiring in the economic cycle can be seen as another reason for the raised demand for IT specialists. Intimidated by the regressive policy of hiring during the recession of 1992/1993, many students to be

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<sup>47</sup> BA 2003a.

<sup>48</sup> Bausch 2002: 4.

<sup>49</sup> Bausch 2002: 5.

<sup>50</sup> Rürup/Klopffleisch 1999: 41.

<sup>51</sup> Fuchs/Schnur/Zika 2000: 3.

<sup>52</sup> Reinberg/Hummel 2003: 4.

<sup>53</sup> Reinberg/Hummel 2003: 6.

<sup>54</sup> ZEW 2001: 34.

<sup>55</sup> DIHK 2001: 10.

decided against studying IT-subjects.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, 10 years later, fewer IT graduates are available on the labour market than businesses wish for.

The fact that many businesses are not willing to employ older people despite their adequate qualifications, can be viewed as another reason for the shortages in the IT sector. This kind of discrimination against older people is not restricted to a specific branch, but a phenomenon across all sectors.<sup>57</sup> The demographic development mentioned above and the tendencies in education in German society are creating an intensifying constellation of problems.

A central cause for the shortage of skilled staff in the social and health system is that employees often stay in their jobs for only a very short period. This predominantly affects in-patient and out-patient nursing. According to a study commissioned by the Federal Institute for Professional Education (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*), for example, only 20% of people working in geriatric care are still in this profession after five years in the job. Approximately one in four people in this job voiced severe problems with the trained profession and the work.<sup>58</sup> The strong tendency to move away from nursing is seen as a consequence of an incoherent interaction of professional qualification, work conditions and perspectives of professional development. The enormous physical and psychological strain, in particular, become too much for many nursing staff, in the long run.<sup>59</sup> Further reasons mentioned, for leaving the job are bad working conditions, shift work, inadequate models for working times and a lack of time and a lack of perspectives for promotion.<sup>60</sup>

In Germany nursing jobs are considered to be unattractive, which, for example, shows in terms of an inadequate allowance during the training and inadequate salary after, a low standing in society and a low standing in the hierarchy of the profession.<sup>61</sup> This makes the fact that the health system will gain in importance due to the demographic aging of society all the more paradoxical.<sup>62</sup> As can be seen in figure II, it is assumed that the number of people in need of nursing care will rise from 1.93 million in 1999 to 2.94 million in 2020 and therefore, the demand for medical and nursing services will go up.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> ZEW 2001: 34

<sup>57</sup> Bellmann/Kistler/Wahse 2003: 30

<sup>58</sup> Becker/Meifort 1997: 271f

<sup>59</sup> Becker/Meifort 1997: 273

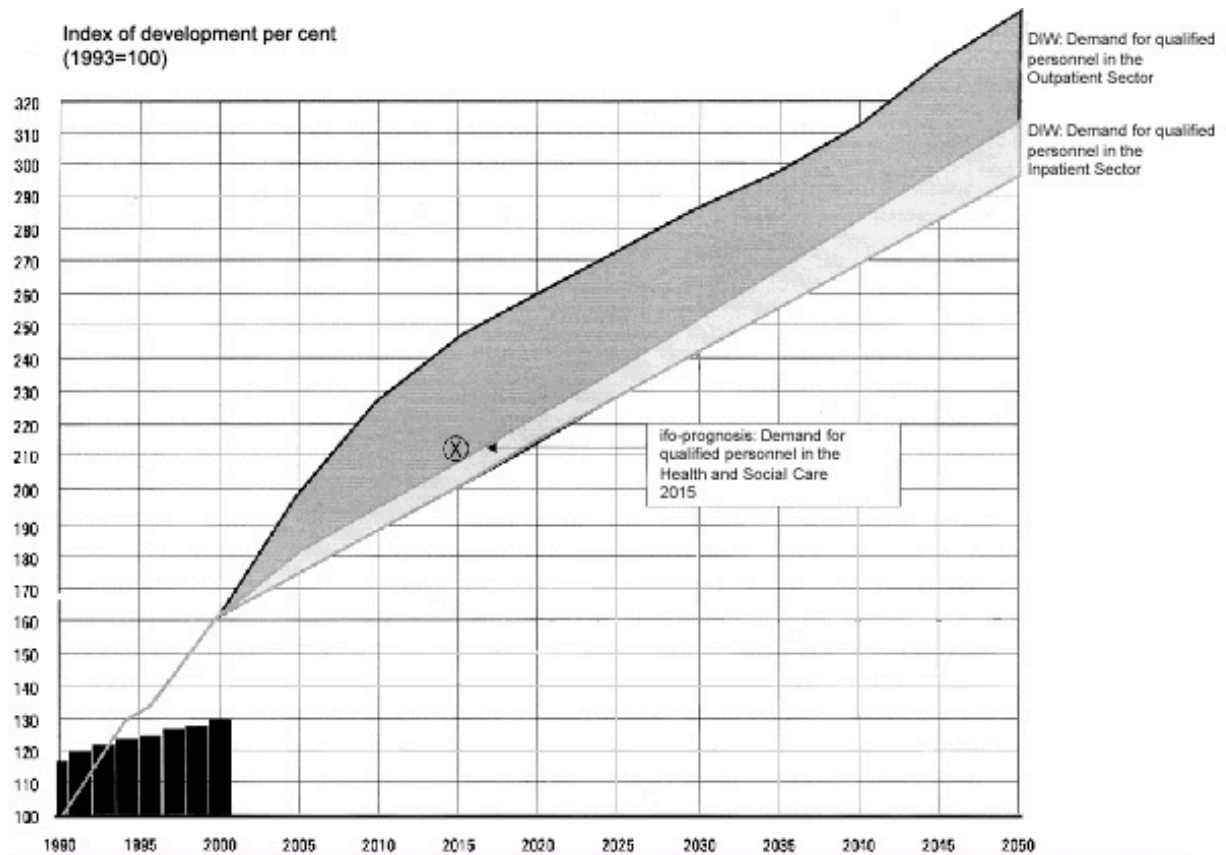
<sup>60</sup> Becker/Meifort 1997: 230

<sup>61</sup> OWL/ZIG 2002

<sup>62</sup> Gewiese 2002

<sup>63</sup> Schulz/Leidl/König 2001: 13

Figure 2: Estimated demand for qualified labour in the Health and Social Care sector



Source: Becker 2002 in Adolph/Heinemann 2003 (changed)

#### 4.4 State and corporate reactions to the shortage of skilled labour

The government has reacted with various attempts to solve the skilled labour shortage.

According to the business panel of the Board of Trade and Industry (*DIHK Betriebspanel*) businesses in the IT sector are trying to react to the shortage of specialists by putting more weight on existing employees.<sup>64</sup> Thus, extra hours are among the most frequent measures taken by businesses when raising production. Furthermore, businesses extend existing limited duration work contracts and take on trainees and employees short-term before providing further qualification for employed specialists.<sup>65</sup> Here it has to be emphasized, that many businesses are offering training as a service. For example, employees of SAP AG and interested people from other companies (if they pay a fee) can take part in seminars and further education held by an academy owned by SAP AG.

The creation of training for professional occupations can be viewed as one of the most important measures against a shortage of skilled labour. In the year 1997 four IT professions were integrated into the German system of dual training for professional IT specialists, IT systems merchants, IT systems electrical engineer and IT-merchants. Meanwhile more than 70,000 people have been trained in one of these jobs and the number of training occupations in these domains is still rising at a high rate.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup> DIHK 2001:10

<sup>65</sup> DIHK 2001:10

<sup>66</sup> BMBF 2002/2003

Probably the best-known state measure against the shortage of IT specialists is the so-called 'Green Card Initiative'. At the time when the information and communication technologies were witnessing an economic boom, on 1 August 2000 the German government issued regulations considering work and residence permissions for 'highly skilled foreign specialists' (IT-ArGV und IT-AV) in the framework of the 'instant action programme to cover the demand of IT specialists' after impetuous complaints from business. This was aimed at the recruitment of specialists, such as software developers and IT system specialists from countries outside the EU, who wanted to work in a German company on the basis of a five-year contract. The condition was a degree from a university or polytechnic and a compulsory guarantee of an annual income of at least €51,000 by the employer. Up to April 2003, 14,144 work permits were issued, 10,166 for first time employment and 3,454 for a contract extension or a change of job.<sup>67</sup> A fifth of the specialists came from India, followed by IT specialists from south-eastern and eastern European countries.<sup>68</sup> But meanwhile, this sector has also felt the effects of the economic crisis. Thus, in 2002, the number of Green Cards issued constantly decreased and a repeated change of jobs has become necessary in order for specialists to keep their residence permits.<sup>69</sup>

The businesses of Health and Social Care are also reacting to the structural shortage of skilled labour by putting more pressure on existing staff. A study by the German Institute for practised Nursing (*Deutsches Institut für angewandte Pflegeforschung - dip*) shows the result, that the shortage of skilled staff leads to a compression of work, as well as an increase in working hours, more regular and longer sick leaves among staff.<sup>70</sup> On the basis of this study it can be calculated, that more than nine million extra hours have been demanded in in-patient nursing institutions, so far, which equals more than 5,000 full-time jobs.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, a process of 'de-professionalisation' has been established in the geriatric care sector. In a periodical comparison between 1996 and 1999 the number of qualified staff in geriatric care went down; at the same time the number of people without qualification, working in the in-patient and out-patient geriatric care rose six-fold.<sup>72</sup> The proportion of qualified staff to unqualified staff, which, in institutions has to be 50% by law, has already fallen short of this.<sup>73</sup> In order to stop this tendency and promote the attractiveness of jobs in geriatric care, the government has introduced uniform training in geriatric care on a national basis as part of a law about the profession. The new law concerning geriatric care replaces the federal states' different regulations concerning professional training and, for the first time, creates equal conditions on a national level.

A further governmental measure is the increasing recruitment of skilled labour from foreign countries. Businesses and institutions as well as the government are forcing the placement of nursing staff from EU member and third country states. Nevertheless, so far, talks concerning placement have only been held with Croatia and Slovenia.<sup>74</sup> Thus, the Federal Institute of Employment (BA) registered 385 placements in 2002.<sup>75</sup> These placements were focused on employers and heartlands where not enough skilled labour in nursing could be found.

There is a remarkable contrast between refugees looking for work in the IT sector and in Health and Social care, where refugees and migrants are becoming a central focus. However some points need to be made about these tendencies. On the one hand it should be noted that among the group of the emigrants of German origin from eastern countries and the quota refugees, in particular, there is a relatively high portion of doctors (13%). In this case possibilities are promoted, which lead to a quick work integration into their profession.<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, according to reports by refugees and migrants, local departments of the Labour Exchange strongly tend to recommend employment or re-training programmes in the nursing sector to applicants with different qualifications and work experi-

<sup>67</sup> Schreyer/Gebhardt 2003: 7.

<sup>68</sup> Schreyer/Gebhardt 2003: 10.

<sup>69</sup> Schreyer/Gebhardt 2003: 7.

<sup>70</sup> Weidner/Isfort/Messner/Zinn 2003: 13.

<sup>71</sup> Weidner/Isfort/Messner/Zinn 2003: 14.

<sup>72</sup> Deutscher Bundestag 2003: 195.

<sup>73</sup> Weidner/Isfort/Messner/Zinn 2003: 17.

<sup>74</sup> According to Section 5 Nr. 7 Anwerbestoppausnahmeverordnung.

<sup>75</sup> BA 2002: 1146.

<sup>76</sup> According to Section 10, federal medical doctors order (Bundesärzteordnung).

ences. Appropriate qualifications and experiences are playing a less important part in these job placements.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Bauder 2002: 13

## 5 Successful pathways to employment

These examples show the experiences of highly skilled refugees in Germany. Please note that the short biographies shown in this chapter are focus on training and employment of refugees living in Germany. The precise reasons and circumstances for their escape are not considered in any detail.

Altogether 25 people who possess qualification or work experience in the social and health service or the IT sector, have been interviewed. Among them were six women and 19 men. Of these, 15 were in possession of an asylum status,<sup>78</sup> seven of a humanitarian residence status and three were tolerated only on a short-term basis.

### 5.1 Are skills and knowledge from the countries of origin being utilised?

Only four people answered that they could make full use of their professional education gained in their country of origin; 10 felt they could make some use of it; and 11 had the impression that they could make no use of it in their current employment. The reasons for this vary. In individual cases a speedy recognition procedure for existing degrees and the possibility to connect different skills were rated positively. One refugee, for example, was able to use the PC-skills obtained during his army training to better perform the administrative part of his geriatric care job. All of the interviewees agreed that commercial knowledge is an advantage. Those refugees who have ventured into self-employment value it in particular.

#### 5.1.1 *Step into self-employment: Ms R*<sup>79</sup>

Ms R was born in 1960 in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan. She completed her school education at a technical school for women, where subjects including economics, finance and statistics were taught to German standard. After her degree she worked as a senior secretary in the Department for the Advancement of Export at the Ministry of Economics. After two years, she quit the employment in order to take up a job as a teacher at a college in Baglan province. Two years later, she moved to a primary school in Kabul. Fearing persecution, three months after this she fled to neighbouring Pakistan and from there to Germany.

Barely five months after her arrival she was recognised as being entitled to asylum status. She attended a secondary school in Frankfurt am Main, but had to interrupt her school attendance for five months due to the birth of her first child. After completing school in 1982, she worked in different sectors as a saleswoman or clerk. After the birth of her second child in 1988, she worked in geriatric care for two years, before deciding to start her own cleaning business in 1991. In 1993 she started an out-patient nursing service of which she is today the managing director. She employs 20 people and is successfully established on the market of nursing services. According to her own statement, her family situation (two children) and the responsibility for the rest of the family (in Afghanistan and Germany) motivated her to set up her own business.

#### 5.1.2 *General Experience in Germany*

People working in the Health and Social Care sector stated that they found it advantageous to come from a different culture. This issue is closely related to the language competence of the refugees who were interviewed: one person is bilingual, 11 are trilingual, a further 11 speak four languages and two even speak five languages. Yet, in this connection the criticism is raised that refugees without an asylum status do not get subsidies for language courses. Indeed, they often speak a number of other languages, but in the one that is most important on the German labour market, they often lack profes-

<sup>78</sup> Either according Section 16a GG or Section 51 Abs. 1 AuslG.

<sup>79</sup> Names have been changed by request.

sion-specific terms. In this context, some refugees have recommended language courses for IT as well as the nursing sector.

But even those refugees who were entitled to six months of language tuition usually had to wait for quite some time, since the courses were often fully booked and waiting lists were in place. The interviewees also suggested improvements concerning the duration of the language courses, such as extending the period of the course by two months while reducing the daily hours, since it would serve to make the language tuition more enduring.

There was universal criticism of the counselling offered by local labour offices. Some interviewees stated that they found support from the local labour offices, when they were looking for employment. In individual cases, the support ranged from passing information about grants for re-education to the placement in a works programme (*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahmen*). Nevertheless, there was only one example of a Labour exchange arranging solid employment for a refugee. In exceptional cases, the social services and youth welfare (*Jugendamt*) are named as supporting factors on the way into employment. Many of the interviewees speculated that officials in the local labour offices preferred to look at the low-income sector of the regional labour market, rather than consider the refugees' existing qualifications and knowledge. Furthermore, while looking for employment, many of the interviewees were referred to private personnel management agencies, without ever having received a job offer from the Labour Exchange.

## 5.2 The connection between qualifications, work experience and employment

Some general tendencies can be seen on the question of the professional history. A refugee who has already obtained professional training in his or her country of origin has a better chance on the labour market. This is particularly true in the Health and Social Care sector. As explained earlier, a job offer in the area in which the refugee is trained is highly unlikely, but the chances of finding employment in a different profession are better. Secondly, a clear connection can be determined between residence status ease of gaining employment. Refugees who are still subject to the duty of residence (*Residenzpflicht*) because of their status, state that their lack of mobility represents a negative factor in the search for employment.

### 5.2.1 Highly qualified tolerated refugees: Dr S

Dr S was born in the Czech Republic in 1965 and came to Germany with his wife and three children in July 2001. After completing the final school exams (*Fachhochschulreife*) in 1982 he went on to study medicine at university. Six years later, he received his diploma with special honours. He completed his compulsory one-year apprenticeship in the emergency surgery at the Republican-State Hospital (*Republikanisches-Staatliches Krankenhaus*) in Grosny in 1988. In the following years Dr S specialised further as a surgeon in three other hospitals in Grosny and St Petersburg. In 2000 he did his PHD at the Russian-State University in Moscow. In the middle of 2001 he decided to flee to Germany with his family. After a year his application for asylum was denied as being unfounded. Since then, his toleration is being extended on a six-monthly basis. Although, he has been in Germany for more than two years now, the Immigration Authorities (*Ausländerbehörde*) still refuses to erase the existing notice prohibiting work from his papers. Although Dr S found several job offers that suited his skills, the Immigration Authorities did not even allow him to attend the interviews as the hospitals were located outside the city. According to a statement from the Immigration Authorities, an interview was not necessary, anyway, since he was still under prohibited from working. Medical institutions, as well as the Federal State Ministry (*Landesministerium*) recognise his high qualification. Thus, his diploma and doctor's title were already classified as equal after three months. Neither his professional and language qualities, nor the existing job offer are a problem, according to Dr S. He has paid for the German language course at the university extension (*Volkshochschule*) by himself and in addition is currently learning English. Rather, the biggest problem seems to be to convince the Immigration Authori-

ties that he is able to and wants to work. Currently he sees fleeing once more as the only way out. 'Maybe to Canada' Dr S says, where he might face better chances thanks to the existing point-system.

### 5.2.2 *General Experience in Germany*

The fact, that they have found work only in a completely different profession and cannot bring forward their abilities, poses a big problem for many refugees. Most of the interviewees perceive this as a decline in professional standing. Language difficulties and not being allowed to work for a long time worsened this problem. In the majority of cases, economic reasons are held responsible for changing profession. Better chances on the German labour market are named as the most important motivation for a complete change of profession. It is also striking that there is a strong tendency to pursue voluntary work, during periods in which they are not able to find permanent employment, be it for administrative reasons or specific labour market barriers. One of the interviewees with qualification in educational theory, for example helps out in a homework care centre, others were, or still are engaged in local sports clubs.

## 5.3 Recognition of qualifications (*Bildungsabschlüsse*)

Answering the question about obstacles they faced, many interviewees complained that recognition of qualifications obtained in their country of origin is either partial or non-existent. Many of their qualifications were not fully recognised, particularly in the social and health service system.

Some refugees who previously worked in nursing in their countries of origin, for example, had to repeat a year of training, in order to get back to their original level of qualification. Altogether, though, the chances on the labour market are described as promising.

When it occurred at all, the recognition of professional qualifications from their countries of origin took too long, according to almost all of the interviewees, especially since they were often only partly recognised and the people concerned then had to complete additional studies. In other cases, where the professional qualification was not recognised, the full professional training had to be repeated.

## 5.4 Different ways into employment

More than half the interviewees stated that qualifications obtained in their country of origin or previous work experience played a part in the process of finding employment.

Some refugees took part in further education in Germany and rate this as important for their later employment. In the majority of cases it is a question of further education in language competence, which serves as a pre-condition for obtaining access or matriculation at a university. Other measures of further education that were considered helpful referred to the commercial sector. In addition, further education was necessary for the recognition of qualifications obtained in the countries of origin.

### 5.4.1 *Complete change of profession, yet, successful: Mr F*

Mr F was born in 1957 in Pakistan. After his technical school degree (*Fachabitur*) in electrical engineering he completed a college education to become a radio engineer with the Pakistani air force, where he worked for several years. Since his religion and political activities were causing increasing problems in his employment, he obtained training in nursing at the same time and, two years later, received his diploma with honours. He changed his employment and worked as a nurse in a doctor's surgery. Mr F had to leave the country in 1987 because of increasing actions of repression. He sought refuge in Germany. During his asylum claim he was not allowed to work, which posed a heavy burden on him, since, for religious reasons, he wants to earn his living by himself. He received asylum status in 1989 and immediately attended a German language course. Because his qualifications from Pakistan were not recognized in Germany, he had to repeat his nurse training in Germany. After this second training phase, which felt lengthy to him, he worked as a nurse in a hospital in south Hesse.

Meanwhile, he has found employment as a residence area manager in a home for old people in Frankfurt-Fechenheim. In 2001 this home for old people has won a special award from the Hessian ministry of the economy for the exemplary integration of foreign employees.<sup>80</sup>

#### 5.4.2 *General Experience in Germany*

Twenty-two of the 25 interviewees took part in language courses in Germany and view language competence as essential in the process of looking for employment. In many cases, as well as German, competence in English was also gained. This applied particularly among people who saw their future in IT.

For many of the interviewees non-profit organisations have been helpful in the search for employment. As the most important supporting groups, charity institutions, non-profit organisations supporting refugees and self-organised cultural associations are named on the same level. Further, foundations, as well as the commitment by social workers and teachers are described as helpful.

#### 5.4.3 *IT employees from a different previous profession: Mr B*

Mr B was born in 1957 in the former Zaire. He completed his A-levels after 12 years at school and spent five years at college, where he studied French. Later he worked as a teacher. During this time he also worked as a journalist for an oppositional newspaper. He was persecuted and fled to Germany in June 1993. While he was not allowed to work at all during his asylum claim (in 1993 a complete prohibition on refugees working was still in effect), he received asylum status<sup>81</sup> and has since gained German citizenship.

Already during the asylum claim, since he was not entitled to a language course, he tried to learn German by himself, in order to go back to working as a journalist as soon as possible. At first, his knowledge of the language was insufficient to write in German or translate into German from French.

After receiving asylum status he attended a language course and completed professional training as a multimedia assistant at a new media college. He was placed in a software company by a personnel management agency, which, after a short while, went bankrupt. Mr B is still disappointed by local labour office responsible for him: 'I had to point out all the measures (language course, further education) I was entitled to, not the other way round. In order to place me in an employment they then referred me to a personnel management agency'. Since 2002 he has been working for a further education project and leading Internet training courses. According to him, his own teaching abilities and knowledge of languages (Kikongo, French, English, and German) as well as aid from refugee organisations have helped him to find employment.

#### 5.4.4 *General Experience in Germany*

Most of the interviewees thought individual skills were decisive in finding employment. The spectrum of individual skills ranges from social competence to computer skills as well as cultural knowledge and the possibility of communicating in their mother tongue (especially in the Health and Social Care sector). Some interviewees, who are employed in geriatric care, have commented that they are increasingly taking care of old people from their own countries of origin, especially from Turkey. Further on, personal attributes like hard work, personality, or motivation are named as preconditions for success in the German labour market.

#### 5.4.5 *Patchwork biography, 'lifelong learning': Mr K*

Mr K was born in 1963 in Iran. He began training to become an electrician while still in school. In 1982 he did his A-levels. For reasons of political persecution he had to leave Iran in 1986 and sought refuge in Germany. Within a year he received asylum status. He attended an eight-month language course at the Otto-Benecke-Foundation and started to study electrical engineering. After two semesters he

<sup>80</sup> For more information please visit: [www.together-in-hessen.de](http://www.together-in-hessen.de)

<sup>81</sup> According to Section 16a GG

broke off and began training in geriatric care in Frankfurt am Main. Subsequently, he studied nursing management at a college, which he completed with honours in 2000. In the same year he started to study law in order to gain further qualification in the field of social legislation (*Sozialrecht*), which he will presumably finish in 2005. He financed both studies by working in geriatric care and as a packer for a logistics company at Frankfurt airport. 'Quite often I went from a night-shift at the old people's home or from the airport straight to a lecture at the Uni.' Mr K sees the main reasons for his manifold approaches to the labour market in his flexibility and his good knowledge of languages.

#### 5.4.6 *General Experience in Germany*

Great importance is also attributed to social relationships and networks, when looking for employment. Thus, applications for businesses, which were arranged by friends or acquaintances were seen as substantially more promising than those through the usual channels. In other cases the actual demand for foreign skilled staff in the social sector, especially in the area of integration work was stressed as a decisive factor for finding employment. In exceptional cases job offers were discovered through notices at the university.

### 5.5 **Obstacles in finding employment**

The interviewees pointed to a number of obstacles in the search for employment. These included individual, as well as structural conditions.

#### 5.5.1 *Language learning*

Refugees pointed out language barriers as the biggest obstacle. A frequent criticism was that often the local labour office grants no support at all for language education, which means that language courses had to be paid by the people concerned despite very limited financial means. In individual cases it is stressed that, although knowledge of German was obtained, no employment resulted from it since native speakers were given preferential treatment.

#### 5.5.2 *Lack of work experience*

A lack of work experience posed another handicap in the search for employment for the interviewees. In some cases lack of work experience in Germany was a crucial factor in failing to get work equivalent to that in the country of origin. For employment in the low pay sector, existing work experience does not play a part in Germany. In individual cases there were difficulties as the Labour Exchange judged the mere fact of lacking work experience as problematic.

#### 5.5.3 *Lack of knowledge about the labour market*

Some of the interviewees see an obstacle in finding employment in a lack of knowledge about the German labour market and possibilities of access. The majority of these cases also state that inadequate information and missing counselling on behalf of the responsible institutions represent a major barrier. Individual people further remarked that the estimation of the economic situation and the connected demand for certain lines of profession, is problematic.

#### 5.5.4 *Residential status*

The residential status, which in many cases is still uncertain, is also an obstacle for a successful integration into employment. The majority describe the long duration of the asylum claim, above all, and the connected loss of time as a main problem. People with limited residence status consider this circumstance as decisive for not being taken on by an employer. In individual cases the question considering the residence status was raised right at the beginning of an interview.

### 5.5.5 *Discrimination*

Fifteen of the 25 interviewees reported discrimination and prejudice against their person. Many also feel that their origin is a decisive factor for not being employed by an employer. Some of the interviewees also see themselves being discriminated against by the procedure of the distribution of jobs or the denial of applications for language courses and further education by the Labour Exchange. Individual cases name the repeatedly limited residence status as a structural discrimination on behalf of the authorities.

### 5.5.6 *Financial situation*

The financial situation of the interviewees also plays a distinctive part in the procedure of finding employment. In the interviews the refugees often mentioned the problem of not possessing the means to pay for language courses and further education by themselves. Individual cases describe the situation of having been receiving grants (BAföG) for only a short period of their academic studies, as a financial hurdle in a successful integration into the labour market. Some refugees report being classified as not trustworthy to receive a loan, which proves a fundamental barrier on the way to becoming self-employed.

### 5.5.7 *Trauma*

Some of the interviewees reported that traumatising events and experiences have put an additional strain on the search for employment. At the same time these experiences are also seen as the cause for existing mental disorders. The long and uncertain stay in refugee residential premises, too, was described as a traumatic experience in individual cases.

## 5.6 **Recommendations from the interviewees**

### 5.6.1 *Language competence*

The refugees interviewed in the course of this study are all convinced of the essential importance language competence and the fundamental requirement of access to language tuition.

### 5.6.2 *Individual skills and competences*

Many of the interviewees are sure that their individual skills and competences were crucial in finding employment. They plead that skills should not be left unused because of long waiting periods or even work prohibition.

### 5.6.3 *Counselling*

To a large extent the interviewees felt inadequately advised by the local labour offices and job counsellors. They would appreciate it if knowledge about the mechanisms of the labour market was provided in the framework of integration courses.

### 5.6.4 *Qualifications*

Particularly among refugees who were already highly qualified in their countries of origin, there exists a great demand for access to further education and the chance to adjust present skills. They wish participation was not obstructed by bureaucratic barriers or restrictions such as the residence duty.

### 5.6.5 *Motivation*

The majority of the interviewees report numerous setbacks and barriers in finding employment. However, they all agree that refugees should not be discouraged and should demand the rights to which they are entitled.

## 6 Results and Recommendations

All the refugees interviewed for this study have qualifications relevant to sectors of the German economy with existing or expected skill shortages. These qualifications comprise not only special training but also work experience. However, only four of the 25 said that their present employment corresponded with their qualifications. Only a minority see themselves in a situation to make full use of their specific professional potential in the German labour market. As cause of these 'mismatches' individual problems and a number of institutional obstacles have been named which considerably delay or impede their professional integration in the labour market.

The most frequent problem mentioned in the search for employment was the inadequate knowledge of German. A good command of the language was felt to be a necessity not only to start a successful career, but also to create the social networks required to start such a career. In this context the interviewees with asylum status regretted their lack of profession specific language courses. Special field vocabulary has so far not been a part of the six-month full-time intensive language courses. In order to improve individual knowledge of the language, the introduction of language practice in corporations has repeatedly been suggested.

### *Recommendation 1: Expansion and specialisation of language courses*

Special vocabulary language training is necessary that takes into account a refugee's education and profession, beyond the six-month introduction language course.

For all those refugees who were not recognised as entitled to asylum status more basic problems arose. Participating in a normal language course is frequently a problem, due to the costs, which they have to pay, and the lack of educational institutions on offer. The general limitation of qualifying measures only to people entitled to asylum status is deliberately causing the isolation from German everyday and professional life for the majority of refugees that are only tolerated in the country. The strict link between residence permit, work permit procedure, and preparing or qualifying measures for a profession should be loosened. Integration benefits will also have to be made available for those refugees who have been permanently in a precarious residence situation in Germany for several years.

### *Recommendation 2: General extension of qualifying measures to asylum seekers and tolerated refugees*

Resources for further education and the possibility for refugees to qualify continue to be problematic. On completion of the six-month language course people entitled to asylum status can take part in a qualification or re-training programme from the local labour offices. However, as was made clear in several interviews, the decision for granting such measures lies with the officials of the local labour offices, and participation in courses that refugees have wanted to attend has frequently been denied. The refugees' existing qualifications only played a minor part in this decision. The interviewees felt that the decisive factor in assessment was much more likely to be what labour was required in the local area. Furthermore, the interviewees reported a discernible tendency to refer them to the tertiary low-pay sector, such as cleaning work.

The structure, scope and granting of qualifying measures would have to be designed more precisely to the requirements of the target group. Special field qualifications of refugees will have to be considered more strongly not only in the job placement but also in the assessment. Therefore counselling should be made available which considers the abilities, knowledge, experience, professional interests and wishes of refugees more closely.

### *Recommendation 3: Individual 'coaching' for refugees*

The creation of an individual 'coaching' system for refugees that will establish individual chances and possibilities for further education, starting with a competence analysis based on abilities and skills acquired in the country of origin.

Some people with asylum status reported prejudice and even deliberate discrimination from corporations, which made it impossible for them to get employment. Beside the local labour offices, professional associations and guilds have a decisive role in whether a specialist trained abroad can work in his or her profession. For instance, the General Medical Council decides if a foreign surgeon will be permitted to practise in Germany. The perception of refugees as potential specialists for the German labour market is still missing from many such organisations.

***Recommendation 4: Combine the work of Professional Associations, Welfare organisations and Labour Exchanges in the creation of qualifying measures***

Applicants for asylum status and tolerated refugees regard the labour legislation regulations to which they have to adhere prior and during start of employment as the biggest obstacle. In particular, the so-called profession prohibition list for the global labour market examination is viewed with considerable reservations. Due to this highly qualified refugees are banned from work, even where certain corporations are desperately seeking their skills (for example, in out-patient and geriatric care services). Furthermore the priority checks carried out by the Labour Exchange whereby no work permits will be granted because theoretically sufficient preferential unemployed persons are available, cause unnecessary irritation to potential employees and employers. The factual work prohibition and the one year period of prohibition before being able to get a first job leave applicants for asylum status inevitably dependant on social security payments.

***Recommendation 5: The deletion of preferential and labour market examination by of the Federal Institute for Employment (Bundesanstalt für Arbeit)***

The Health and Social Care sector provides the best potential labour market for many refugees. Especially in the area of out-patient and in-patient nursing in hospitals and residential homes for the elderly chances for employment are promising (see chapter 4.2). Specialist qualifications acquired by refugees in their country of origin could be effectively put to use. The precondition for this is the smooth approval of qualifications acquired abroad. This would require a simple and uniform system of approval of foreign training, experience, and qualifications. Unfortunately, such a system is exactly what is missing in Germany at this point of time.

***Recommendation 6: The creation of binding verification criteria for the recognition of foreign examinations and faster permission for work***

The IT sector can represent a potential labour market for qualified refugees (see chapter 4.2). However, recognised qualifications have become more important since the Internet boom of 1999 to 2000, when it was possible for people with qualifications in other fields (*Quereinsteiger*) to find good opportunities.

Some interviewees see their only alternative as supplying external services to corporations. This option should be reflected in the training on offer.

***Recommendation 7: Creation of and expansion of existing training seminars for refugees who possess specific qualifications in the IT sector***

A far more intensive co-operation between educational institutions, refugee authorities and labour exchanges is vital to guarantee effective and speedy integration of refugees into the labour market. The activity of the asylum development partnerships (EQUAL) in Germany could provide a suitable model of how concepts and measures of labour market integration for refugees could be developed (see chapter 3.2). In this way foundations could play a larger part than they have so far. The sole concentration of integration offers to the group of persons entitled to asylum status, quota refugees, and immigrants of German origin from eastern countries leaves the majority of refugees in a socio-economic isolation which will permanently reduce their abilities to manage new and regular training and work processes.

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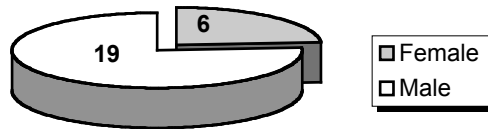
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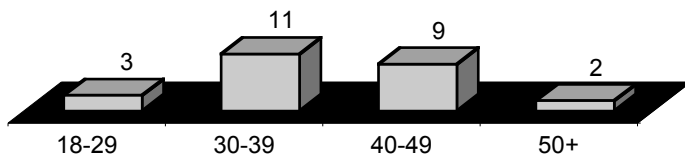
## 8 Appendix: quantitative data

The 25 interviewees had the following characteristics:

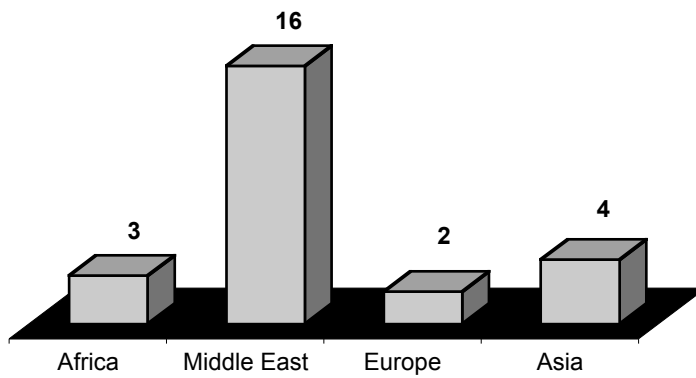
### 1a Gender



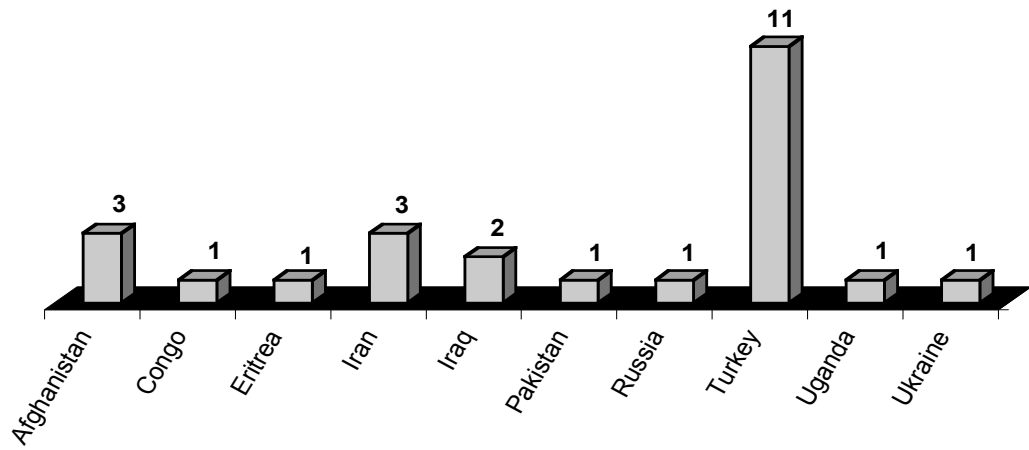
### 1b Age



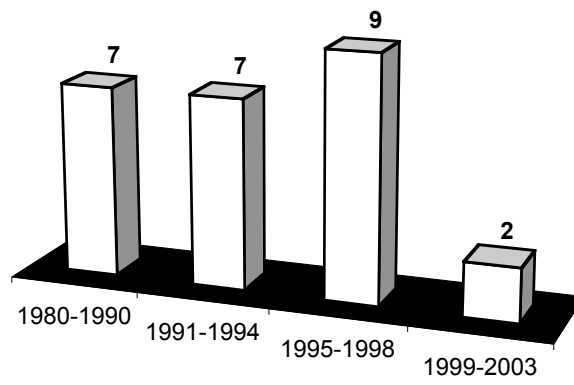
### 1c Region of origin



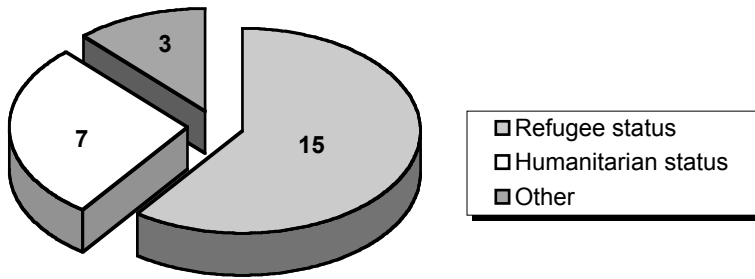
ld Country of origin



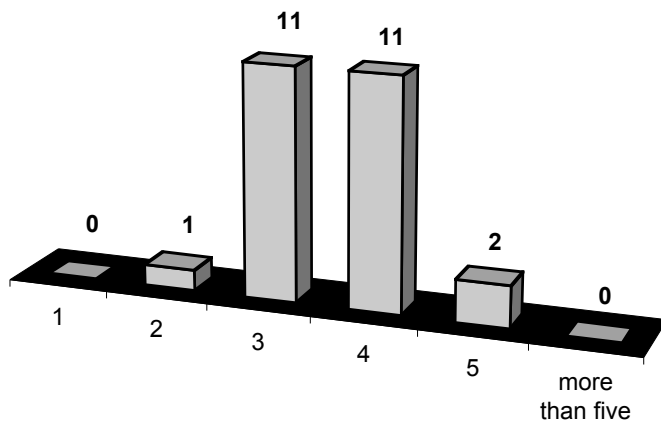
le Date of arrival in Germany



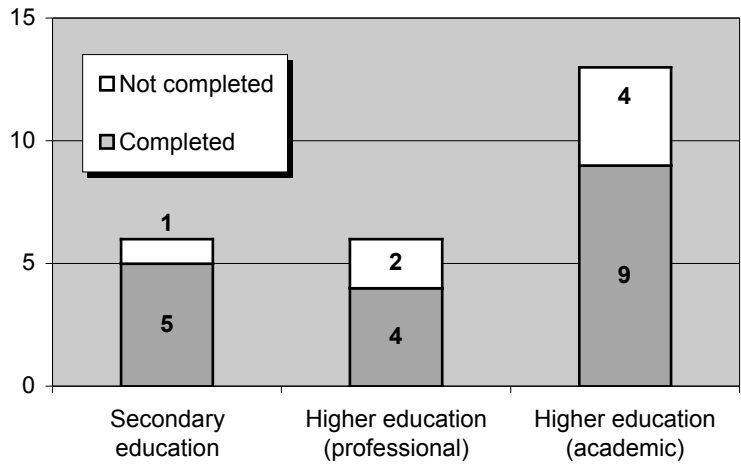
If **Status**



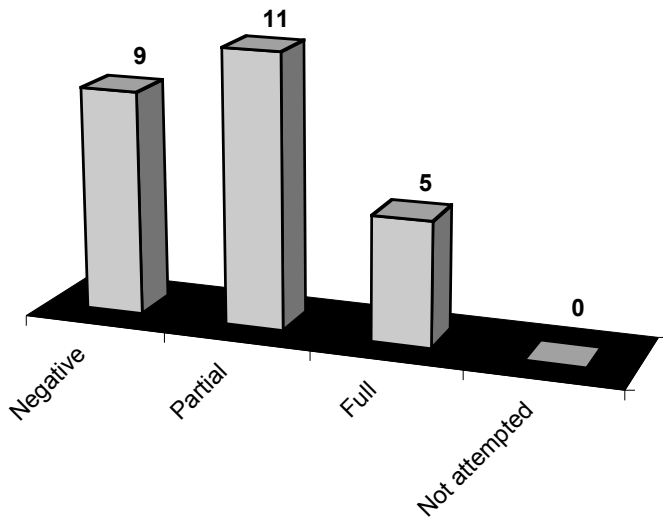
2 **Knowledge of languages (including mother tongue)**



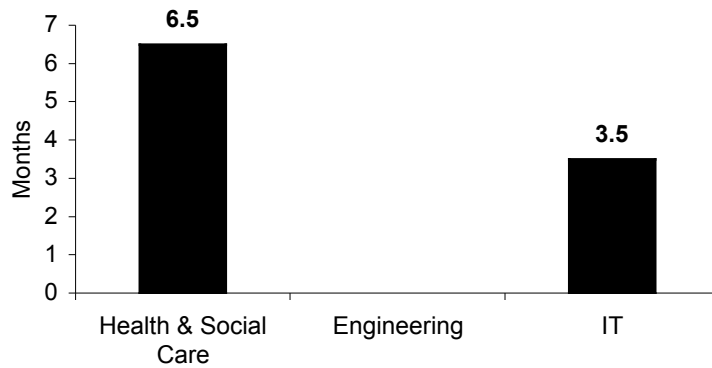
3a Highest level of education before arrival in Germany



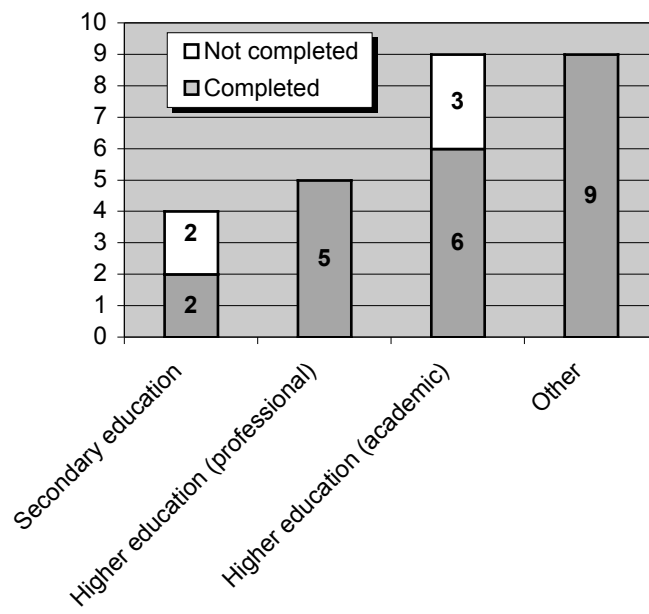
3b Diploma/equivalence recognition in EU country



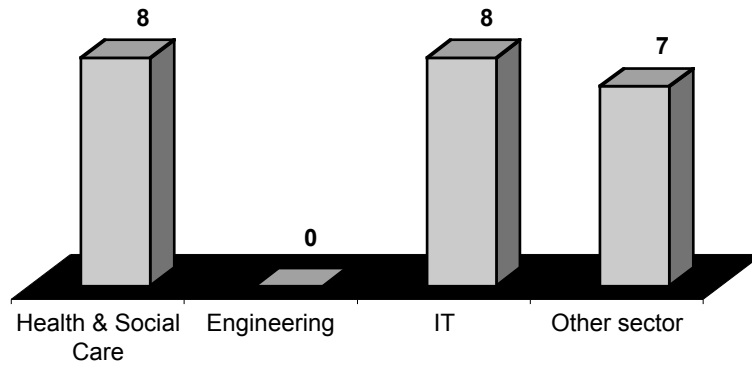
## 3c Average length of recognition procedure per sector



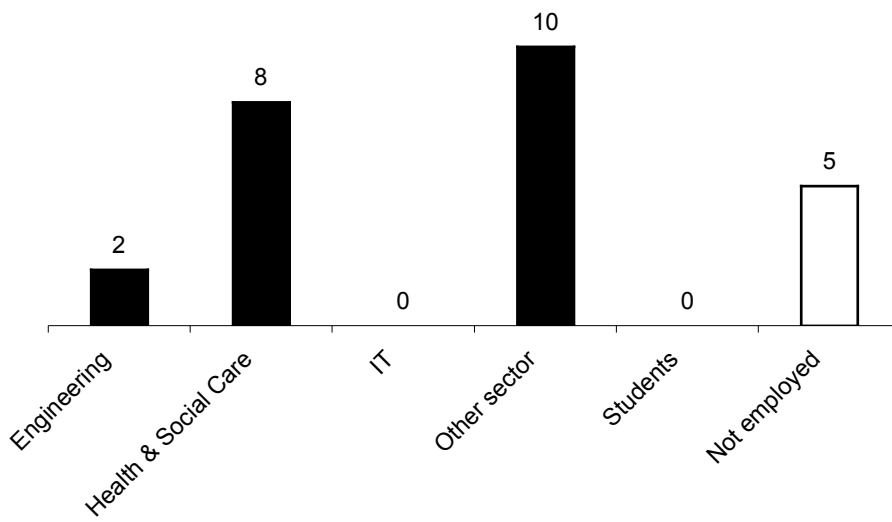
## 3d Highest level of education in Germany



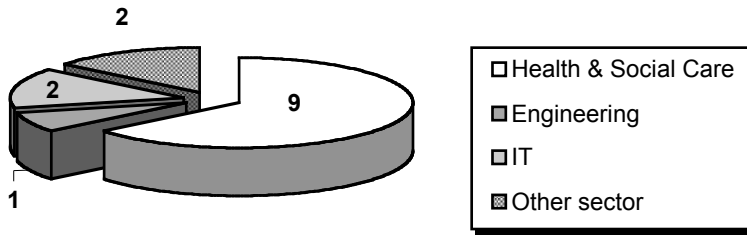
4a Number of refugees who followed practical training before arrival in EU (per sector)



4b Number of refugees employed before arrival in Germany (per sector)

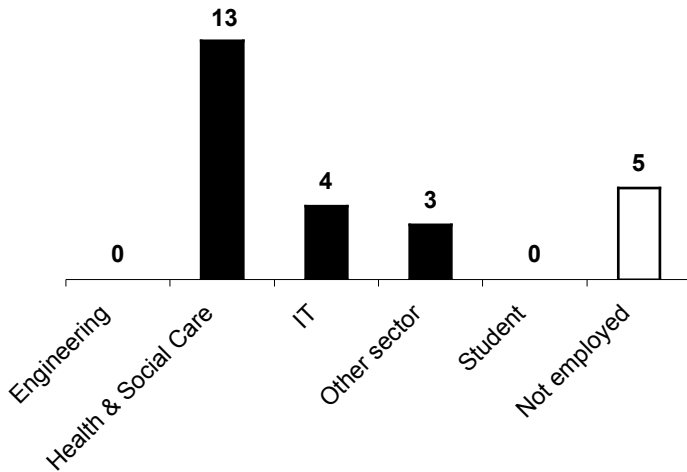


4c Number of refugees who followed practical training in Germany (per sector)



(Total people: 14)

4d Number of refugees employed in Germany (per sector)



5 To what extent do refugees' current jobs reflect the level of their skills, abilities and knowledge acquired before arrival in Germany (per sector)

