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Ayuda al Refugiado

RESOURCE Project

Refugees' contribution to Europe

Country Report: **Spain**

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European Training and Research Centre (Austria) – www.etc-graz.at

Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland) – www.ihmisoikeusliito.fi

France Terre d'Asile (France) – www.france-terre-asile.org

ProAsyl (Germany) – www.proasyl.de

Social Work Foundation (Greece) –

Spiritan Asylum Services Initiative (Ireland) – www.spirasi.ie

Italian Consortium of Solidarity (Italy) – www.icsitalia.org

ASTI (Luxembourg) – www.asti.lu

Portuguese Refugee Council (Portugal) – www.cpr.pt

CARITAS (Sweden) – www.caritas.se

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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 agencies¹ 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 states², 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 year. It makes good economic and social sense to better utilise this huge potential.

¹ 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).

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

2 The Spanish context

Access to the labour market is crucial for the social integration of third countries' citizens (that is people who are neither Spanish citizens nor citizens of another EU state). Refugees and asylum seekers are usually better qualified than immigrants; they have the necessary skills and competencies but they face many difficulties when looking for a job, due to the circumstances of their forced exit. Asylum seekers have left their countries fleeing persecution. They had a 'status' in their countries, and a life matching their qualifications. Hence, they expect this status and find it very difficult to start from zero in the labour market. Immigrants, on the other hand, usually accept easily the job they are offered, as their prime concern is economic; they try to get promoted later on.

The demographic situation in Spain at present is characterised by a very low birth rate, the lowest in Europe; high life expectancy, the highest in the world; and immigration by foreign workers that was initiated in the mid eighties and has increased during recent years. However, the population is continuing to age and neither immigration (even at current increased levels) nor a recovery in the birth rate will be able to replace the predicted loss in the workforce.³ Despite this discouraging foresight, Spain continues to use police policy to manage immigration and the granting of asylum status.

In 2002, for example, the data of Asylum and Refugee Bureau show a total of 6,203 asylum seekers. The number of refusals and unfavourable resolutions of the CIAR (Inter-ministry Commission for Asylum and Refugee) is still high: there were 5,683 asylum seekers, which represents 91.6% of the total. Only 175 applications were granted Geneva Convention status (2.8%), 53 applications were given protection for humanitarian reasons (0.85%) and 71 applications received complementary protection.

In contrast with this restrictive treatment of immigration, the aforementioned demographic outlook requires a change in policy. In fact, the aims fixed by the Lisbon strategy in March 2002⁴ are difficult to achieve, considering the economic consequences that will result from the European population's increasing average age. Several reports by specialists on this issue predict intense migratory flows as a solution to the problems created by the lack of people with the required skills and qualifications in the labour market.

Two very significant trends define a precise picture of the general labour market situation in Spain.

Firstly, during the last seven years (since just after the 1994 crisis), Spain has gone through a period of economic growth, which is reflected by the following:⁵

- Creation of new jobs (between 1995 and 2001 2.7 million new jobs were created. This figure reflects an increase of up to 22.3%)
- Subsequent reduction in unemployment (which decreased to 13% of the active population in 2001).
- Expansion of sectors and emergence of new occupations.

However, these encouraging figures cause a concentration of new jobs in certain sectors and branches of activities, commonly known as 'new job deposits'.

On the other hand, at the same time and in the opposite direction, in other sectors the destruction of jobs has increased (manual, fishing and mining industries). The size of the sub-sectors where jobs are declining is bigger than that of those creating employment. In 1995 there were 1,526,000 unemployed people (12.7%) and in 2001 1,328,000 (9%). The jobs destruction in this period was of 13%⁶.

In this report we will restrict to picture and analyse the behaviour of three sectors in the labour market which, according to former reports and researches on the matter, are facing lack of staff and are thus covered by foreign citizens: health, computing and telecommunications engineering.

³ Fernández Cordón, J.A. *'El futuro demográfico y la oferta de trabajo en España'* in Migraciones 9, IUEM. Madrid 2001.

⁴ The EU has a new target for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge, capable of growing permanently with more and better jobs and with more social cohesion.

⁵ See Report Spain 2002. Employment between 1995 and 2001: another missed chance for convergence. Fundación Encuentro-Centro de Estudios del Cambio Social (CECS)

⁶ See Report Spain 2002, op.cit.

As a way to approach this research, we will analyse these problems by studying the personal pathway to employment of some refugees who have achieved exemplary careers and contributed to the Spanish economy. The aim is to evaluate, from the refugees' point of view, the elements, practices and policies that have helped (or hindered) their labour integration in Spain.

The relevance of this research is unquestionable. We believe that the full integration of refugees in the EU labour market can contribute to its economy and develop its potential in terms of competitiveness, growth and employment. It is obvious that in the long term economic immigration will be a solution. However, the European Commission itself recommends that, in order to face these challenges and meet the Lisbon Strategy, the EU must mobilize its present human resources, among which immigrant workers living in the EU are included⁷.

Therefore, this Spanish research is part of a wider examination of how better management of human resources can unlock the potential of refugees, with their qualifications and previous professional experience, in order to maximize their positive effect on the product demand and employment demand. We intend to provide elements of a solution to the crucial question: What means should governments apply to correct the imbalances of a labour market characterized by evident lacks of specific qualifications and obvious disruptions?

This report is made up of three sections. The first will introduce a general view of employment policies and specific programmes for the labour integration of refugees in Spain. The second section will try to visualise the exact situation of the three sectors in the labour market that are being analysed, and detect the specific labour needs. The last will focus on the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from the in-depth interviews made with 20 refugees.

⁷ See Communication to the Comisión about *immigration, integration and employment*. Brussels, 3.6.2003 (C5-0382-03)

3 Overview of employment policies and schemes for refugees in Spain

3.1 Refugees' and asylum seekers' entitlement to work

The law on foreigners stipulates that: 'foreigners who meet the requirements provided for in this Organic Law and in the regulations that develop it, will have the right to exercise a remunerated activity on their own or for others, as well as access to the social security system, in accordance with the legislation in force'.⁸ Furthermore, the law on the right of asylum and refugee status admits that the grant of asylum right entails residence permission, authorisation to carry out work, and professional and commercial activities.⁹

On the other hand, the Royal Decree that regulates the law states that asylum seekers will be authorised to work after six months without their request having been answered for circumstances not attributable to them.¹⁰ This authorisation enables them to exercise a lucrative activity for others in a specific sector and geographical area. The duration of the authorisation will be the same as that of the contract of employment, with a six-month limit and its validity is determined by that of the asylum document.

In general, there is a high unemployment rate in Spain. There are no official statistics or figures regarding the unemployment rate among refugees because the National Employment Institute (INEM) makes no distinction between migrants and refugees when they register for work. For that reason, the only way to approximate the number is to use a survey.

A recent study on quality evaluation on public social services for asylum seekers, refugees and displaced persons in Spain, required by the Institute of Migration and Social Services (*Instituto de Migraciones y Servicios Sociales* – IMSERSO) and carried out by *Inmark, Estudios y Estrategias S.A.* reveals that almost half of the refugees interviewed are currently unemployed and looking for a job (49%), and another 46% do have some kind of job although in very variable conditions as only 16% have a stable position while roughly 30% are working in precarious or irregular conditions and 4.5% do not have a job and are not looking for one either.

This data, supported by many other interviews, shows that the main difficulty in the refugees' insertion process is, together with finding a home, getting a stable and well-paid job.

In view of this tough reality refugees have two very distinct positions:

- Resigning to the reality of the labour market. In other words, starting afresh in the labour market sectors that Spaniards are not interested in (agriculture, construction, hotels and domestic services) and are very badly paid.
- Rejection of what is offered and reclamation of more social protection that permits access to jobs in accordance with the refugee's educational and labour-professional profile. Refugees support this attitude as a way to claim the status they enjoyed in their country of origin. Indeed, most refugees are better qualified than immigrants and look for a job in accordance with their educational background and professional experience.

After going through several documents and state policies for the labour integration of refugees, we found that no clear definition of the policies exists. One gets the feeling that the Spanish Government's only existing policy is to pass the responsibility for administering social services for refugees or asylum seekers on to the Institute of Migrations and the Social Services (IMSERSO).

⁸ Art. 10 of the Organic Law 4/2000 of January 11, reformed by the Organic Law 8/2000 of December 22, on rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration.

⁹ In art. 13.

¹⁰ Paragraph c), Art. 79 of the Royal Decree 8/2001 that regulates the implementation of the Organic Law 4/2000.

But we found a series of programmes and projects at local, national and European level to which Spain adheres as a member of the EU.

3.2 Refugees integration policies in Spain

The European Commission defends the integration of 'third countries citizens', immigrants and refugees, on the basis of the recognition of human rights, especially those related to decent living and labour conditions. In this perspective, the European Council in Tampere explicitly requested more commitment to integration policies directed to granting rights and obligations comparable to those of the European citizens to legally resident nationals of third countries.

In general, the integration policies offered to refugees in Spain do not offer a life equivalent to the average Spaniard, but one rather closer to that of marginalized Spaniards.¹¹ Also, the policies make no significant distinction between immigrants and refugees.

In 1982 the Spanish government assumed responsibility for social assistance to refugees; thus, taking on for the first time, responsibility for its international commitments, financing social programmes for refugees through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

Since 1990, the Institute of Migration and Social Services (IMSERSO), an organisation responsible for managing social security which reports to Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (*Ministerio de Trabajo y de Asuntos Sociales*), has been in charge of managing and developing social programmes for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people, as well as the development of a network of Refugee Acceptance Centres (*Centros de Acogida de Refugiados – CAR*).

The aim of IMSERSO's refugee programmes is to provide help to refugees and displaced people in Spain who have no economic resources as well as to facilitate their integration. This is done in two ways:

- Direct management through CAR.
- Subsidies to NGOs in the sector to promote their cooperation in the execution of social programmes. The management of the programmes is carried out in the government sphere, between the government and the NGOs.

NGOs manage around 80% of the budget that has risen to €17,978,820. Concretely, the NGOS programmes offer: Information and guidance, help for housing and job-searching through assistance for training and starting a professional activity as well as meeting their needs and finding the best way for their integration in Spain. Nevertheless, in many cases the financial assistance offered by these programmes is not enough and the requirements very strict considering refugees' situation (lack of formal support networks, their ignorance of the Spanish language and culture, difficulties to find a house and a job that matches their qualifications and experience, and so on).

In theory, refugees have access to the social protection provided by the State who recognises the universal right to education, health care and job and guarantees basic needs. Refugees should have access to these resources in the same way as Spanish people. But the truth is that refugees find it really difficult to get those resources that guarantee their integration. So, 'besides legal reasons, there are others such as unemployment, knowledge of the Spanish language in some cases, ignorance of the basic social skills, little information on employment, racism or xenophobia and contempt for their work experience, that makes it difficult for them to find a job'.

As specific programmes carried out by NGOs (all partners of IMSERSO)¹² that are aimed to tackle unemployment among refugees we can underline the following.

¹¹ Report CEAR 2003, *Accento Editorial-CEAR*, Madrid, 2003

¹² The Spanish Commission for Help to the Refugee (*Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado: CEAR*), Spanish Red Cross, Association Spanish Catholic Immigration Commission, International Rescue Committee

3.2.1 *Mediation in refugees employment*

Under this there are three types of procedure that must be carried out by the entity acting in the labour intermediation for refugees and asylum seekers:

- Establishing integration, tutorship and follow-up for each person.
- Managing and dealing with authorisation procedures before the Administration.
- Preparing people for the labour market. This means providing them with professional training, facilitating their admission and attendance (with grants, transport, etc) and providing them with some command of Spanish so that they can take advantage of the training, helping them overcome their fears and helping them disregard fake job offers that may tempt them to give up the training.

The biggest problem that appears when trying to find employment for refugees is in the gap between the positions offered and the refugees' training and skills. Besides, there is the stigmatisation of foreigners with illegality and delinquency, which creates a high level of rejection, misunderstanding and discrimination when employing them. On the other hand, the Spanish labour market offers a wide range of jobs in sectors where Spaniards do not want to be employed: the hotel and catering business, construction, agriculture and cattle raising. These kinds of jobs are normally underpaid. When there is no other resort, refugees, who are usually better qualified, finally accept those jobs. For this reason there is an imbalance between refugees' academic levels and the jobs they usually do.

3.2.2 *Vocational training*

In Spain, the concept of vocational training refers to education that takes place outside the official educational programmes and geared to provide people with the tools, elements, concepts and basic vocabularies related to their professions. In the Spanish context, this education is very productive, considering the following factors:

- Most refugees and asylum seekers that arrive in Spain generally have the training necessary to do something they used to do in their countries of origin.
- Asylum seekers generally have a family to support, which makes it urgent for them to try to find some source of income. In addition, many of their families have only one parent.
- When they are informed about the steps required to have their degrees recognised as valid, they are generally discouraged by these difficulties and their lack of economic resources. Thus, they start to work straightaway and in whatever conditions they are offered.

Some NGOs have agreements with the National Institute of Employment (*Instituto Nacional de Empleo* – INEM) to give asylum seekers professional training courses that will provide them with the basic language for their professions. Also, they are given certificates and diplomas that specify the number of hours the course consisted of, the skills acquired and the contents of the course.

These courses are an alternative to the official INEM courses since the design and planning of those courses fail to take into account the particular situation of asylum seekers, which is reflected in the timetables, the contents or the methodology. The NGOs select the refugees and asylum seekers for their courses on the basis of the following criteria:

- The candidate's legal situation.
- The interest shown.
- Professional experience.
- Knowledge of Spanish.

3.2.3 *The EQUAL Initiative*

The Equal initiative operates in the context of the European Employment Strategy (EEE) goals, and involves issues connected to exclusion, discrimination and inequality in all their forms where they interact with employment.

In Spain there is just one Equal project referring to Axis Five, which is the axis relating to asylum seekers. This project is called Eneas Equal and its sectoral development group is led by IMSERSO and composed of the following organisations: Refugees admittance centres of Vallecas (Madrid), Alcobendas (Madrid), Seville (Andalusia), Mislata (Valencia); ACCEM (Spanish Catholic Commission of Migration Association); CEAR (Spanish Commission for Refugees Assistance) and CRE (Spanish Red Cross).

The main aim of the Eneas Equal project is to provide asylum seekers and people granted with the **o t h e r f o r m o f p r o t e c t i o n** with the knowledge and skills needed, promoting a close institution cooperation which allows them to get by and integrate in the host country.

The main actions are the following:

- Detection of weak and strong points, and opportunities offered by the labour market for applicants.
- Complete itineraries of labour insertion, considering the specific beneficiaries' features and the labour market structure. Development of training profiles and training proceedings, including training activities specially meant for women.

Data from the Eneas Equal project between 16 May 2002 and 1 December 2003 reveals a total of 1,558 beneficiaries (asylum seekers and humanitarian protection status), among them 1,009 men and 549 women. However, within this number, a total of 599 people received training help (340 men and 259 women).

As a concrete result, on the abovementioned date, this project presents a total of 432 working contracts. This figure represents 35% of the beneficiaries. Of these 432 jobs, 423 were full time and 133 were part time.

3.2.4 ***The process of diploma recognition***

The recognition of foreign degrees is carried out in the Ministry of Education and Culture through two offices.¹³

- The *Secretaría General Técnica*, which is in charge of recognition of foreign higher education degrees, obtained in any country, and is also responsible for degrees obtained in EU countries.
- The *Dirección General de Enseñanza Superior*, which has the authority to decide on medical and pharmaceutical specialities and nursing.

The university where a student would like to finish their course is in charge of the recognition of unfinished higher education courses.

Foreign higher education courses can be recognised and matched to the corresponding Spanish ones as long as they bear enough resemblance with the corresponding Spanish official degree, which must exist in some Spanish university at the time when the recognition is requested.

In the process of recognition, evaluation sub-commissions of the Council of Universities have decisive intervention. Experts scrutinise the contents and duration of the foreign higher education courses to be recognised. These are compared with Spanish and EU higher educational contents and after this scrutiny the Council of Universities decides favourably or unfavourably on the recognition of the degree.

When the Council of Universities decides that the foreigner's studies are inadequate or somehow incomplete in comparison with the above-mentioned standards, candidates must take a test at a Spanish university of their choice in order for their degrees to be recognised.

In theory, six months after they have submitted their application, asylum seekers can apply for a work permit to do any job. And when they are granted the status, they can do any job working for

¹³ The recognition of foreign university degrees is regulated by the Real Decree 86/1987, dated 16 January, as well as both the Order of 9 February 1987 for the application of what is stated in the Royal Decree 86/1987 and also the Order of 21 July 1995, which establishes the general criteria for tests prior to recognition of higher education degrees.

themselves or for others. In practice, they can only exercise this right after meeting a basic requirement: to have their degrees recognised.

The recognition or validation of a degree is a requirement to exercise a profession in Spain. Procedures vary depending on the profession, the higher the corporatism in the trade, the more the requirements.

4 General labour market behaviour

The second part of this research relating to the behaviour of the Spanish labour market was meant to find out, among other things, what are the requirements, what kind of requirements they are, if there is workers' shortage in some sectors of the economy and what kind of shortage it is.

These questions were being asked to confirm or to reject the hypothesis that refugees in Spain, with the experience and academic education they bring from their countries of origin, might substitute for the skilled labour needs in some sectors of the economy that were seemingly experiencing a high growth similar to that of some countries of the EU. Those sectors are Health care, computer science and telecommunications and engineering.

4.1 Behaviour of the labour market in the period of 1999 to 2002

In general terms the behaviour of the Spanish labour market with regard to the most relevant sectors for this study, in the last four years is as follows:

Table 1: New unemployed people per sector

Sectors	1999		2000		2001		2002	
	% Annual increase	People	% Annual increase	People	% Annual increase	People	% Annual increase	People
Industry	3.0	76,000	4.7	15,000	1.2	35,000	0.6	14,000
Construction	12	160,00	6.0	127,000	6.1	98,000	3.4	63,000
Services	5.0	426,000	4.5	390,000	1.9	171,000	3.2	321,000

Year after year we can see a downward trend in all sectors. The services sector in the last year was accounted for the two-points growth of the Spanish employment and though this shows some growth compared to 2000, these results are due to its big size. And it is precisely in the services sectors that we find most of the professionals of the areas that are considered in this study.

Information Technologies and Telecommunications (IT), the subdivision of computer activities, has grown dramatically, generating a high employment level. On its part the subdivision of health care services showed some recovery at the beginning of the period (1999) but, in the following years did not improve as a growing occupational branch. And in the case of engineers, industry left them with few job options.

But let's see what happened in 2002, to have an up-to-date view of the Spanish labour market.

In 2002 80% of profits were obtained from the employment rate of the people aged between 16 and 64, that is, 4.4% below the EU average.

The employment rate of Spanish women in the same age group grew 1%, but it is still the lowest of the EU; unemployment among women also increased dramatically that year.

The number of people over 55 in employment grew slightly, to rise above 40% and although the increase brought it closer to the EU average, it is still more than 10% away from the objective for 2010.

From a sectoral perspective, the loss of employment stands out in the primary and industrial sectors. The services sector was once again the one that maintained the occupation increase in the year, whereas the construction sector showed a relatively high growth, but very far from the results obtained in the period of 1998-2001.

Almost all job creation was accounted for by wage-earning jobs, which increased by 355,000, of which two thirds were women. The private sector has created jobs at a lower rate relative to previous years, whereas this rate was a bit higher in the public sector, with emphasis on the job created by the Autonomous Communities.

According to the Working Population Survey, (EPA), unemployment in Spain grew in 2002 by more than 312,000 people, which means a 2% increase, rather below the level obtained in 2001 (3.7% in homogeneous terms). We can say that the tendency shown since the end of 2000 continues with an

important nuance: it does not show a clear drop in the seasonal rhythm of job creation in each quarter. Besides, although the information of people registered at the Social Security shows an seasonal growth throughout 2002 lower than 2001; this seems to be much more stable although immigration might have an impact on this growth.

The latest available results definitely show an uncertain outlook for the Spanish labour market.

We cannot present an exact picture of the evolution of the labour market in Health and Engineering confirming our hypothesis of labour shortages. The reason is that there are no studies, data or trustworthy figures available. For that, in the framework of our study, we will use the focus deduction from the data for the IT sector, which are trustworthy, and available.

4.2 Analysis of the IT and telecommunications sectors in Spain

It is not easy to present an analysis of the employment generated by activities related to this subdivision since it is limited by the lack of statistics. Despite the fact that until 2001 the Information Technologies and Telecommunications (IT) market experienced a boom that seemed endless, studies that tried to quantify this growth and the lack of qualified professionals in these fields of activity had to find their own definition, conditioned to a large extent by the availability of the data.

Some institutions made some definitions of IT and invested money and resources to know their economic as well as social impact; here are some of them that are included in the *Informe España 2002*, a report written by the Fundacion Encuentro and in which this subdivision includes the following branches of activity:

- Computer activities.
- Production of office machines and computer equipment.
- Post office and telecommunications and production of electronic material.
- Production of radios and television sets and communication.

The National Association of Electronic Industries and Telecommunications (ANIEL) in its report, presents it the following way:

- Components.
- Electronic equipments.
- Telecommunications.
- Audio-visual.
- Computer science.
- Electronic trade.
- Electronic contents.
- Internet.

The sector so defined, had 252,000 workers in 1995 (2.1% of the total working population) and in 2001 419,000 (2.9%) which meant a strong increase (66.5%), although differences between the subdivisions were observed.

This dramatic development was followed by strong job creation in some sectors with high technological component generating some stresses due to the lack of properly qualified workforce. This skill shortage held back not only the growth of the sector, but also, in view of its important dragging effect, that of other sectors related to it. In 2000, some studies calculated that 1.7 million of these new professionals would be necessary in the whole EU for the year 2003; according to other studies, 80,000 would be necessary in Spain.

Between 1999 and 2001, the most relevant aspects related to the behaviour of employment of this sector had to do with the fact that those who benefited most from it were young people (under twenty-fives accounted for 30% of new jobs) and women (47% of the new employment, doubling the number of women).

Nevertheless, while young people's participation in the sector has grown up to exceed the average in other sectors, the proportion of the women only comes to 35%, standing below the average.

Most of the people employed in this sector have a high educational level and the majority of employment created belongs to this level. Nevertheless, this situation is compatible with the surprising result of an analysis of more than 11,000 job offers in the area of information new technologies where 32% of the offers analysed did not require primary education. Obviously this does not mean that the offers refer to the uneducated segment of the population, but given the imbalance between offer and demand of skilled workers with university degrees and the competence required by employers, qualification is not totally comparable to having a university degree. This also means that there is a possibility for people with no university degree but who have the necessary technical knowledge to enter the job market.

Nevertheless, at the end of 2001, the great expectations of this sector cooled to some extent, after realising that many of these companies did not achieve the great profits expected from them; the development of the sector started to slow down. This in some cases is currently undergoing some changes.

As for employment, the consequence was either a decrease in the growth intensity of these companies or a remarkable staff reduction.

In the document that compiles the economic and social situation of Spain in 2002 and the paragraph related to the IT it is clearly shown that this sub-division experienced an important slow down in its growth especially in the case of telecommunications, one of the most dynamic sectors in the rising phase of the economic cycle. Apparently this slow down contrasts with the general economic slow down in Spain since 2001, which became more noticeable in 2002.

According to the figures published by the National Association of Electronic and Telecommunications Industries (ANIEL), in 2002 the market of the IT grew only 2.5% and reflects the continuous slow down of the sector for the second consecutive year, compared to its evolution in previous years.

Within the sectors that form this market, the decrease experienced by the equipments and electronic components industry, professional electronics and telematics, which decreased by 15%, stands out compared to the growth of the telecommunications' market, which increased 13% compared to 2001.

The growth of the market of telecommunications services contrasts with the decrease registered in the production telecommunications equipments, which experienced a decrease of 40% compared to 2001, as well as in the investments in telecommunications, which equally descended by 40%. Besides, in terms of employment, a reduction of 7% was observed in the sector in 2002; this affected not only the production with a setback of 33% in employment, but also operators and/or suppliers of telecommunications services, with a 1% fall.

For the second consecutive year, imports as well as exports decreased against this setback of 4% of the year 2001, in 2002 imports fell 14% (€10,677m) and exports 15% (€3,967m).

In this way, the direct employment that was generated by this subdivision fell by 5%, mainly because of the reductions in the area of telecommunications. At the end of 2002, this branch was directly employing 133,360 people.

Thus the employment outlook that we get is very discouraging. The figures shown above allow us to conclude that far from what happens in other EU countries (where the growth rhythm of this sector has also fallen due to the worldwide economic crisis, that is not yet so clear in Spain), the IT market in Spain is not growing, but on the contrary it is suffering a noticeable downturn, like many other sectors of the national economy.

In this respect, it is difficult to think that refugees with training in the areas related to this market will find job openings or can make up for some needs, since for the time being there is no shortage of labour, but rather some excess. At the time of the boom in these activities, many professionals of these areas benefited because there were lots of positions to be taken in the shortest possible time, so it was not important to hold a degree but have qualifications and experience; thus, one of the interviewees for this report could get a job with one of the top companies of the sector, with little experience and without having any degree that backed up his knowledge.

Nowadays, competition among professionals is high and companies' requirements are higher and higher. In this sector professionals have to update their knowledge constantly because of new technological advances that come up every day.

And to reduce employment possibilities, this situation contrasts with the fact that Spain is still behind the EU countries. As for infrastructures and equipments, investments have decreased in the last years.

As we said in the previous chapter about the employment policies for refugees, they compete in equal legal conditions (when not in worse conditions as asylum seekers); that is to say that according to the law they should have the same right as the native Spanish, but there is no such equality regarding social conditions. Xenophobia, discrimination and little appraisal of their skills and experience still have a strong weight and the situation gets worse if this barrier adds to the barriers of a sector that in the beginning offered lots of opportunities to many people but now is closing more and more every day.

Despite the fact that state programmes included the implementation and the development of the Plan Info XXI with actions from 2001 to 2003 that included the creation of Web pages for many of the departments of the state administration, the training of the IT professionals, *'the impulse of the use of new technologies and professionals' access to new employment for the integration of 14,000 unemployed people until 2003, training for the integration of more than a million people of this area to be integrated in the labour market and the diffusion of the new technologies among the disabled'*, these plans were never achieved, since the *Plan* was a total failure. So, after the recognition on the part of the government of the above mentioned failure, some months ago a new Plan designed for next four years was presented, and be will developed in accordance with the New National Research and Development Plan 2004 -2007.

But if the results of the previous plan are worrying and the new one causes some distrust, it is also worrying that in neither of two plans does the government provide for actions that improve the working conditions of refugees. The development of training courses for new professionals and lots of job opportunities are mentioned but there is no emphasis on the target group; the plan simply talks about 'unemployed people'. In this situation it is necessary to remember that an unemployed Spaniard is not the same as an unemployed immigrant.

But it is not only in the Initiative Info XXI where refugees do not fit. They do not fit in the National Plan for Employment (PNAE) where they are invisible. This Plan is about fomenting actions to fight discrimination and to favour social integration, but refugees are not openly mentioned as the direct beneficiaries of the future actions.

Up till now, it is impossible to know the exact number of refugees who are employed in the IT sector, but surely they will not be more than usual, the sectors of activity they are bound to are the ones related to services, especially hotel and catering business, people's care and domestic services or cleaning in the case of women; as for men there is a great demand for jobs like electricians, plumbers or carpenters and also in the construction sector which in the last years has generated many jobs due to its growth, but is now at a standstill due to a slow-down. Agriculture, which is the sector that normally absorbs a lot of foreign labour, does not normally employ refugees, except in the case of sub-Saharan Africans.

This reality answers the manpower need for the jobs that Spanish people reject, either because the conditions are precarious – temporality and low wages - or because of their hardness, the schedule or the lack recognition; for this reason, regardless of their education and experience, the integration of refugees in Spain normally implies a loss of economic, labour and social status which puts them in a position of social exclusion.

The conclusions drawn from the documents presented above allow us to give a straight answer to the questions raised in this study: what are the needs of the labour market, what type of needs they are, if there is shortage of workers in any sector of the economy and what type of shortage it is.

The answer is that the Spanish economy has shown a continuous slowing down year after year and it reflects in all the sectors. Despite the fact that the government continuously reduces unemployment rate and creates conditions that favour new jobs creation, self-employment, the eradication of gender inequalities, aids for the primary sector, and so on, the truth is that the situation is hopeless.

And if it is not encouraging for Spaniards themselves it is less so for refugees who do not come to Spain for economic reasons and are ready to forget their education and experience and in many cases their dignity for a job that in most cases is badly paid.

As can be observed in the figures presented, the sectors that have grown within the national economy or keep their profitability indexes in the last four years are the services and construction sectors. This is precisely where immigrants and refugees are employed; but the positions they hold are not equally distributed, and don't reflect their education. They don't reach managerial positions despite having university degrees; they hold the low level positions in the production line: waiters, cooks, servants, receptionists, clerks (in the best cases) roundsmen in the services sector, or workers or construction labourers, electricians, plumbers, gardeners.

5 Qualitative analysis: refugees' contribution to Europe

5.1 Summary of the interviews

We interviewed five women and fifteen men; nine from Colombia, four from Cuba, three from Congo, one from Ethiopia and one from Mauritania. Most of them (14) are between 30 and 39 years old; two are between 40 and 49, two are 50 or more and two are between 18 and 29 years old.

They are men and women with very similar personal and existential characteristics: optimistic, persistent, nonconformist, with a high level of self-esteem, public relations skills, sure of themselves, with a high level professional, social and political experience due to their education, experience, responsibilities or the status they had in their countries.

Depending on the time they have lived in Spain, the interviewees can be put in three groups: the biggest (12) is that of people who arrived between 1999 and 2003; five in between 1995 and 1998; the other three arrived between 1991 and 1994. If we compare the time of residence with the nationality, Colombians are the most representative group (9) of those who have been in Spain for a long time. This reflects the increase of the migration wave from Colombia in the last five years for political and humanitarian reasons.

As for their legal status, fourteen were asylum seekers; four were granted refugee status for humanitarian reasons; one had been denied the status and appealed the decision and two were asylum seekers at the time of the interviews.

One advantage they had is their knowledge of other languages, considering that Spanish was the mother tongue for thirteen of them; four people only spoke this language. Nine of them were bilingual and the other three spoke three to five languages, the Africans speaking most languages. The knowledge of a language different from Spanish has been a decisive factor in getting a job especially for the engineers and the computer specialists and those who temporarily worked as intercultural mediators.

The educational level of the group is high. When they left their countries, eleven of them were university graduates, seven had postgraduate education; two vocational training or non diploma courses and only one was in his or her first year of university. In the case of the Africans, three studied in Cuba, one in Russia and another in Belgium.

As for the validation processes only eight of them got the total validation of their degrees. Some of them did not get the same academic for having their postgraduate degrees validated for graduate degrees. Another group (8) had their degrees partially validated and had to do an exam to have the full recognition. There are other three who are still waiting for an answer to their application and the dental technician was denied recognition.

While they have been living in Spain the educational level of the group has increased due to the fact that seven of the university graduates did postgraduate courses. This occurred specially with the health care professionals and the engineers, because it is a way to get the Spanish qualification in order to get more job possibilities, adapt their knowledge to the Spanish market and make relations in their professional area. It has also been a way to reach other sectors that allowed them to use their experience and previous education in political or social activity and apply them to intercultural mediation, social and cultural education.

We can assume from the experience they had in their countries of origin in the exercise of a profession as well as internships as part of a course or an academic curricula that their level of experience is very high. Except from one who was still studying, all of them had some training when at university as part of the requirements to get the degree, especially in the health care and engineering areas. The interviewees insisted on this aspect to show the difference with the number of training hours required at Spanish universities which are much less and with less responsibilities than students in Cuba, Colombia and Russia.

Despite their previous qualification and experience, more than half did internship in some institution, association or NGOs in Spain, and this has permitted them to know the labour market and meet people that have finally guided them in their job searching. This has been an important strategy to spread

information on job offers. The only exception is the case of the computer specialists who did not use this system because this sector gives priority to knowledge and it is an area where there is not yet the corporatism and protectionism of other areas like health care where apart from having the right professional qualifications, you also have to be well connected to enter the job market.

Before coming to Spain, fifteen of them were working and five were had just graduated or were still studying. By occupational sectors the distribution of the sample is still the same, that is, 10 in the health care sector, two engineers and three computer specialists. In short, the possibility to find a job was quite good. Except one who was unemployed, they were all working at the moment of the interview; but there are a lot of nuances in this new situation: although all the health care professionals were all working, the category, the skill level required or the relation between responsibility and salary were lower. Only two doctors make the difference. They were newly graduated when they arrived to Spain and after 12 years residence and after a long and difficult way they are in better labour conditions than before and a computer specialist who had neither experience nor education could reach the level of a programmer thanks to self-taught studies, but he earns less than an engineer.

5.2 Pathways to employment

5.2.1 *Refugees' own perception of their present jobs compared to the skills and training acquired in their countries of origin*

Forty percent of the interviewees think that their present jobs do not reflect the training level and experience acquired in their country of origin. For example, a computer technician said that: *'I could have used my training as computer consultant in only two jobs and I had to re-train as a swimming instructor'*. Within this group the highest percentage belongs to the health care professionals who do not manage to exercise their speciality because of the academic barriers they find for the recognition of that type of degrees: *'I did a specialisation and I have more experience than necessary for a general practitioner'*. In the case of engineers and computer professionals they say that their responsibilities and salaries are lower than their abilities: *'No, because I have always been under-employed and did not use the training level or I have never been paid accordingly to the tasks I carry out'*.

Twenty percent of the people said that they partially do because they value as positive the fact that they work in their field of study though with less competences or status, because they lacked work experience on their arrival to Spain or because they have been in Spain for less than four years. In this case the opinion of women working in the health care sector is most important: *'I am trained to do almost everything, except surgery, but because I don't have the certificate of my speciality I cannot subscribe the civil liability insurance and I can only exercise like a dental assistant'*.

Some engineers think that the salary they receive is above the professional average and the stability that they have gained is positive: *'I have better training than necessary for my job but, since I did not have any working experience, it is not bad for a start, it takes time'*. On the other hand, another one gives more importance to the social action of his job than to the ability or training he had: *'It fits with my training as Electric Engineer and makes communication easy with people and allows me to act like a mediator'*. Finally there are people who think that in their job they develop their abilities and experience to the maximum level but, do not get the salary a Spanish person would in the same job and think it is because they are black and immigrant: *'The level of my responsibilities and functions reflects the level of my abilities but, does not adjust to my salary because I am paid as technician not as a polyglot engineer'*.

Finally, there is a group who thinks their skills and working experience completely adjust to their present job; these people represent 40% of the group. They give reasons like their lack of previous experience, the good treatment they receive, or the status and the salary they have reached are similar to what they had back home.

'Yes, because if I had not studied and worked in Colombia I would not be able to teach them now. I know how to do it well and the fact that I studied dentistry is the basis of my success as a dental technician.'

'Because when I arrived here I could teach computing despite the fact that in my country I only did a year of mathematics and another one of computer science.'

'The activity I carry out as a computer specialist is welcomed.'

5.2.2 Analysis of the factors which have helped refugees to get their current job

In this section we will try to systematise the answers given by refugees about the factors that contributed and helped them to get their current job. These elements put together in this way, can be considered as pathways to employment. Each refugee who was interviewed has based on one or more of them. From the interviews as a whole we can point out the three following factors.

5.2.2.1 Cultural and social skills

This factor includes all elements relating to the skill of the refugee and asylum seeker for connecting with the surrounding social environment and for perceiving the cultural keys, which are the backbone of the host society.

We include in this group the skill to create, maintain and use a social net made up of both compatriots and Spanish citizens to access to the information about the labour market and therefore to handle in their favour the disposition and solidarity of this social net.

When analysing the interviews, we observe that the process of introduction to the labour world for some refugees has been promoted by this net. This is very frequent in large national and well-settled groups in Spain, such as Colombians and Cubans. Besides this aspect, the good command of the language plays a determinant role, as it makes communication possible.

5.2.2.2 Supplementary academic effort

This factor is comprised by all elements tending to provide the refugee and asylum seeker with training and qualifications that are complementary to the ones acquired in the country of origin, and add more points to the curriculum vitae (CV). These elements add value and show that the refugee has a minimum re-training to master the concepts and techniques of his or her profession in Spanish. Besides language courses, we include in this group other training, such as professional practices, voluntary work, specialisations and Master's degrees.

This factor is complementary to social and cultural skills. It helped many of the interviewees to get in contact with people of their professional environment who turned out to be very useful to enter in the labour market.

5.2.2.3 Personal skills

Under this name we include elements belonging to each refugee's personality. These are psychological factors that distinguish the personal capacity for facing an adverse situation or environment. For illustrative purposes we can mention aptitudes like perseverance, non-conformity, patience and endurance.

This is the most shared factor. All of them have admitted that this element played an essential role in the process of professional insertion and the success of all other factors depends on it.

5.2.3 The impact of the recognition process in the current job

The impact of recognition has been decisive in getting a 'suitable' job, although this effect is stronger in some sectors than in others. Although half of the refugees that participated in this study have worked without having their degrees recognised, it was without a contract and in precarious condi-

tions. This allows us to consider suitable the jobs that they had before the recognition of their degrees or the validation of their knowledge by a Spanish educational centre.

Health care is the sector where the impact of degree recognition is most noticeable, especially in the case of dentists and dental technicians as well as doctors who work for the Public Health System. For these people it is impossible to get a job without this requirement, no one employs them if they are not members of a professional association, condition that enables them to subscribe an insurance necessary to exercise. Of the 12 professionals, only one could skip this condition by creating his own dental surgery, after having worked as an assistant for two and a half years.

Seemingly, there are no degree requirements for computer specialists. This is mainly due to the fact that at the end of the 1980s there was need for all available manpower. But, from 2002 the situation changed because of the slow down of the sector and the newly graduated technicians and engineers. This made it difficult to get a job without the right qualification, unless one is ready to work for less money and more responsibility than a graduate.

The impact can also be evaluated in terms of duration: the longer the time and the more the requirements to get the recognition, the greater the difficulties getting a suitable job. Among the interviewees, there are two opposite cases: people who waited between 36 and 48 months to get recognition and those who got it within 12 months. When asked about the reason for such a quick procedure, they said that was because they submitted a doctorate degree to be validated for an undergraduate one. We wonder who is losing most; the doctors who relinquish their specialisation to get a job in their field of knowledge, or the state for wasting a talented professional in whose education it did not have to invest.

The time it takes to get the recognition depends on whether it is necessary to validate subjects or not. For example, in Spain, dentists, dental technicians and doctors belong to very exclusive trades and try to regulate the entry of foreign professional through bureaucratic and academic obstacles. For example, Cuban and Colombian degrees are internationally recognised because their universities are very strict with their students. But when doctors, engineers, computer specialists or dental technicians from those countries come to Spain, they need to validate the subject in order to get degree recognition.

To pass the validation exam, they need to study between 9 and 15 months. This prerequisite puts asylum seekers in a dilemma: to study or to work? The majority of people included in this study got the recognition, but some of them are still waiting to have enough money to do it.

We can finally draw two conclusions: degree recognition is a positive factor in getting a suitable job and the obstacles that are involved prevent the majority from doing so. For most of them it is impossible to leave their jobs when they do not have financial assistance to survive; this is worse in the case of women with dependants.

5.3 Study of the comparison of the variables: knowledge, education, work experience in present job

A study of the objective characteristics of the interviewees at educational level, experience and skills acquired in their country of origin and training acquired in Spain compared with the conditions of their present jobs (position, salary, tasks carried out, stability and the contractual situation) and considering the sector they belong to.

In general terms there has been a decrease in the professional level because we are referring to a group of people that currently hold positions for which they are over-qualified or their qualification is not required. We must not forget that those who used to work in their countries of origin had a university degree and broad experience or lot of practice in his or her field; as is the case of the five interviewees. They were studying or just graduated when they had to leave for Spain.

To all this, we have to add labour instability that shows in the number and duration of jobs they have had since their arrival, as well as the times they have been in precarious conditions. Precarious means working extra hours or not being paid.

Among the health care professionals the number of people who work in inferior conditions is higher, being those with doctorate level the most affected.

Among those who work in equal or superior conditions there is no difference to be highlighted, except that the two men without experience came to Spain just after graduating at 24 to 25. They have been in Spain for 9 years and have carried on with their studies; the fact that their degrees were recognised before 1994 was crucial in enabling them to give basic care. All these factors allowed them to work in the Public Health System.

In general, we can say that from the interviews we can draw the general conclusion that the methods as well as the factors that have mostly contributed to labour integration of the refugees are related to their private life. They achieved this through personal effort and social networks. The only missing element is the state: government methods and support are conspicuous by their absence.

It is necessary to wonder what happened to other asylum seekers in the same situation as those interviewed did not have the personal skills and social support considering the lack of help from the state.

5.4 The barriers

Based on the answers given by the interviewees about the barriers they found to get to their current job or the barriers they have to face in order to get promoted, we can systematise them in two different categories: the common barriers shared by the three professions which are the object of this research and the specific barriers of each profession.

5.4.1 *Common barriers*

Under this category we put together the elements pointed out by the refugees and in our opinion they do not depend on the sectors they are working in, they are considered as general elements pointed mentioned by all interviewed. These barriers are closely connected both with the available resources (policies), social prejudices and with the employers' practices.

5.4.2 *Barriers related with available resources (policies)*

5.4.2.1 **Lack of specific advice (guidance) and accompaniment**

All interviewees have denounced the lack of specific resources that provide orientation and accompaniment for those refugees highly qualified and with real possibilities to contribute in the market sectors which are objectively demanding them. As we mentioned previously, this work of information, advice and intermediation in professional insertion is made by several NGOs. They do not have services, programmes and professionals exclusively devoted to refugees with this profile. These social movements are conformist and they resign themselves to employing refugees just in the market sectors that are rejected by the Spanish citizens, usually working with general schemes.

5.4.2.2 **Lack of material assistance in housing issues**

The answers given by refugees have insisted on the difficulty finding accommodation before getting employment. The consequence is that they need a supplementary effort in their job search, and they would be discouraged if they did not have personal qualities, as they have to cover some minimum needs for life during this period of search and inactivity. They consider that the lack of support in housing matters is a huge barrier, which prevents them from focusing on their professional insertion. This situation forced many of them, mostly those having family responsibilities, to do anything just to cover this housing need.

5.4.2.3 **Lack of financial resources for and during requalification process**

This element is closely connected to the previous one. Actually, the requalification process takes a long period and refugees are usually inactive, waiting for it. In some cases, with a partial requalification (conditioned) they have to devote themselves to study and prepare for exams. There are no specific resources to support refugees in this process. In Spain only the Eneas Equal project has very restricted aid for asylum seekers.

5.4.2.4 **Duration of the requalification process**

This process takes at least 8 months and it can take up to 4 years. It is a waiting time, which means that everything that refugees do in the meantime is only provisional. Moreover, the requalification is usually partial or conditional, not complete. So it has to be added the time of preparation for the special exams and the years of specialisation in the case of medicine.

5.4.3 **Barriers related to social prejudices**

In this category we put together the barriers mentioned by refugees, which are caused by social perceptions and opinions that are pre-established and, in many cases, unfounded. These perceptions and opinions are usually negative. They are generally stereotypes that refugees must overcome with a huge effort. From all the interviews as a whole we can point out 5 types of barriers connected to social prejudices

- A negative image (in general) of non-EU citizens. The foreigner is perceived as a problem and never as a contribution, and is associated to crime.
- A conceptual confusion between immigrant and refugee.
- Mistrust about the level and quality of the education done and the professional experience acquired in the country of origin.
- Racism and xenophobia in their different versions and nuances. For example, black refugees in some private sectors, specially in those posts in direct contact with the public.

5.4.4 **Barriers related to employers**

In this category, refugees have made evident discriminatory salaries. Some of them have denounced the fact that they carry out functions of responsibility and coordination but the remuneration does not benefit the function.

On the other hand, those refugees who have chosen to a stage to acquire some professional experience and a re-training to handle technical terms, have denounced exploitation, lack of respect and blackmail of employers.

These kinds of barriers not only stop or delay insertion in the job market, but also damage the promotion of refugees and prevent them from contributing effectively where they are most competent.

5.4.5 **Personal barriers (psychological)**

They cannot be considered as barriers strictly, as they are direct and logical results from the three categories previously mentioned. Actually, the three categories turn up in a concentric circle, which at the end affects the personality, causing lack of self-esteem, mistrust on oneself and feeling of personal failure.

In this last category we can include also the ignorance of the reality and structure of the job sectors they want to get in. They do not functioning in the same way as in the original countries.

5.5 Specific barriers

In this section we have collected all barriers mentioned by the refugees that are specific of the profession, not being shared by the three sectors analysed. Each sector has its barriers, which are connected to its nature and structure.

5.5.1 *Health and Social care sector*

- Ignorance of the technical language of the profession. The commercial names of medicines are actually different depending on the country.
- The health sector in general is almost public. Therefore, the Spanish society, seeing a foreigner working as a doctor, perceives he is taking a very prestigious and well-paid post that (by right) should be for a Spanish citizen.
- Unsteadiness of nursing works, as refugees and non-EU foreigners usually have substitution contracts. That is why most of them confine themselves to geriatric works.

5.5.2 *Engineers*

In this sector, interviewees have pointed out the high exigency of a proved professional experience in a specific area. This exigency forces to reconversion. The refugee who is an engineer must do other courses and Master degrees or specialisation modules.

5.5.3 *Computer experts*

All barriers previously mentioned are valid also in this sector, such as technical language. However some aspects of these barriers are stronger for computer experts. For example, it has been severely denounced the wages not matching the function assumed, working exploitation and blackmail suffered by refugees who work in this sector.

5.6 Procedures to overcome barriers

It is shocking to confirm that the procedures used are almost completely based on personal skills and initiatives. No refugee interviewed recognised a substantial and decisive support on his or her pathway coming from identified policies.

Factors that have helped them are linked with their attitudes towards life. Qualities like perseverance, tenacity, courage, spirit of sacrifice, optimism and capacity of making relations are the ones mentioned mostly.

6 Case studies

Below is a selection of three interviews to refugees that managed to get a job related with their profession, although their social status might have changed. Telling these stories and presenting the factors that had a bearing on them, is a way to illustrate the analytic descriptions and economic indicators presented so far.

6.1 Yusef, an African Doctor

Yusef is a 35-year-old African doctor. He is a very kind and talkative person, who is thoughtful when speaking. He came to Spain in December 1994, on an exchange programme to do a course in internal medicine. But a few months later he applied for political asylum before the Spanish State, which granted him the status in June 1995.

Yusef is currently working as a specialist in the Emergency service at the Arnau Hospital in Villanova (Valencia). However, before reaching that position he went through a long adaptation process, training and 'red tape' that he finally overcame to achieve his objectives.

6.1.1 Vocational training in his country of origin

In 1988 Yusef graduated from high school. Then, he entered the State University to study Medicine. He graduated in Medicine and Surgery in 1994.

When he was a student, he carried out Health Education campaigns with some of his friends in the most underprivileged areas of his city. He also worked in summer courses to help students to bridge the gap between one educational level and the other. He combined the first activity with this latter he had had since he was at Secondary School. He was then the Chairman of an association he created with his friends.

In October 1994, he started to work as a doctor at a Health Centre in the city, but he left it a month and a half later to come to Spain.

6.1.2 His experience in Spain

He came to Spain alone because he was granted a scholarship to do a two-months (December 1994 - January 1995) course at the University Hospital in Valladolid.

At the end of the course, Yusef applied for political asylum. At the moment his main priority was to learn Spanish, which he did not know a word of, because the course was in English. In March 1995, he moved to Madrid and registered at the Official School of Language and studied there till March 1997. Apart from this school he also went to the Fedora Association for more language classes.

During this same period (1995-1997), he started the recognition and validation procedures of his degree. He first had to do an exam in all the subjects, and had to wait a year and a half to get an answer from the Board of Universities. Two years and some months passed before he could have his degree recognition. When this process finally ended, he joined the Association of Doctors in Segovia and started working there.

After his degree validation, he did a postgraduate course in internal medicine at the University of Valladolid (1997-1999) and got the *Suficiencia Investigadora*.

In 1998 he did a Master's in Emergency services at the Hospital Marques de Viana in Asturias. He got the Specialist Degree in Emergency Medicine.

Later on he trained as a Humanitarian Medicine specialist at the Miguel Hernandez University.

In 2000, he started the training course for the MIR, an exam he must pass before starting any specialisation. It took him a year to prepare it. Once he passed the exam, he started training as a general practitioner on a two-years course at the Arnau Villanova Hospital in Valencia.

6.1.3 *Internship and professional experience in Spain*

His first job was as an Arabic teacher in Madrid; he lived in the CAR (Refugees Admittance Centre) in Vallecas, Madrid. In the summers of 1995 and 1997 he got a job as a seasonal worker in an oil bottling factory. During those years, he also worked as a painter together with a friend.

But in 1997 he had a 'twist of fate' and thanks to some friends who were also doctors, he got a summer job in Segovia in the National Health Administration. He worked there during two or three summers.

Later he got a scholarship through the Spanish International Co-operation Agency (AECI) to do his PhD. He stopped working to prepare the specialisation exam. It was not easy to get the scholarship because he needed the degree validation, a good knowledge of the language, referrals from the University, a good record and a summary of the research work he was going to do. He got it and in the year 2000 he started he got a training contract with the Ministry of Health.

All this time he was working as a volunteer with the Organisation *Medicos del Mundo* and even headed the voluntary management area.

6.2 **Ali, an African engineer**

Ali is a calm and polite 51-year-old African engineer. He always accompanies his answers with a smile and is very emphatic when talking about human dignity and the right to be respected. He lives with his wife and children in a subsidised house.

He came to Spain in September 1996 after leaving his country because of the death threats he was receiving. He had been imprisoned for his trade union activities and he came to Spain to avoid going back to prison. His mother tongue is Poular but he also speaks French, Russian, Arabic, Spanish and English.

6.2.1 *Vocational training in his country of origin*

He finished his secondary education in 1972. In 1976 he travelled to Italy to do a training course in trade unionism in Turin, through the International Labour Organisation. In 1977 he moved to Moscow in Russia to do a course as an engineer, which he finished in 1984.

6.2.2 *Professional experience and internship in his country and in Russia*

In 1974 he started working for the government of Mauritania as a Social Security Inspector for two years. Then he travelled to Russia where, while studying to be an engineer, once a year, he worked in the Government factory 'Lenin' where electrical appliances were made.

He finished his studies in December 1984 and went back to Mauritania to work at the SAIM, (National Industrial and Mining Association) as the Head of electrical maintenance and a mechanic in the iron mines. He stayed there till 1990 when he was fired for problems with union activity.

In 1992 he started an Agricultural Co-operative and becomes its Chairman until 1996 when he was forced to leave his country.

6.2.3 *Training in Spain*

When he came to Spain he felt the need to adapt his education to what the market offered through his newly found network

- **1996** – October. Spanish language course at the Association Caribu until the end of 1997.
- **1997** – A 400-hour course in plumbing and electricity at Maforen. (5 months).
- **1997** – Intercultural Mediation Course at the EMSI until September 1998.
- **2000** – He becomes a member of the Association of Engineers in Madrid.
- **2001** – Master's degree in Intercultural Mediation, Universidad Autonoma of Madrid until 2002.
- **2002** – Refrigeration Technical Maintenance Course.

6.2.4 *Internship and professional experience in Spain*

He thought that doing the course in intercultural mediation was a way to validate his activity with immigrants. We must remember that he has experience with trade unions and some leadership that he had developed in his country.

6.2.4.1 **Professional training**

- Mediation Course at the EMSI: training at the Red Cross. He worked there for a month and a half and had to mediate in conflicts and give information and help to marginalised gypsies.
- Master's degree at the Universidad Autonoma of Madrid: a three-month training at the Latin American Foundation for Development collaborating with the drawing up of the development co-operation projects.

6.2.4.2 **Work Experience**

- He got his first paid job at the end of 1997 at Eurofactor, a factory in Saragossa that makes machines for public works. He was the mechanics supervisor but he left in 1998 because of confrontations with his boss who wanted to exploit him.
- In 1998 he came back to Madrid to create the Mauritanian-Spanish Association of Cultural Exchange (AMEIC). He was the Chairman and had to maintain relationship with other associations, draw up projects and organise various sensitisation campaigns against racism, xenophobia, and also to spread Islam and Mauritanian culture, and so on.
- Besides this, in 1998 he got a job as a gardener in Alcobendas (a town near Madrid) with a maintenance company.
- Later he worked for six months as an Environment Technician on a project managed by the Council of Alcobendas.
- Later the Council of Alcobendas requested his services again to substitute for an Industrial Design teacher at on a Training course.
- In June, 2002 he worked with The Red Cross as an instructor at their Admittance Center in Simancas
- He combined all these with a part-time job as an electrician on several construction sites until the year 2000.
- From November 2001 till March 2002, he worked as a Social and Labour Mediator in the social services of the Council of San Sebastian de los Reyes (a town near Madrid).
- Finally, in December 2002 he started to work as a teacher in the Youth Information Office of a town in the Madrid Region. He teaches electricity, plumbing and carpentry in one of the workshops. He is working there at present.

He got most of these jobs thanks to the good relationships he has always created and maintained with people who work at local councils, NGOs and association apart from his own training.

6.3 **Eduardo: South American Computer Programmer**

Eduardo is the youngest of the interviewees. When he came to Spain with his mother and brothers he was already granted refugee status. When his family had to live his country, he was 19 years old and was studying systems engineering. Before that he did a year of mathematics. He was an athlete and had been a national champion.

During the first three months of his stay in Spain he devoted his time to training and studying the job possibilities offered by the Spanish labour market. At the same time he was waiting for the academic year to start in order to register at the university and continue his studies.

Through the jobs offers in newspapers and on the Internet he discovered that he could use his knowledge in computing to work as a trainer because the level required on the market was not too

high. He then started to send his CV and after going to some job interviews, he got his first job as a computing teacher in 2000.

At the same time he completed his education in computing by learning on his own, in order to update his knowledge and adapt to the requirements of the market.

6.3.1 *Vocational training in his country of origin*

- 1991-1996 Secondary School.
- 1997-1998 He studies Mathematics at the University.
- 1998-1999 He studies Systems engineering.

6.4 Recommendations from refugees

Recommendations made by the refugees are logically connected with the barriers they had to face in their pathway to employment. Taking all interviews as a whole we can systematise them in four groups of recommendations.

6.4.1 *Recommendations connected to investment (policies)*

6.4.1.1 *Investing in services*

All refugees interviewed regretted the lack of specific resources to provide refugees with the proper services of job information, advice and intermediation. Actually, all of them have confirmed that where these services are available (which is rare), they work with little means and in a standard way: they are not specialised to advise refugees with a highly qualified profile.

Therefore, they recommend the Government to invest more, using the NGOs financing procedures to offer these services or designing their own structures on the administration to take on these services.

Some refugees insisted that these investments also include psychological support services.

6.4.1.2 *Investing in material assistance*

From the moment of their arrival, refugees begin to search for a proper job. As we said before, this means a lot of sacrifice and full-time dedication. It cannot be combined with a provisional work, as so many exams and tests require a lot of concentration. The state should grant some minimum vital needs, such as housing, minimum monthly incomes, and so on, so that refugees do not get discouraged and have to give up their project to content with any job. This situation is even more obvious in the cases of refugees with dependent relatives.

On the other hand, refugees also claim for special material assistance to face the high costs involved in the official requalification process, such as sworn translation of marks certificates, study plans and subject programmes.

6.4.2 *Recommendations connected to legal improvement*

In this group are included those recommendations tending to an effort of the administration to introduce legal modifications. Refugees claimed for three types of legal improvements:

- Special consideration of the refugee condition in the requalification process of academic titles. Some formal requirements such as diplomatic legalisations, or the requirement to present original documents are obstacles some times very difficult to overcome.
- A labour law that helps (by incentive policies) and controls professional practices of refugees to avoid blackmailing and work exploitation.

- They ask for other exemplary punishments for unscrupulous employers who do not respect wage scales attending the position and function.
- They advise severe punishment for discriminatory treatment.
- They recommend legal reform to cut down the time it takes to process asylum claims and officially recognise academic titles.

6.4.3 ***Recommendations connected to raising public awareness***

All the interviewees denounced stereotyping and the negative image spread by the mass media, which normally shows immigrants as a threat to safety and as a problem in the labour market. Therefore, all refugees interviewed advised the public administrations and social agents to work to raise social awareness.

7 Conclusions

From the point of view of the interviewees and the analysis of their professional careers, there are few government policies that are considered efficient: they are limited to granting refugee status that enables them to do any type of job, survive the first months, financial help for self-employment and scholarships. But, in the case of the interviewees, only 20% felt they benefited from some type of help.

The implementation of asylum seekers' rights is hindered by the degree recognition processes: the Ministry of Education, universities and professional associations have academic and bureaucratic requirements and do not know about the difficulties in contacting their countries of origin and prevent them from contributing to the labour market with their skills and experience and this lays the foundations for their professional undervaluation.

Degree recognition has a positive bearing on job securing for refugees and the obstacles found on their way prevent the majority from getting this; because for many of them it is impossible to stop working when they do not have financial help in order to survive. In the case of women this situation is worse for those who have dependants.

In the opinion of the refugees, government policies that are implemented through plans and projects carried out by NGOs and associations, are empty, wrong and have approaches that underestimate refugees. In the case of labour mediation, they think that they are considered 'economic immigrants' with the negative ideological connotations that this has for the Spanish society. The main obstacle they have found is the lack of information and ignorance of the procedures, resources and ways to exercise their profession.

Generally speaking there has been a decrease in the professional level because we are talking about a group of people that hold positions in which they do not show all their skills or for which they do not need them.

The skills, qualification and work experience refugees bring with them to the exile are not being used or exploited in these three specific sectors of the Spanish job market.

The Spanish economy has shown a continuous slow down year after year, and this is reflected in all the sectors. A situation that is not encouraging either for Spanish people or for refugees who come to Spain looking for a solution to their financial problems and are not prepared to forget about their education, experience and in many cases, their dignity in order to get a job that is almost always underpaid.

The sectors that have grown within the national economy or keep their profitability indexes in the last four years are the services and construction sectors. This is precisely where immigrant and refugees are employed; but the positions they hold are not equally distributed, not reflecting their education and not reaching managerial positions; they rather hold the low level positions in the production line: waiters, cooks, servants, receptionists, clerks (in the best cases) roundsmen in the services sector or, workers or construction labourers, electricians, plumbers, gardeners although having university degrees.

It is difficult to think that refugees with training in the areas related to this market can have job openings or can make up for some needs, since for the time being there is no labour shortage, but rather some excess.

As for employment policies for refugees, they compete in equal legal conditions (when not in worse conditions as asylum seekers); it is to say that according to the law they should have the same right as the native Spanish, but there is no such equality regarding social conditions. Xenophobia, discrimination and little appraisal of their skills and experience still have a weighs heavily on them.

They do not fit in the National Plan for Employment (PNAE) where they are invisible. The plan is about fomenting actions to fight discrimination and to favour social integration but refugees are not openly mentioned as the direct beneficiaries of the future action.

The government does not provide for actions that improve the working conditions of refugees. The development of training courses for new professionals and lots of job opportunities are mentioned but there is no emphasis on the target group; the plan simply talks about 'unemployed people'. In this situation it is necessary to remember that an unemployed Spaniard is not the same as an unemployed

immigrant. We must also bear in mind that for the National Institute for Employment there is no difference between an immigrant and a refugee.

Generally speaking, the interviews bring us to the conclusion that the methods as well as the factors that contribute most to the labour integration of the interviewees, have to do with their private lives. They achieved this with personal effort and the social networks they could build. The State is the only element missing from this integration process: the government methods and official support are conspicuous by their absence.

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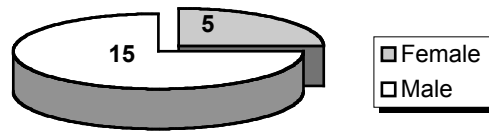
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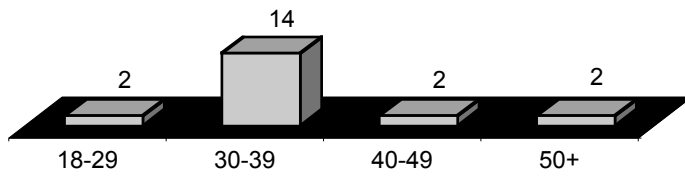
9 Appendix: quantitative data

The 20 interviewees had the following characteristics:

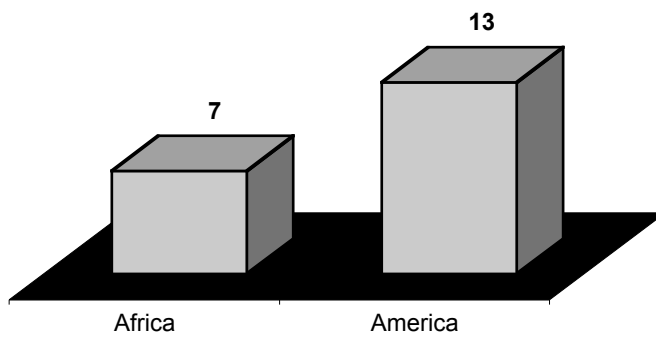
1a Gender

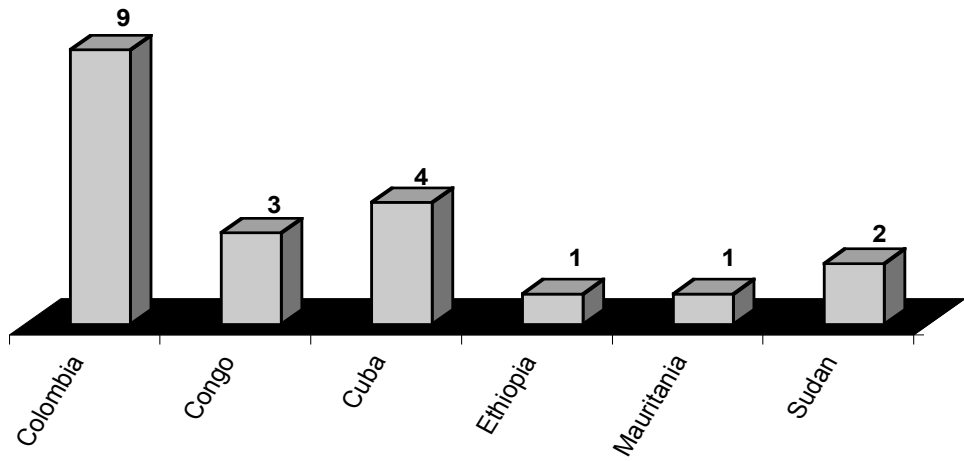
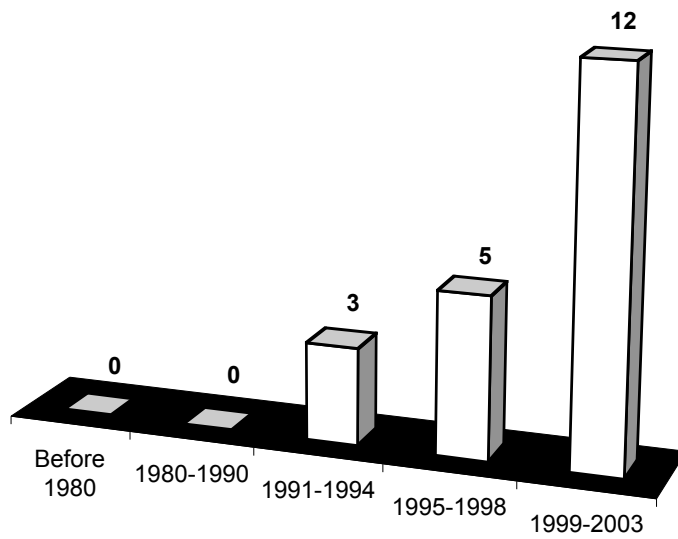


1b Age

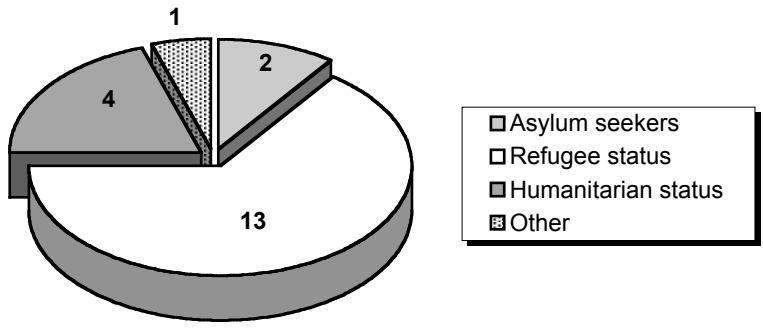


1c Region of origin

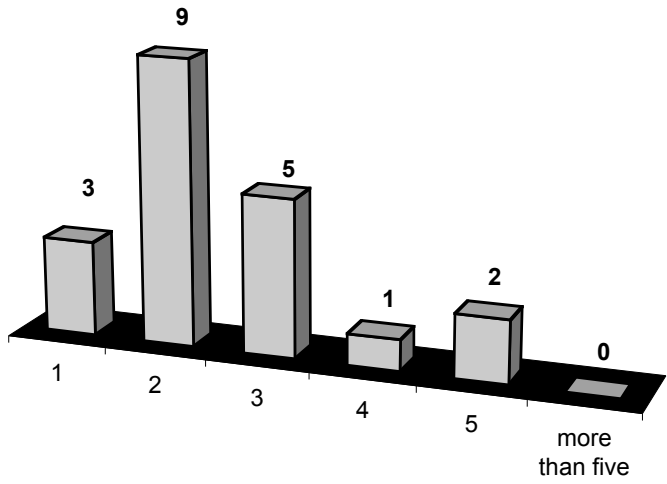


ld **Country of origin**le **Date of arrival in Spain**

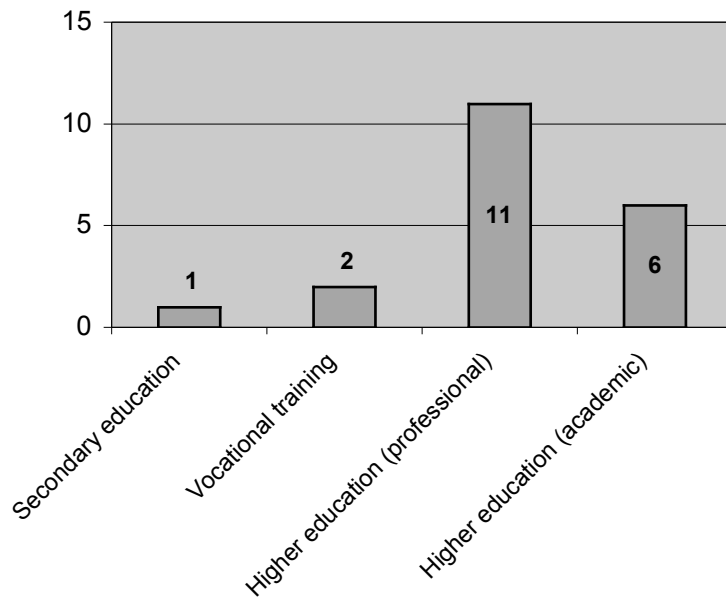
If Status



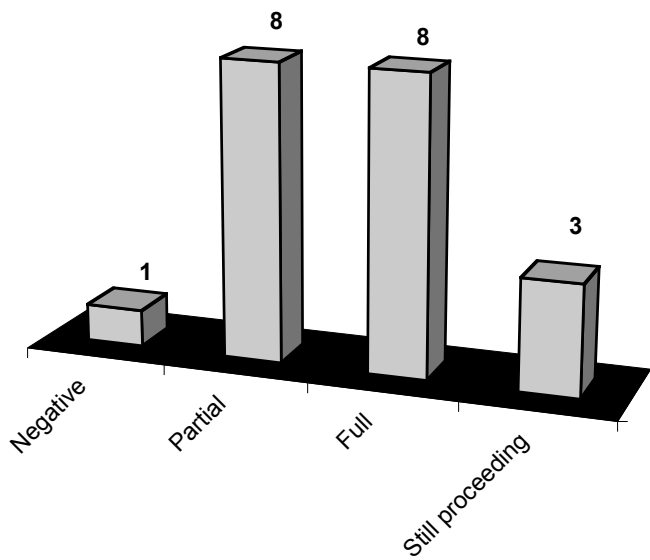
2 Knowledge of languages (including mother tongue)



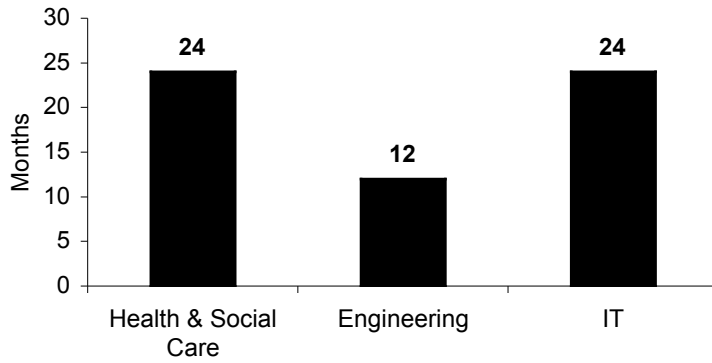
3a Highest level of education before arrival in Spain



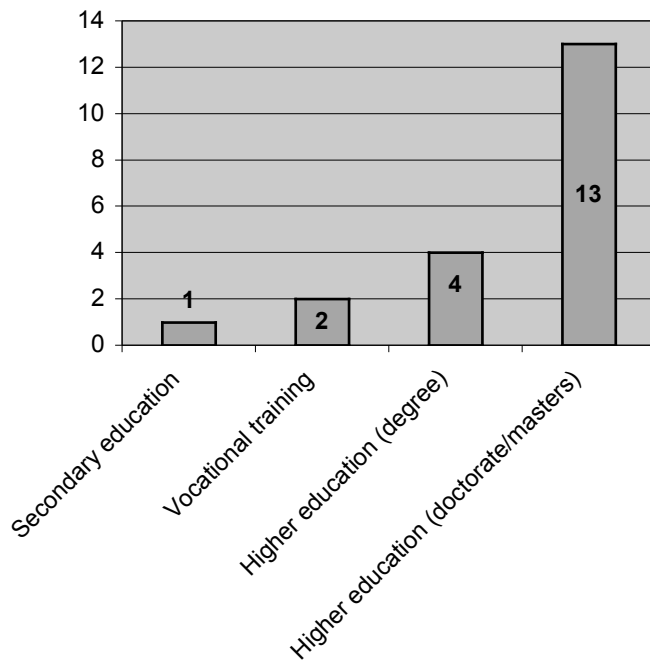
3b Diploma/equivalence recognition in Spain



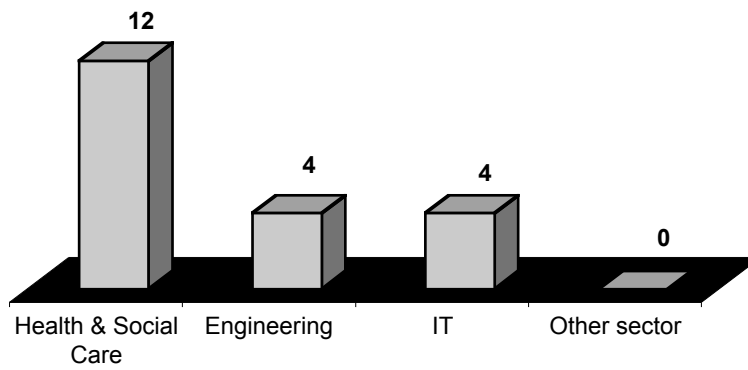
3c Average length of recognition procedure per sector



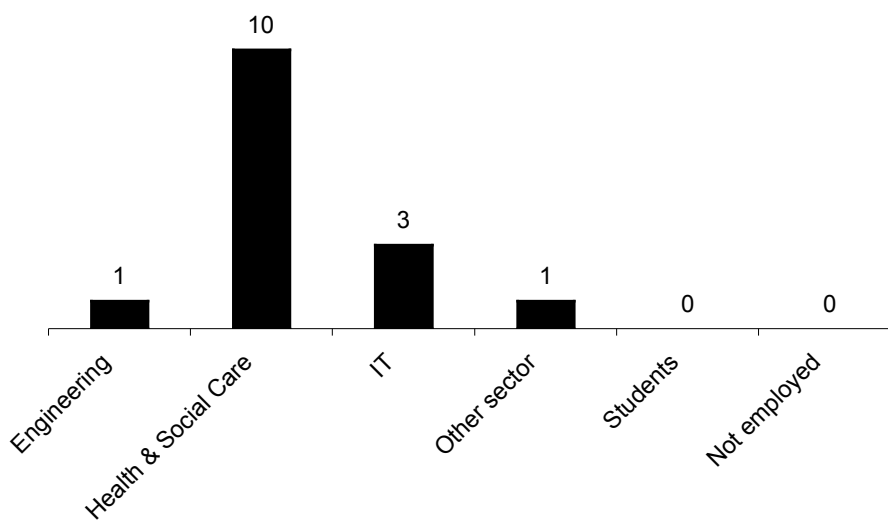
3d Highest level of education in Spain



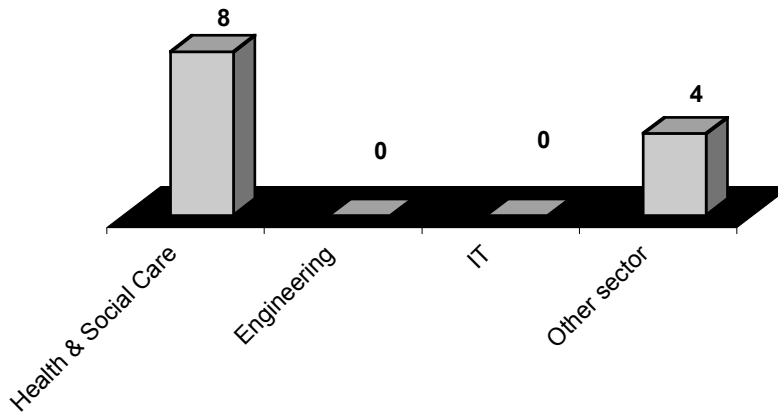
4a Number of refugees who followed practical training before arrival in EU (per sector)



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

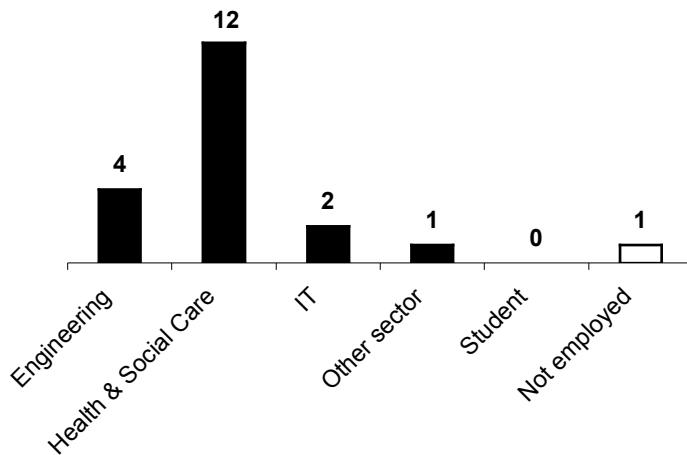


4c **Number of refugees who followed practical training in Spain (per sector)**



(Total people: 12)

4d **Number of refugees employed in Spain (per sector)**



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

