

Refugee Contribution to Europe

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

United Kingdom

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Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE)

Feasibility report - United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

Demographic developments show that the United Kingdom is in need of foreign labour. Recent data on skills shortages in the UK indicate that 56% of employers are experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff in the following sectors: services, teaching, health, charity, retail and distribution.

In the 1990s refugees¹ became a substantial component of migration flows, bringing skills and work experience with them into exile. Estimations based on large-scale arrivals show that currently there could be more than 300,000 (former) refugees in the UK. It is clear that the labour market could benefit more from their potential. However, in reality refugees have great difficulties in getting work or – if they do find employment – are hugely under-employed. One of the main barriers refugees face is a lack of funding to access training or education to re-qualify for employment and a lack of access to finance to start their own businesses.

This report is the result of a project which investigated the feasibility of creating a *Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE)* in the UK as part of a European-wide fund. The fund would provide refugees with business start-up loans and scholarships/grants to access further or higher education and re-qualify for employment. By assisting refugees in finding employment reflecting their skills and experiences, FREE could make a valuable contribution towards easing labour market shortages in the UK.

The report is divided into two sections. The first concentrates on the existing regulations and support systems for refugees. The answer to the question "What provisions are already available?" is important to determine the specific needs for FREE in the UK. This section starts off by describing the most important refugee regulations, the asylum procedure and the key players in the refugee sector, and is followed by chapters on education and employment issues. This section will show that there is a need for more financial support for refugees' training, education and business start-up.

The second section explores the interest of and benefits for British companies, governmental organisations, charitable foundations, educational institutes and others in contributing towards FREE. On the whole the idea of setting up FREE was received positively. However, it was clear that actual contributions will depend on receiving more information, such as concerning FREE's structure, management, administration, budget, activities, and the commitment of other sources, in particular the willingness of the European Commission to make a substantial contribution to FREE.

REFUGEE REGULATIONS, THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE AND KEY PLAYERS IN THE UK

Refugee regulations in the UK

Britain romanticises herself as a sanctuary for those fleeing persecution but in fact her actual record is at best mixed. Although refugees have made a big impact on UK society – in the past, for example, Huguenots, Jews and Ugandan Asians played a leading role in the development of the UK's domestic and global financial markets – British hospitality was never assured. During the Second World War doors were often closed to the victims of ruthless persecution. However, as the master of an empire that at its height included 25% of the world's population and area, Britain was not impervious to the arrival and settlement of non-Europeans.

¹ In this report the definition of refugees includes both asylum seekers and refugees granted asylum or Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR) unless stated otherwise.

The arrival of émigrés was, however, minimal until the Second World War. A large number of people who had been displaced by the war remained in the UK, but refugee numbers – mainly from Eastern Europe and a few from the new Commonwealth – remained low until the early 1970s. At this time severe dislocations in developing countries, brought about either by processes of decolonisation and modernisation or reaction against them, resulted in a growing number of non-European refugees arriving in the UK.

Like other European countries, the UK began to tighten up its refugee regulations in the early 1990s to deal with a sharp increase of those seeking asylum in the UK (from 3998 in 1988 to 44,840 in 1991). The Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, aiming at '*streamlining procedures*' and ensuring '*the rapid rejection of a large number of unfounded claims*', introduced an array of measures that were regarded as drastic at the time: the fingerprinting of asylum seekers, restrictions concerning the Homeless Legislation, removal of some appeal rights and accelerated procedures for '*frivolous and vexatious*' claims.

In 1996, after new asylum applications amounted to 44,000 cases, a new Asylum and Immigration Act was introduced. It extended the application of the accelerated appeal process, penalised those assisting, for their own gain, the entry of an asylum seeker and those employing a person not entitled to work, and introduced a 'White List' of countries where, it was argued, there is '*in general no serious risk of persecution*', so all claims related to these countries would be rejected.

The Act was much criticised by agencies and charities from the race relations and the protection of refugees' fields. The then Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, pronounced the White List to be '*partial, defective and profoundly unfair*'. Another concern was that the 1996 Act withdrew social security entitlements to asylum seekers except those making their claim at a port of entry. Many asylum seekers were left destitute and at risk of grave illness and even death. The situation was mitigated when a High Court judgement ruled that under the National Assistance Act 1948 local authorities had to provide for applicants with no means of support. In addition, it was noted that under the Children Act 1989 a local authority had also a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children even if they were asylum seekers. In August 1997, the number of asylum seekers (including dependants) assisted under the National Assistance and Children Acts was estimated at 15,000.

In 1998 the Labour Government presented a White Paper on Immigration and Asylum reviewing application procedures and establishing 'cluster areas' in the UK where accommodation and support would be offered. The new Immigration and Asylum Bill aimed to clear the backlog (estimated at 101,475 in 1999), speed up the hearing of new cases (average decision time was 22 months in 1997) and crack down on bogus immigration advisers. It also made it a criminal offence to enter the country with false documents. While some proposals were welcomed by refugee agencies, those concerning housing and support were not. Support would take the shape of a voucher package equivalent to 70% of Income Support (This measure was reversed in April 2002). Those who refused to go to a cluster area would not be eligible. Some refugee agencies, including Refugee Council and Refugee Action, would take an 'assistant role' to help asylum seekers in their claims.

The Immigration and Asylum Act received Royal Assent in November 1999, the third piece of legislation in less than a decade. Arrangements for dispersing asylum seekers to designated areas across the country began in April 2000. By December 2000, a total of 13,530 asylum seekers (including dependants) had been allocated accommodation by the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) in dispersal areas. The top three areas where asylum seekers were accommodated in England were Yorkshire and Humberside (3550 cases), the North West (3420 cases) and the North East (2420 cases). A further 1200 cases had been sent to Scotland and 20 to Wales.

As refugee agencies had predicted, the dispersal of asylum seekers led in some places to isolation and lack of suitable provision such as language classes, legal advice and counselling, and low standards of largely private accommodation. Until then some agreements between councils had existed with limited success to help disperse asylum seekers across the country. The new system had a stronger compulsive

character at a time when public perception of refugees was low. There was much talk about ‘*bogus*’ claimants, beggars, detention centres and fast-track expulsions. The Conservative Party leader coined the memorable phrase of Britain as a ‘*foreign country*’ and suggested that a soft line on asylum applicants would cause many people to embrace the politics of the National Front. More worryingly, the system gave rise to sequences of racially motivated abuse and violence in places such as Dover, Oxford, Somerset and Glasgow. The voucher system itself, apart from being inappropriate to needs such as those of pregnant women or those on dietary regimes, resulted in stigma and segregation and was expensive to manage.

In February 2002 the government presented yet another White Paper on immigration policy², followed by the introduction of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill 2002, which will lead again to new legislation, at the end of 2002, aimed mainly at tackling abuse of the asylum system. In the White Paper the government acknowledges that migration may help to ease recruitment difficulties and skills shortages, and introduces some new routes, such as the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme, to enter the UK labour market. Although the government also announces labour market policies for refugees aimed at reducing the time it takes from entering the country to the point when they are ready to move into work, the plans do not yet include any practical measures to improve refugee integration. On the contrary, by removing the employment concession that allows asylum seekers to work after 6 months in July 2002, the government took a practical measure that obstructs speedy integration.

Asylum procedure

Asylum seekers can make their application at their port of entry to the UK or in-country to the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). The application will be followed by an interview to establish the identity and nationality of the asylum seeker. Evidence to support the claim may be provided in two main ways: either by completing a ‘Statement of Evidence Form’ (SEF) or by means of a face-to-face interview with an asylum caseworker. Most applicants are given a SEF to complete and return to the IND within 10 working days. The SEF must be completed in English. If not returned on time, the application may be decided on the information already available. There is normally an interview to explain the basis of the claim.

Destitute asylum seekers get support from the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS), provided they are willing to be directed to one of the cluster areas. It was possible to remain in London and receive some help but this does not include assistance with accommodation. However, the Government now intends to suspend this "support-only" option and asylum seekers will now only receive support if they submit themselves to the dispersal system. Asylum seekers who receive a final decision must move out of their accommodation within 14 days. Those eligible for refugee status or exceptional leave to remain (ELR) subsequently receive advice on access to housing and social security benefits.

A successful application leads to refugee status with indefinite leave to remain. In some other cases, applicants who are refused asylum may however be granted ELR on compassionate or humanitarian grounds. If asylum is refused, there is normally a right to appeal. In the year 2000 a total of 45,120 asylum seekers were accepted for permanent settlement in the United Kingdom.

Refugees in the UK

From the late 1950s to the 1980s only small numbers of people applied for asylum. Then, in the late 1980s, the numbers started to increase from around 4000 a year during 1985 to 1988 to around 45,000 in 1991. Applications continued to rise despite harsher regulations up to over 70,000 a year in the period 1999 to 2001.

² Home Office, Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain, HMSO, London 2002

Table 1: Refugee Arrivals and Decisions 1988–2001

Year	Applications	Granted Asylum	Granted Exceptional Leave (ELR)	Granted Asylum or ELR under backlog criteria	Refusals (including backlog)
1988	3998	628	1578		
1989	11,640	2210	3860		
1990	26,205	920	2400		705
1991	44,840	505	2190		3380
1992	24,605	1115	15,325		18,465
1993	22,370	1590	11,125		10,690
1994	32,830	825	3660		16,500
1995	43,965	1295	4410		21,300
1996	29,640	2240	5050		31,670
1997	32,500	3985	3115		28,945
1998	46,015	5345	3910		22,315
1999	71,160	7815	2465	11,140	12,025
2000	80,315	10,605	11,475	10,325	67,910
2001	71,365	12,610	21,175		92,420

Source: Home Office. Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.

In 2001 an estimated 42% of the applications resulted in grants of asylum (10%), ELR (22%), or in allowed appeals (10%). On 31 December 2001 around 38,800 asylum seekers were awaiting an initial decision. Since 1985, the Home Office has made 286,185 initial decisions on asylum applications in total. Of these 40% were positive and the applicant granted either refugee status or ELR.

Accurate figures showing how many refugees reside in the UK are not available. Estimations based on large-scale arrivals since the 1970s indicate that about 300,000 refugees might be settled in the UK. This represents less than 10% of the ethnic minority population in the UK, which was estimated at 3,394,000 in 1996 (6% of the total population).

For as more than other migrants the reason for coming to the UK is caused by 'push' factors, such as persecution, civil wars, oppressive conditions, and more generally, severe economic and social shocks and dislocations. These circumstances are clearly reflected in the countries of origin of the biggest refugee communities in the UK. According to Home Office estimates, refugee groups coming to the UK from the 1950s until 1980 included:

- 250,000** Polish nationals (1940s and 1950s)
- 50,000** other Eastern Europeans (1940s and 1950s)
- 17,000** Hungarian nationals (1956)
- 5,000** Czech nationals (1968)
- 3,000** Chileans (1970s)
- 19,000** South East Asians (1970s)
- 40,000** from over 50 countries who sought asylum on an individual basis.

Since the 1980s, the UK has also accepted the following refugee groups as part of Government programmes:

- 5,820** South East Asians (1985–1995)
- 2,500** Bosnians (1992–1997)
- 4,345** Kosovars (1999)

Key Players in the refugee sector

In the UK hundreds of organisations deal with refugees. However, many are small and deal with other groups as well. The following list is therefore not exhaustive, but does include the main actors.

The Home Office

As part of the Home Office the **Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND)** considers applications for permission to stay, citizenship and asylum. They are also responsible for immigration control at air and seaports throughout the United Kingdom.

The **National Asylum Support Service (NASS)** is a department established by the Home Office to coordinate the arrangements for supporting asylum seekers and dispersing them to different areas of the UK. It was established under the terms of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, which removed asylum seekers from the mainstream welfare system. NASS provides a basic package of support to asylum seekers. To qualify for NASS support, an asylum seeker has to show that s/he is destitute (i.e. has no other means of support), or likely to become so within 14 days. Asylum seekers can apply to NASS for accommodation and support, or support only if they have somewhere to stay, in which case no accommodation costs at all will be paid by NASS.

If an asylum seeker receives a positive decision and still needs support, then NASS will help them transfer to the main benefit system. If an asylum seeker gets a negative decision and also fails in any appeal, then their support from NASS terminates and they are expected to leave the UK.

NASS also funds a number of voluntary agencies to assist in implementing the support arrangements for asylum. The voluntary agencies funded by NASS are:

- Migrant Helpline (Kent and Sussex);
- Refugee Action (North West, East Midlands, South West and South Central);
- Refugee Arrivals Project works (London Airports);
- Refugee Council (North East, Yorkshire and Humberside, West Midlands, Eastern Region and London);
- Scottish Refugee Council (Scotland);
- Welsh Refugee Council (Wales).

Each of these organisations has extensive experience of working on behalf of asylum seekers and refugees, in different areas of the UK. Although independent of each other (they all pre-date the new asylum support arrangements), these six organisations work as a partnership to provide support to asylum seekers through One Stop Services around the UK.

One Stop Services offer a wide range of services to asylum seekers, both immediately after arrival in the UK and throughout the process of waiting for a decision on their asylum claim. Asylum Support Advice Workers help asylum seekers consider their options for support, and assist asylum seekers with applications for NASS support. NASS then decides whether the asylum seeker is eligible for support, and if so, finds an area for dispersal. Asylum Advice Support workers also coordinate the provision of emergency housing for asylum seekers, to accommodate them whilst NASS determines their support application. As well as offering immediate assistance, One Stop Services assist asylum seekers dispersed to the regions and accommodated by NASS whilst awaiting a decision on their asylum claim. Assistance includes helping asylum seekers to access statutory services, explaining asylum seekers' rights and entitlements, providing asylum seekers with local contacts and advice following decisions on asylum seekers' claims. (More information: www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk)

Local authorities

Local authorities are responsible for social services support for asylum seekers who are judged to be destitute and who applied for asylum in-country before certain dates specified in the interim arrangements of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are also supported by social services departments under the Children Act 1989 until they reach the age of 18. In addition, local authorities administer housing and council tax benefits for recognised refugees and those with ELR who are on benefits or low wages.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

The employment section of the DWP has responsibility for policy development and employment support through employment agencies (**Jobcentreplus**) for disadvantaged groups, including refugees. The main support is through the New Deal programmes (see Employment section for further details). However, the department acknowledges that refugees need a more tailor-made approach because of their specific backgrounds. Therefore, research has been commissioned to further investigate the specific barriers which refugees face when looking for employment. In addition, pilot packages (ESOL prototypes), specifically aimed at refugees, which deliver new English language standards in a work context, have been developed. (See websites: www.dwp.gov.uk and www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.)

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)

The DfES implements the funding regulations for the **Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC)** and the **Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs)**. The HEFC is responsible for the statutory student support system for higher education. The LSCs fund Further Education colleges to provide language courses (ESOL pathfinders) for foreigners, including refugees and asylum seekers, and government funded training schemes (refugees only). (See Education section for further details. Websites: www.dfes.gov.uk and www.lsc.gov.uk.)

Legal advice

Advice for asylum seekers is available from immigration law advisers and firms of solicitors contracted to provide immigration services under the Community Legal Service Fund (formally the Legal Aid scheme). They provide advice on the initial claim and any appeal. A number of other organisations throughout the country provide advice and assistance for refugees and asylum seekers concerning their asylum applications, for example **Asylum Aid** (www.asylumaid.org.uk) and the **Immigration Advisory Service** (www.iasuk.org.uk).

The Refugee Council

The Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. The organisation has nearly 180 members, of which a significant number are refugee community organisations. The Refugee Council is a registered charity, financed by a variety of sources including government departments, the European Commission, trusts and members.

The Refugee Council's work includes:

- giving advice and support to asylum seekers and refugees to help them rebuild their lives;
- working with refugee community organisations, helping them grow and serve their communities;
- caring for unaccompanied refugee children to help them feel safe and supported in the UK;
- offering training and employment courses to enable asylum seekers and refugees to use their skills and qualifications;
- managing a residential home for young refugees;

- campaigning and lobbying for refugees' voices to be heard in the UK and abroad, keeping them high on the political agenda and discussed in the media;
- producing authoritative information on refugee issues world wide, including reports, statistics and analysis.

(More information: www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs)

Around 400 Refugee Community Organisations provide support for refugees and asylum seekers from their respective communities. The services offered vary from RCO to RCO, but most of the time consists of advice and assistance on asylum, housing, education, welfare benefits and employment.

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI)

JCWI is an independent national voluntary organisation, campaigning for justice and combating racism in immigration and asylum law and policy. JCWI provides free advice and casework, training courses, and a range of publications. (More information: www.jcwi.org.uk)

Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

The Medical Foundation offers medical treatment, social assistance and psychotherapeutic support for survivors of torture. The organisation also documents evidence of torture for asylum purposes, provides training for health professionals, educates the public and decision-makers about torture and its consequences and ensures that Britain honours international obligations towards survivors of torture, asylum seekers and refugees. (More information: www.torturecare.org.uk)

Refugee Women's Association

The Refugee Women's Association offers support and advice for refugee women to help them gain access to training employment and education. The association offers English language classes, childcare support, and covers travel and childcare expenses for classes and training. In addition, it is involved in networking and development work with refugee women and a mental health project offering advice and referrals to specialist and appropriate sources of help.

Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service (RETAS)

RETAS works to support the social and economic development of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK and at the European level by facilitating their access to education, employment and training opportunities. RETAS provides expert advice and guidance to individual refugees and asylum seekers on educational opportunities, training and employment. RETAS has been running a Small Grants Scheme and a successful business start-up course for a number of years. In addition, RETAS provides advice on sources of grants, scholarships and loans for education, training and self-employment (More information: www.wusuk.org)

Refugee Assessment and Guidance Unit (RAGU)

RAGU was set up in 1995 by the University of London in order to improve the employment prospects of refugees and asylum seekers with higher level education or professional qualifications from their own countries. RAGU offers a wide range of services including specifically targeted courses, individual advice and guidance sessions and help into employment (SET UP project). RAGU aims to enhance students' language skills, build self-confidence and open up possible avenues into education, vocational training and employment. (More information: www.unl.ac.uk/ragu)

The Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund (PoC)

PoC is a charitable trust dedicated to relieving hardship of prisoners of conscience and their families by providing relief grants. Currently, The PoC helps around 2000 people every year. About half of the grants go towards general hardship relief, which includes items such as clothing, food and essentials for the home. In 2001 23% of the grants was aimed at education and training. In the last few years PoC has been overwhelmed with requests for assistance from people who have arrived in the UK as refugees. The PoC has recently been working in partnership with RETAS to offer a grants programme for refugees particularly those seeking to undertake advanced postgraduate courses. (More information: www.prisonersofconscience.org)

The Africa Educational Trust (AET)

AET was founded as a charity in 1958 to help with the development of African education. Since then AET has supported a wide range of education and training programmes and provided scholarships and study grants to African refugees in Britain. The main aim of this grants programme is to enable African refugees and exiles to gain qualifications and skills which they can use for the benefit of their home country when they eventually return home. (More information: www.africaeducationaltrust/uk)

Praxis

Praxis offers a range of services for refugees and displaced people, such as signposting advice on housing, welfare, benefits and education. Praxis also supports the development of community groups and administers two small-scale grants programmes, including one for refugee doctors. (More information: www.praxis.org.uk)

The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)

CARA provides grants for tuition fees, bench fees, books, travel, and research expenditure for a limited number of refugee academics. In the academic year 2001/02 CARA supported 31 refugees. In the same year they had to turn down around 100 applications. Another 120 requests did not meet their criteria. (More information: www.academic-refugees.org)

Refugees into jobs

Refugees into Jobs was set up in 1997 to help refugees in Brent and Harrow to secure a job. The people Refugees into Jobs helps are often recognised as highly qualified, experienced professionals in their own country, but are bewildered by the UK labour market and have little knowledge of how to sell their skills to a potential employer. Therefore, the main objective is to empower refugees by providing them with the necessary tools to survive and thrive in the community.

EDUCATION

The educational system in the UK

The educational system in the UK has the following levels:

- pre-school education;
- school education: primary (5–11); secondary (11–16) and tertiary (16–19);
- Post-compulsory education: tertiary education in schools, adult education, further education, and higher education (undergraduate and postgraduate).

Because the FREE focusses on support for adult refugees the following section will describe post-compulsory education only.

Post-compulsory education

After 16, young people have three choices: they can stay on at school (or move to a sixth-form college); they can continue at a College of Further Education or they can leave school to look for employment and/or vocational training. Students staying at school, or sixth form college, study for Advanced ('A') level exams that are required for university entrance. Post-16 school education is still free, but in practice, asylum seekers (or their children) are not generally offered places in schools after compulsory education.

Colleges of further education (CFEs)

These offer a range of full-time, part-time and distance-learning courses, including General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) and 'A' level courses, craft, technical, vocational and commercial courses, access courses and English courses. Colleges include general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, agricultural and horticultural colleges, art and design colleges and other specialist institutions.

English provision

CFEs are responsible for most English language provision for speakers of other languages. There are two kinds of provision: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). EFL tuition is designed for visitors to the UK who will be returning to their countries once their studies are completed. ESOL tuition is designed for those who live in the UK and wish to learn the language for everyday communication, further studies, training, or employment. Most ESOL courses are free (or very cheap), and may also be run as part of specialised projects (sometimes managed by refugee community organisations).

In general there is a lack of suitable language courses for refugees. The level and intensity of ESOL courses are often insufficient to access education, training or jobs. The more intensive EFL courses would be more suitable for higher educated refugees, but unfortunately, in most cases, refugees are not able to access them because of the high costs. Furthermore, long waiting lists add to refugees' frustration in trying to learn the language quickly.

Access courses

These were established for people who want to refresh their knowledge and study skills or do not have all the qualifications they need to gain entry to higher education. Most of these courses do not require any formal qualifications, although applicants may be asked to come for an interview or write an essay. Access courses covering areas such as accountancy, business, engineering or social sciences, are regarded as appropriate for refugees who want to gain entry to higher education, but do not have all the necessary qualifications either due to the disruption of their education or because their original qualifications have not been recognised. To be able to enter access courses refugees first need to finish their language training.

Adult Education (AE)

This cannot be easily defined; it includes many recreational courses (including personal interest or hobby courses) as well as literacy and numeracy courses, study skills courses, adult foundation and 'pre-access' courses. Most AE courses do not require formal entry qualifications, are reasonably cheap and available on a part-time day or evening basis. These courses are also run by Adult Education Centres.

(General) National Vocational Qualifications

National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were developed in order to provide a framework for training in technical and vocational areas, to set industry-defined standards, and to recognise skills and competencies that were being gained ‘on the job’. The qualifications aim to be relevant to the workplace, easily understood by employers, and enable individuals to add to their skills throughout their working life. As a rule of thumb, NVQs are workplace-based and GNVQs are college-based. All NVQs slot into the NVQ framework according to their occupational area and by level - from level 1 which recognises the most basic skills, to level 5 which covers the highest levels of professional skill. GNVQs are available at three levels: Foundation, Intermediate, and Advanced.

Key Skills

Communication, Application of Numbers, and Information Technology have been identified as essential skills for individuals in modern society. A single Key Skills qualification is currently being piloted. Key skills can also be studied and assessed separately alongside other qualifications. Key skills are mandatory for GNVQ students, and are being integrated into NVQs, ‘A’ levels, and some degree programmes. They are also part of Modern Apprenticeships and National Traineeships.

Vocational training courses

Under-18s

All under-18s who have reached the school-leaving date and completed full-time education are guaranteed a training place at technician, craft and junior management level. People who are over 18 but have not been able to train or complete training because of disability, ill-health, pregnancy, language difficulties, a custodial sentence, being remanded in custody, or a care order, may still be guaranteed an offer of suitable training.

Under-18s who are unemployed

This group can normally train and study for qualifications up to NVQ level 2, and for up to 40 hours in any 7-day period, provided courses are completed before reaching the age of 25. A training allowance is paid to trainees.

Under 18s who are employed

Employees who are not in full-time education and who are not yet qualified to NVQ Level 2 have a legal right to reasonable paid time off for study or training in order to obtain an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent. The training can take place in the workplace, at college, or with another employer or training provider.

Modern Apprenticeships

These are government-funded training initiatives which aim to increase the numbers of young people (16–19) who achieve qualifications at NVQ level 3 or above whilst training within industry-designed frameworks, under a training agreement between the individual and his or her employer.

National Traineeships

These include training in both occupational and key skills with the focus on NVQ Level 2, and are intended for school and college leavers aged 16 and upwards. The aim is that every young person on a National Traineeship will be employed and paid wages. Where this is not possible, a young person will be linked to an employer or group of employers and paid an allowance.

Government-sponsored training schemes

From time to time the Government sets up training and educational schemes for the unemployed. At the present time, the main scheme is called ‘Work Based Learning for Adults (WbLA)’. Consult the Employment Services for further details.

Training and Employment Section (TES) - Refugee Council

The Refugee Council Training and Employment Section (TES) organises vocational training courses for unemployed refugees and asylum seekers. At the time of writing the courses on offer are Business Administration, Accountancy, Health and Social Care, Child Minding, Information Technology, Customised Training and Language and Communication.

Refugees face a number of barriers regarding vocational training. Financial constraints concerning living costs, travel, books/equipment and childcare can prevent refugees from following vocational training. Also there is a shortage of work placement schemes. Asylum seekers are excluded from government funded training courses.

Higher education

Higher education is a level of study that is above school education and further education. It is provided by 89 universities, 19 Colleges of higher education which award their own qualifications and 34 other Colleges of higher education that provide courses validated by universities. The Open University provides higher education through open and distance learning. A small number of (expensive) private universities are able to award their own degrees. The general requirements for higher education are passes in two or three subjects at 'A' level supported by passes in three other subjects at General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSE) level.

Technical and vocational qualifications (such as the BTEC National Certificates or Diplomas, Access and Foundation qualifications) and appropriate European or international qualifications may also meet university entry requirements. Refugees and asylum seekers may also be asked to prove that they have advanced written and spoken skills in English. If the student does not meet normal entry requirements, the system can offer alternative routes. Many institutions make special provisions for mature students (normally 21+) who have significant work experience. Others offer Conversion/Foundation courses – sometimes structured as 'Year 0' of a degree course – to students who do not meet their entry requirements. Higher education generally includes: first degree courses; Diplomas of higher education (DipHE) courses; BTEC; Higher National Diploma (HND) courses; and postgraduate studies.

First degree

A first degree (also known as an undergraduate degree or Bachelor degree) usually takes 3 or 4 (full-time) years, although some disciplines, such as architecture, dentistry or medicine can take up to 7 years to complete. Most degrees are also available as part-time courses. Degrees can be 'single' (one subject only), 'joint' (two subjects) or 'combined' (a number of subjects). 'Modular' degrees are those for which students can choose a variety of 'modules' to structure their own course. 'Honours' are obtained if the degree is more specialised; 'Ordinary' or 'General' degrees are less specialised. 'Sandwich' courses are those which involve a period of training in a workplace. Degrees are named according to the discipline, so arts degrees are called Bachelor of Arts (BA), science degrees are called Bachelor of Science (BSc), etc. Degrees are graded: first, upper second (2:1), lower second (2:2) and third.

Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) and Higher National Diploma (HND)

These are either full-time courses of 2 years' duration or 3-year sandwich courses. The DipHE is an academic qualification while the HND is more technical and vocational. They are qualifications in their own right, but also stepping stones to a degree.

Postgraduate studies

After completing a first degree, students may pursue postgraduate studies either by research or by instruction. A first class degree should, and an upper-second might, satisfy postgraduate entry requirements, although each applicant is individually assessed by the institution. Postgraduate qualifications include:

- Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma (1-year);
- Master of Arts/Master of Science (MA/MSc) (1 or 2 years);
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil) (2 years, based on original research);
- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) (3 years or more, based on original research);
- Professional and other postgraduate qualifications (entry to some professions requires postgraduate studies, e.g. PGCE for prospective teachers without a Bachelor of Education qualification).

In recent years, some universities, following the European model, have begun offering Masters Degree courses combining undergraduate and masters courses, e.g. Meng - a 5-year course in engineering. Some professional bodies have established their own educational structures, e.g. accountancy.

Recognition of qualifications for educational purposes

UK NARIC is contracted by the Department of Education and Skills (DfES) to inform and advise on comparability of international and UK qualifications and to promote British qualifications overseas. UK NARIC has no legal powers to recognise overseas qualifications. Thus, the work is done on an advisory basis and the final decision stays with the university, employer or professional body. On a yearly basis UK NARIC receives between the 25,000 and 30,000 inquiries.

UK NARIC does not require original documentation because they do not give legal recognition or permission to work. Instead, photocopies of the final qualification certificate and the transcript (including an official translation in English), as well as a covering letter, will do. UK NARIC can also advise refugees with straightforward qualifications who could not take their documents with them into exile.

Refugees' entitlements to education and training

Contrary to the widespread myth, there are no legal restrictions to refugees' access to education in the UK. Refugees are free to study any course at any level or in any mode (part-time/full-time), as long as they meet both of the following conditions:

- They must be able to satisfy the entry requirements of the course in terms of their language skills and their academic/ vocational/ experiential background.
- They must have the financial ability to pay the course fees and maintain themselves while studying. This is especially important if they are ineligible for statutory financial support, ie. remission of fees, Student Loans, Access and Hardship Funds, Hardship Loans etc.

It must be pointed out that refugees' immigration status has important implications for their eligibility for statutory financial support both in further education and higher education. Unfortunately, due to modifications to the laws and regulations in recent years, a large number of refugees cannot benefit from those financial support schemes. This is especially true for asylum seekers, regardless of the length of their stay in the UK.

Refugees' entitlements to education are governed by a series of complex laws, regulations, rulings, funding councils' decisions etc., which are also subject to constant change. The following information is only a summary of these entitlements.

Refugees' access to further education

All categories of refugees, including asylum seekers, who are in receipt of state benefits (Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, or assistance from the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) or Social Services) do not need to pay tuition fees for Colleges of Further Education. During enrolment

colleges may charge a Registration Fee. Refugees who are in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support should not be studying for more than 16 hours per week, as this affects their eligibility to those benefits.

Eligibility for statutory funding (Access and Hardship Funds) in further education

Refugees' eligibility for these financial assistance schemes is determined by the Education (Student Support) Regulations 2000, and entitlements of refugees with different legal status differ greatly.

Table 2: Eligibility for statutory funding in further education

Refugees' legal status	Eligibility
Asylum seekers	Ineligible regardless of their length of stay in the UK
Exceptional leave to remain/enter	After fulfilling the "three year ordinary residence" requirement before the start of the course
Refugee status	Eligible from the date of being granted refugee status
Indefinite leave to remain given under the "backlog clearance scheme"	After fulfilling the "three year ordinary residence" requirement before the start of the course

Access Funds are the main statutory financial support system for further education for both part-time and full-time education and are only available for students in need. Costs towards books, equipment, childcare, transport and even maintenance can be claimed from this scheme. In addition to Access Funds colleges also administer Hardship Funds for students who find themselves in sudden financial hardship.

Refugees' access to higher education (undergraduate level)

There are two rates for tuition fees for higher education: the Overseas Student rate and the Home Student rate. The latter is much cheaper (€2,400 to €3,150 per annum) than the former (over €11,000 per annum). Refugees' eligibility for the Home Student or Overseas Student rate of fees is determined by the Education (Fees and Awards) Regulations 1997. According to these regulations refugees with full Refugee Status and ELR are entitled to pay fees at the Home Student rate. Asylum seekers, however, can legally be charged at the Overseas Student rate, but the regulations left it to the discretion of the educational institutions as to whether to charge Home or Overseas Student rates. Many universities have a policy of charging asylum seekers Home Student fees, while some may consider individual cases for Home Fees, but as a rule charge asylum seekers Overseas Student rate of fees.

Statutory student support in higher education

In England and Wales there is a statutory financial student support system, which includes loans and allowances. The Student Loan covers the maintenance expenses of the student, and it has to be paid back after the completion of the course of study, although no one is expected to make any payments in a year when their annual income is less than €15,820. Applications for student loans need to be made through Local Education Authorities.

The student support system also has an element of "award" which does not need to be paid back. This covers the following:

- allowances for maintenance expenses of dependant(s) of students
- allowances for single parents and people with disabilities
- top-up payments for those course fees exceeding £1000
- fee waivers (see below)

The Student Support system excludes postgraduate studies, with some exceptions, such as Initial Teacher Training courses. Access and Hardship Funds and Hardship Loans are also available for students who face difficulties in entering into or continuing with their studies. These funds are administered by the educational institutions themselves, and are also available for postgraduate students in need.

Undergraduate students who are either in receipt of state benefits or on a low income might be eligible for a fee waiver (remission of fees or nil fees) for the tuition fees. This applies to both part-time and full-time courses.

Refugees' eligibility for statutory student support, including fee waivers, depends on their immigration status. According to the Education (Student Support) Regulations 1999, refugees with full refugee status are eligible immediately for such support, but refugees with ELR need to fulfil the "three year ordinary residence requirement" before the start of their course. Asylum seekers are ineligible, regardless of the length of their stay in the UK (see also table 2).

Miscellaneous

- Unemployed students can continue claiming Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance whilst studying on a part-time basis, but Job Seekers Allowance claimants should demonstrate that they are actively seeking employment and are ready to give up the course if an offer of suitable employment is made.
- Students in full-time education normally cannot claim Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance unless they are single parents or registered disabled. For certain courses, however, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) may allow students to do full-time courses that are likely to enhance their chances of finding employment.
- Educational entitlements of refugees with full refugee status and ELR normally apply also to their spouse and children.
- Local Education Authorities can still offer Discretionary Awards to local students, but they need to use their own financial resources to run this scheme, rather than Central Government funds.
- Some universities and colleges may receive additional funding from different sources, ie. funding from European Social Fund (ESF), Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), charities etc, to be able to offer reduced fees or distribute bursaries or grants to certain categories of students, usually students in need. These may also be referred to as Access or Hardship Funds, but they should not be confused with their statutory equivalents. These funds may also be targeted at certain categories of course. Refugees with full refugee status and ELR can benefit from these schemes as long as they meet the criteria. Asylum seekers may also be eligible, depending on the policy of the institution and/or funders' requirements.
- The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) provides grants for tuition fees, bench fees, books, travel, and research expenditure for a limited number of refugee academics.
- Around 50 trusts, foundations and charities assist individual refugees and students with their training or studies, for example the Prisoners of Conscience Appeal Fund and Praxis (see key

players). Each has its own specific criteria depending on the aims of the organisation and type of funding they receive, for example regarding nationality, age, gender, types of study. No specific data is included in this study on how many refugees each organisation supports, but in general the numbers are limited due to lack of funding.

Financial constraints

Financial constraints play a key role in preventing refugees from following the training or education they need to (re)qualify for employment reflecting their skills, educational background and working experience. More specifically the problems occur in the following areas:

1. A lack of funding to be able to follow higher level intensive language courses, especially for refugees who wish to enter higher education.
2. A lack of funding for travel, books and childcare to be able to follow language courses or other further education programmes.
3. No statutory funding for asylum seekers for further education and higher education. Asylum seekers also have to pay overseas fees (over €11,000 per annum). Getting alternative funding is difficult because educational trusts and charities are reluctant to support them because of their status. Asylum seekers who do not want to be dispersed do not receive any kind of benefits and thus have additional problems, for example to pay for living costs.
4. Refugees with ELR are not eligible for a student loan for maintenance in the first 3 years of their residence in the UK.
5. Only limited funding is available for postgraduate studies. This is also true for native people, but they have in contrast to refugees access to other sources of funding (e.g. banks, relatives).

EMPLOYMENT

In the 1990s asylum seekers became a substantial component of foreign migration flows, comprising between a sixth and a quarter of annual inflows. More sharply, they represented in 1999 about half of the non-EU and non-Commonwealth foreign immigrants.

Labour market trends in the UK

The Office for National Statistics (ONS)³ employment statistics figures for winter 2001/02 show that 23% of those working were employed in the public sector and 77% were employed in the private sector. Taking these sectors together, only 3% were working in agriculture, energy and water; around 23% were working in manufacturing and construction, and almost 73% were working in the service sector. The service sector includes banking, finance and insurance, hotels and restaurants, transport and communications, and education, health and public administration. Education, health and public administration accounts for almost 25% of total employment. These figures demonstrate that the UK labour market has becoming increasingly service-oriented and, accordingly, there are opportunities for jobs in this sector at most levels.

³ Extracted from www.statistics.gov.uk.

Immigration and skills shortages

In the UK we have seen recent debates within the government about how to fashion immigration policy in such a way as to allow immigration for people with skills in shortage areas. These debates are particularly important because of the ageing of the working age population. Growth in the proportion of elderly people will be the principal source of increases in social protection expenditure. At the same time fertility rates have decreased so that the numbers of new entrants to the labour market has not kept pace with those leaving through retirement⁴. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) predicts that in 2020 more than 10 million migrants are needed to freeze old age dependency ratios at their 2010 level⁵. Therefore, it would make good economic sense to utilise the skills and revenues of refugees.

Refugees' entitlements to work

People with ELR status or with refugee status are fully entitled to work, except in some "sensitive" jobs in the civil service (they can work in most administration posts). Sensitive jobs could be in the military or at the level where the employee has access to highly confidential ministerial information. The entitlement to work is recorded in the Home Office letter containing notification of status.

Until July 2002 asylum seekers were entitled to apply for permission to work regardless of how their asylum application was doing. Six months after submitting an asylum application, asylum seekers could apply for permission to work, and this was usually granted with a stamp on their standard acknowledgement letter (SAL) document. With married couples the main applicant applied for the permission to work, usually the man, and it was this applicant who was granted the permission.

Since July 2002 this concession has been removed for all new asylum seekers, while those who applied for permission to work prior to July 2002 can still work. In theory asylum seekers who are on appeal are allowed to continue in work but they generally have no papers to indicate this as their documents will be with the Home Office, so in practice people on appeal have less work opportunities than others. Overall employers generally find the permission to work situation confusing and are worried about being penalised under section 8 of the Immigration Act 1996 which means they would be fined for employing an illegal migrant worker. In a lot of cases the employer will be over-cautious and choose not to employ an asylum seeker as they often do not know the difference between an asylum seeker and an illegal migrant. The public sector (non-profit organisations, including charities, local authorities, housing associations etc.) is believed to be the least discriminatory group of employers in the UK.

Unemployment and under-employment rates among refugees

In reality, refugees have great difficulties getting work or are hugely under-employed. Although there are no exact figures for the unemployment of refugees (these statistics are not gathered by the ONS), recent research shows a high level of unemployment amongst refugees. A well-known study carried out by the Home Office in 1995⁶ found that of a sample of 263 refugees, two-thirds had been employed in their home country, while only 27% had jobs in the UK. In 1999, a survey conducted by the London Research Centre⁷ showed that in a sample of 236 refugees and asylum seekers, 42% of the refugees were unemployed, and 68% of the asylum seekers. The survey also discovered that most of

⁴ Shaw, Graham. Centre for diversity and business, *Ethnic minority employment through partnership*, The Copenhagen Centre, Copenhagen 2002.

⁵ OECD, *Trends in International Migration*, OECD 1998.

⁶ Home Office, *The settlement of Refugees in Britain*, HMSO, London 1995.

⁷ Refugee Skills-net, *The employment and training of skilled and qualified refugees*, London Research Centre, London 1999.

those actively seeking work had been in the UK for several years. The Home Office report found that although over half of those employed had found work as professionals, managers or employers, they tended to be in temporary jobs. Many of the 37 highly qualified refugees in London in a 1997 study by the Low Pay Unit and the World University Service (UK)⁸ were found to work in casual jobs not related to their qualifications: doctors, lawyers, teachers and lecturers were, when employed, found to be working as, for example, occasional interpreters or sales assistants.

Further research makes the same point. For example, an interview survey of 949 refugees and asylum seekers in Haringey⁹ found that 64% of the economically active were unemployed despite half having been in the country for 3 years or more. A 1996 survey of refugees and asylum seekers in Brent and Harrow reported that 42% of economically active respondents were unemployed though three quarters had lived in the UK for over 2 years. The 1999 Africa Educational Trust Report¹⁰ interviewed 122 former grant applicants for their 1993/94 programme (so they had resided in the UK for at least 5 years) and found that 35% still remained without a job.

The reports suggest the following rule of thumb: about 45–60% of refugees are out of work after residing 2–5 years in the UK; after 5 years, the rate is about 22–30%, with the risk of unemployment becoming chronic. Comparisons of these figures with the rate of unemployment for ethnic minorities (13%), for other foreign-born (15.8%), and for white adults (6%) in 1994 in the UK, show the magnitude of the problem.

Unemployment entitlements

There are two main types of social security cash payments available to the unemployed: Income Support (IS) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (around €95 a week). These benefits are roughly the same amount of money, but people on JSA are obliged to look for work, which means having regular interviews at the Employment Service and drawing up a 'back to work' plan. Those on IS do not have to seek work (for example single parents, elderly people etc.). For the first 13 weeks on JSA, people can search for a job of their choice but, after 13 weeks, they must consider any job. In practice, this means that people are often obliged to have interviews for jobs in which they have no interest, or take up low-paid positions. Those with ELR and refugee status are entitled to claim IS and JSA; asylum seekers are supported by NASS.

Job schemes and relevant government schemes for unemployed people

People on IS or JSA can go on government training courses, during which they are off the 'live' unemployment register for periods of up to 3 months a year. Whilst participating in such schemes, people do not have to seek work. However, courses are of inconsistent quality, and may not be appropriate to the needs of the individual.

The only certain entitlement asylum seekers have to free government sponsored training is English language learning (ESOL). However, some training providers are able to provide other and more vocational training for asylum seekers under European Social Fund (ESF) schemes (as distinct from UK Government training schemes). For updated information, see www.refugeenet.org, www.refugeecouncil.org.uk, www.rightsnet.org.uk.

⁸ Pile, Helga. *The Asylum Trap: The Labour Market Experiences of Refugees with Professional Qualifications*, Low Pay Unit, London 1997.

⁹ Haringey Council, *Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Haringey*, Haringey Council, London 1997.

¹⁰ Africa Educational Trust, *Do study grants help refugees find jobs?* Africa Educational Trust, London 1999.

Recruitment process and job search

Ostensibly, the recruitment process is the same for refugees as for the native population. Job hunters look in newspapers, magazines, or on the Internet for job advertisements, apply in writing and, if they get an interview, they will discuss skills and experience relevant to the position etc. Other ways of finding jobs include word of mouth, private recruitment agencies and government job centres, all of which involve interviews.

Refugees often fail to get jobs because they lack knowledge of the recruitment process, have poor interview skills, or do not know how to use the latest language of Equal Opportunities. Refugees may not know what clothing is conventionally worn to work, what information is expected in a written application, or how to present information in an interview. Refugees' applications may also fail because they use formal English that is no longer widely used.

Employment support for refugees

Those working with refugees all report high levels of motivation amongst clients, but continued low levels of employment. The Refugee Council stresses to employers and the government that refugees bring skills and experience that is currently wasted. RETAS and the Refugee Council are involved in schemes to help refugee doctors get through their PLAB examination. Praxis is involved in a scheme to help refugee nurses. These health professions require a re-qualification process that costs money and the Refugee Council and RETAS can help to some extent with this.

Other schemes have been those which provide job-search training to people of all professions, followed by one-to-one employment support. RETAS, the Refugee Council, RAGU and Refugees into Jobs have been involved in delivering this type of support. Although this is labour-intensive, it delivers results by making clients independent and able to compete in the labour market as individuals; again, given the caution of employers mentioned above it is important that people can explain themselves in a non-controversial fashion.

Employability Forum is an organisation that acts as a network/umbrella for both the refugee charity sector and mainstream private sector employers. The network aims to raise awareness among employers of the skills refugees have and also to develop ways refugees can access employment in the private sector.

All of the above organisations are London based. There are other organisations helping refugees with employment throughout the UK; for example, the Northeast Refugee Service in Newcastle (NERS) and the Midlands Refugee Council in Birmingham.

Changing career, re-training and transferring skills

Refugees may find themselves in a situation where the host country may not place value on their qualifications and experience. Given the restrictions on 'regulated' professions, such as law or medicine, it may be more practical for refugees to change their careers rather than try to re-qualify in their original profession. Furthermore, there are some jobs, such as agricultural scientists, for which there is very limited demand in the UK. Changing careers is not a simple process. There are several factors that need to be taken into account:

- Will the person need re-training?
- How long will it take?
- Is it going to cost a lot of money?
- Will the refugee be employable at the end of the training?

Equal opportunities and positive action

There are four acts referring to equality in employment: Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976, Equal Pay Act 1984, and Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Positive action as practised in the UK means that organisations can try to improve access for marginalised groups to enable them to participate fully in society, but there are no quotas for race or gender; indeed, this would be against the law. For more information see the Commission for Racial Equality's website: www.cre.gov.uk and www.rightsnet.org.uk.

Language and qualifications as barriers to employment

Although knowledge of the host language is a condition for most jobs, the premise that language difficulties of refugees are a major barrier to employment may have been exaggerated. Seventy five percent of the respondents to the Refugee Skills-net report who had 'poor English' were unemployed, but so were 48% who spoke fluent English, forcing the Report to conclude that '*although English helped, it by no means solved the problem*'.¹¹ With regard to qualifications, apart from the 'regulated professions' (medicine, architecture, dentistry and the like), most occupations in the UK do not require any formal recognition of foreign diplomas. It is up to the employer to assess whether a particular individual with a particular qualification meets the workplace needs. Although foreign qualifications may raise some difficulties in terms of describing the range of skills they encompass, this can also be an issue for UK qualifications. Furthermore, few qualifications fully meet the needs of the workplace and a short period of induction/training is almost always indispensable.

Changes in the UK economy

Employment possibilities for migrants have been influenced by changes in the UK labour market. The period after the Second World War until the early 1970s was exceptionally good with low unemployment figures. Since 1970, however, economic cycles became much more severe: there were sharp downturns in 1973–75, 1979–81, 1984–86, and 1993–94, with unemployment reaching a peak of nearly 12% of the economically active population in 1985–86, but still remaining at over 6% at times of economic recovery.

During the period 1992–2000 overall employment rose by 1.9 million. Two of the major occupational categories, Craft and related occupations and 'other' occupations experienced net losses. All others had gains, the main ones being managers and administrators (618,000) and associate professionals and technical occupations (604,000). In general, the largest gains were in the skilled groups. Jobs associated with manual work, trades and manufacturing have been lost or not increased; those with management, administration, professional and technical work have been increasing.

The Gainers and Losers table below shows that during the period 1992-2000 there were good job opportunities for a foreign labour force in computer companies, security and service occupations, arts and sports and others. However, so far refugees have had little chance of getting these jobs. Most jobs in computers, financial management and others are filled by the so-called 'international internal market' (i.e. a pool of specialist staff in a particular field). Arts and sports are restricted to small elites of international personalities. Expansion in childcare and related services, and teaching, offered some job opportunities, but it should be noted that a majority of refugees, in the case of teaching, might have felt handicapped by language requirements.

¹¹ Refugee Skills-net, *The employment and training of skilled and qualified refugees*, London Research Centre, London 1999.

Table 3: Percentage changes from 1992-2000 by occupation for foreign-born workforce

Top 10 Gainers

Occupation	%
Computer Analysts and Programmers	110.5
Security Etc Service Occupations	100.0
Arts and Sports Professionals, etc.	69.7
Financial and Office Managers, Etc	60.0
Managers in Transport and Storing	60.0
Childcare and Related	55.6
Sales Representatives	53.8
Specialist Managers	52.1
Teachers	48.6
Road Transport Operatives	46.3

Top 10 Losers

Occupation	%
Production Managers in Manufacturing	-44.4
Textile Trades	-42.5
NCOs Etc., Armed Forces	-31.3
Metal Trades	-26.9
Business and Finance Assoc Prof	-22.9
Admin Staff in Government	-20.9
Assemblers and Line Workers	-16.7
Other Transport and Machine Operatives	-15.4
Woodworking	-12.5
Other Plant and Machine Workers	-12.5

Source: *International Migration and the United Kingdom: recent patterns and trends*

To these changes in the UK economy and developments concerning migration flows one must add the detrimental impact of government policies described above, the negative representation of refugees by the media and the xenophobic exploitation of the asylum seeker 'threat' by politicians of all varieties. The result is the ideological construction of asylum seekers and refugees as a marginal, low-skilled, unreliable and problematic source of labour.

There are two negative views in the popular press about migrants coming to the UK:

- People come to the UK to avail themselves of a benefits system that is more generous than that of the rest of Europe and to get free housing etc. - a view that does not stand up to scrutiny when one examines the systems of other European states. In any case, in most states the "generous" parts of the benefits systems are not available to migrants.
- People come to the UK to find employment - There is some truth in this, although unfortunately the type of jobs many migrants end up working in are in the black market. Over the last 20 years the UK economy has become more and more deregulated to the extent that it is relatively easy to find low-paid unregulated work in large metropolitan areas such as London. It is estimated there are many thousands of illegal migrants servicing this black economy in the UK at any one time, and although this estimate refers to illegal migrants and does not include asylum seekers/ refugees, they have become identical categories in much of the public imagination.

Refugees and qualifications

Most professions in the UK do not require foreign qualifications to be formally recognised for the purpose of employment and self-employment, but there are some exceptions (regulated professions). Regulation prevails in the medical and paramedical fields and professions such as law, architecture and dentistry. There is not always a clear rationale to explain why some professions are regulated; in some cases, like health or social services, a public interest can be recognised, but it is hard to explain why architecture is regulated but civil engineering is not. Access to regulated professions normally requires a process of formal recognition of foreign diplomas ending in “registration” with the competent authority.

The main features of the system of regulated recognition for employment in the UK are:

- There is no single system of recognition. There is a bewildering array of procedures that might include one or more examinations, or a period of further training or study, or a time of supervised work experience, or a combination of them all.
- It follows from the above that no single authority assesses or recognises all overseas diplomas. There are many professional, government and other agencies involved, depending on the type of qualification.
- Recognition normally entails the right to engage in any branch of professional occupation, but there is a “nationality” requirement for jobs in the Civil Service.

The cumbersome and expensive formal procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications for regulated professions represent one of the most powerful weapons to exclude refugees and other ‘third-country nationals’ from the labour market or to undermine their professional standing.

Labour market discrimination

While the idea of ‘labour market discrimination’ is hardly novel, it was confined in the past to grumbling radical sociologists (mostly working in the field of race relations) while neo-liberal, market-based theories of the labour market reigned supreme in the 1980s and early 1990s. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in the late 1990s, however, resulted in a growing public awareness of the problem of ‘institutional racism’ in the UK. A 2000 report from the London Development Partnership stated that in London, ‘...*labour market discrimination is wasting human resources on a massive scale. Unemployment rates amongst black and minority ethnic communities can be up to three times that of the white community whilst, on average, unemployment rates are twice as high as those for white people with the same level of qualification - and the situation is getting worse.*’ Unfortunately, the growing awareness of labour market discrimination seems to have been followed by a back-lash in the early 2000s when public sentiment against asylum seekers (branded as ‘bogus’ refugees and illegal immigrants) has again been aroused by extreme right-wing and racist rhetoric in Europe.

However, there is a particular area with a substantial history of foreign staff and high social standing: the National Health Service.

An example in disentanglement: Health Occupations

Not only is the National Health Service emblematic of the welfare state but also one of the three or four key public issues (the others being the economic state of the nation, public order and security, and immigration) that could determine the fate of politicians. It is amazing to realise that a performer with such a grip of the public vote could be run for good measure by foreigners. Over 30% of doctors are foreign-born, and the total number of foreigners in medical occupations is about 8%. Between 1992 and 2000 the number of foreign-born doctors rose sharply by 44%, but the stock of foreign nurses

remained unchanged. Half the expansion of the NHS over the last decade, i.e. 8000 of the additional 16,000 staff, had qualified abroad.

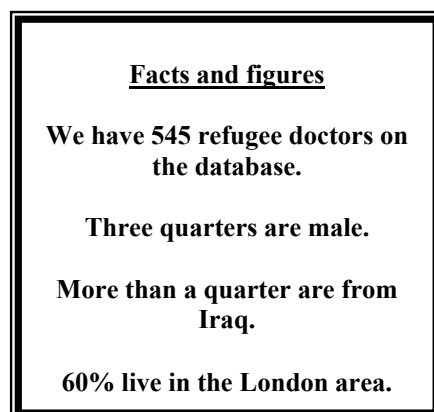
It is also striking to see that most foreign doctors are not from the EU or the EFTA region. There is a long tradition of recruiting doctors from the Old Commonwealth (particularly South Africa) and from India and Pakistan. There was little expansion of the medical profession in the 1980s and early 1990s, but by the turn of the Millennium the decline of the NHS had become a burning issue. Shortages of doctors and nurses presented a serious challenge to efforts to resuscitate the UK's suffering health services.

The number of medical refugees and other health professionals does not seem negligible, although precise figures cannot be obtained. In 2001 the British Refugee Council began to register refugee doctors that they came across and by March 2002 the figure was approaching 600. Their work experience is significant: 81% had worked more than 5 years in a particular speciality and 14% had over 10 years' experience. Sixty percent of them live in London.

However, re-qualification procedures for foreign doctors from outside the EU have been expensive and particularly laborious, and anecdotal evidence suggests that no more than 30% have managed to re-qualify. Whatever the exact figure, refugee agencies agree that most doctors end up in long-term unemployment or in low-skilled jobs. It should not be thought, however, that this is necessarily the result of poor training abroad. In fact, practically all refugee doctors have received the kind of training that the World Health Organisation accepts as appropriate. For example, until recently, refugee doctors from Cuba were not even allowed to apply for recognition even when the high standard of Cuban medical training has long been admitted.

On the other hand, recognition procedures for EU nationals have been smooth and effective. The difference in treatment does not derive from 'natural' dissimilarities but from political and institutional arrangements that disenfranchise some groups and establish differential access to the labour market and to the benefits of societal life. Nowhere is this more manifest than in the case of third-country refugees who, having graduated in an EU state, find themselves subject to cumbersome and harsh re-qualification procedures while their European fellow-students take little time and effort in gaining recognition of the same diplomas.

Statistics from the British Refugee Council - Refugee Doctor Database - March 2002



In 1999, prompted by acute shortages in the NHS, the Department of Health established a scheme to help refugee health professionals to re-qualify. It is still too early to assess the impact of the scheme, but this one as well as other smaller projects run by refugee agencies show that the issue turns not so much around 'natural' barriers (such as talent, skills or language) but around artificial constructs and ideological perceptions.

Skills Shortages in the UK: What Jobs for Refugees?

At the present migrant workers should look at the following economic sectors:

- Health. There are still severe staff shortages for doctors and nurses. A Royal College of Nursing survey reported 78% of hospitals facing recruitment difficulties
- Education. Recent reports suggest that schools in England and Wales will have to find an extra 10,000 teachers over the next 4 years;
- Higher education. About 12.5% of academic and research staff are non-British nationals, particularly in medicine, science and engineering;
- Information Technology (IT). It is said that the IT services industry alone will need to recruit another 500,000 in the next 8 years;
- Catering. About 70% of catering jobs in London are filled by migrants, yet about 40% of hospitality firms reported recruitment difficulties recently.

Setting up Businesses

As an alternative to looking for employment, refugees could consider setting up their own businesses. Over the years Britain has profited a lot from refugee business initiatives. There are estimates that during the 2 years following the Second World War, refugees in Britain established over a thousand new companies, employing well over 250,000 people, and some of the most celebrated entrepreneurs – including Michael Marks, founder of Marks & Spencer – originally came to Britain in search of asylum¹².

However, setting up one's own business is not easy. For refugees this is especially true because they are less familiar with the British regulations and they have more difficulties to access finance. Support is available from mainstream business support agencies such as Business Link and private business advisers, but the fees they charge are often a barrier to attend their sessions. Agencies such as the Refugee Council, RETAS and the Islington Enterprise Agency (IEA) in London also provide advice and business start-up courses for refugees that take into account the special circumstances of refugees.

A number of organisations provide financial assistance for business start-up. The Prince's Youth Trust provides grants up to £ 5,000 for people between 18 and 30 years old. Since 1983 the Prince's Trust has helped launch over 47,000 businesses. Last year they supported 34 refugees. One-London provides loans up to £ 5,000 without any interest payable in 3 years. There is, however, an administration fee. After 1 year trading applicants are eligible for a loan up to £ 20,000 with an interest rate of around 3% off the basic rate. Local councils might have special financial packages and the Learning and Skills Councils in London also might provide assistance for start-ups. In addition, PRIME provides loans for people over 50. Street Cred helps unemployed women, including refugees, in east London to start their own enterprises by providing them with business support, access to training and small start-up loans of up to £500 to help them start trading. Finally, the Department of Trade and Industry has a small loan guarantee scheme, but this scheme is restricted depending on the type of business.

However, despite this provision, refugees encounter difficulties in accessing finance for their business plan. Mainstream funding through banks is hard to get, because refugees generally do not have any financial records or assets to prove their credibility (although Banks might consider match funding). Another difficulty is follow-up finance to keep the business going until it is profitable; asylum seekers, with or without permission to work, as a rule cannot access the sources listed. Their only option is money from friends or relatives. In general, more financial support and more tailor-made training for small business start-up for refugees should be made available¹³.

¹² Refugee Council, *Credit to the nation: refugee contribution to the UK*, Refugee Council, London 2002.

¹³ Shiferaw, Demessew and Hagos, Hailu, *Refugees and progression routes to employment*, Refugee Council, London 2002.

REFUGEES' BARRIERS AND NEEDS

The following table gives an overview of the most important barriers and needs for refugees and asylum seekers when they try to access training, education or employment. The table clearly shows that financial constraints play a key role in refugees' ability to enter training, education and self-employment. The table's content is based on information from various research reports (see bibliography).

Topics	Barriers	Needs
Further education and language provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - not enough courses to cover the demand: long waiting lists - the level and intensity of general language provisions are often insufficient to access education, training or jobs - financial constraints; lack of funding for travel, books and childcare - lack of suitable statutory funding for further education - lack of childcare provisions - lack of places on courses for asylum seekers (over 16 years) - lack of information and expert advice for getting on courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consistent data collection for better planning of language provisions - more language courses for a wider range of levels and needs - more intensive preparatory courses for higher education - financial support for travel, books and childcare - statutory funding for asylum seekers and refugees with exceptional leave to remain - more possibilities for combining teaching language skills with further (vocational) education or work placements - more cheap childcare provisions - more places on courses for asylum seekers - expert advice and more accessible information on which courses to follow
Vocational training/ government funded training schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asylum seekers are excluded from government funded training courses - financial constraints: living costs, travel, books/equipment, childcare - limited funding available; normally no statutory funding - shortage of work placements schemes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - permission for asylum seekers to follow government training courses - more financial support
Higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - non recognition of skills and qualifications - lack of documents to prove qualifications - lack of preparatory courses - financial constraints: living costs, travel, books/equipment, childcare - expensive overseas student fees for asylum seekers - asylum seekers ineligible for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more suitable preparatory courses for higher education - scholarships/grants, in particular for asylum seekers and refugees with exceptional leave to remain - Additional financial support for travel, books/equipment, childcare - home fees for asylum seekers - abolishment of "three year

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - statutory student support - refugees with exceptional leave to remain ineligible for statutory support for the first 3 years of residence - lack of funding for postgraduate studies - cultural differences in teaching methods and education system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ordinary residence requirement" for exceptional leave to remain status holders - more cheap childcare provisions - funding for postgraduate education - more attention to cultural differences in preparatory courses
Recognition of qualifications for education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of documents to prove qualifications - under-assessment of foreign qualifications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - flexibility in admitting alternative evidence such as other supporting documents, tests or interviews - more fair assessment
Entitlements to work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asylum seekers are not entitled to work since 7 July 2002 - lack of employers' knowledge of refugees' entitlements to work - red tape - bureaucratic legislation concerning permission to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - give asylum seekers permission to work - reduce red tape - simplify legislation regarding permission to work
Recognition of qualifications for employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cumbersome and expensive procedures for regulated professions for which no funding is available - high costs for professional re-qualification - lack of recognition of foreign qualifications by employers; employers' emphasis on work experience in the UK (instead of qualifications) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reduce costs and simplify recognition procedures for regulated professions - scholarships/grants for professional re-qualification - employers should acknowledge refugees' home qualifications and work experience
Changing of careers and transferring of skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - high costs for re-training - lack of information on changing of careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more funding for re-training - expert advice on if a change of career is worth it
Accessing the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asylum seekers are not allowed to - lack of references (in the UK) - lack of work experience (in the UK) - discrimination - lack of knowledge of the job search culture; lack of familiarity with "Western" work practices - lack of self-confidence - lack of relevant skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - entitlement to work for asylum seekers - funding for tailor-made job search courses for refugees - funding for tailor-made advice and support - change of employers' recruitment practices and attitude towards refugees' qualifications and work experience - more availability of work placements
Setting up businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of availability of grants/ loans, in particular for refugees over 30 - refugees' lack of credit history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more accessible grants / loans - more funding for tailor-made business start-up courses - more funding for individual

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of grants/loans to keep the business growing after setting up - lack of knowledge of the system, administrative laws - bureaucracy, red tape - lack of advice aimed at refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - advice / support - reduce red tape
Social Benefit system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - full time education normally not allowed for people on Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - permission to do full time courses to enhance chances in finding employment, for example re-qualification in certain professions

POTENTIAL PARTNERS AND DONORS

This section will describe the possible interest of, for example, British businesses, governmental organisations, charitable foundations and educational institutes, in contributing towards a Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE).

Methodology

The project's steering group provided the research method which was used to carry out the feasibility study in the UK¹⁴. The British funding system is characterised by European and Governmental budget lines and hundreds of trusts, foundations, businesses, supporting numerous charities and other organisations in various areas. One of the difficulties is that all these donors and budget lines have their own policies and criteria for allocating funding to charities or projects, limiting the fundraising possibilities for FREE. Also, previous experiences¹⁵ suggest that the corporate sector lacks an interest in refugee issues. Furthermore, the current restrictive government asylum policies, in particular concerning asylum seekers' entitlements¹⁶, could imply a reserved reception of the project by governmental representatives.

Given these circumstances the following strategy for identifying and approaching potential donors was used. To explore the possibilities in the corporate sector, several experts in corporate giving¹⁷ and business networks¹⁸ were consulted. Desk research was carried out to identify trusts, foundations, and charities in the field of refugee education and employment and to investigate their policies, activities and criteria. As much as possible personal and organisational networks were used to contact potential donors/partners. They were contacted by telephone, mail and/or email, making use of the publicity material provided by the steering group. If possible a face to face meeting was arranged to explain the project and make inquiries about the donor/partner's interest, benefits and conditions. The publicity leaflet was also disseminated through networks and newsletters¹⁹ trying to seek responses from

¹⁴ See overall report for an outline of the research method.

¹⁵ Pile, Helga. *The Asylum Trap: The labour market experiences of refugees with professional qualifications*, Low Pay Unit, London 1997.

¹⁶ In July 2002 the government removed the concession which allowed asylum seekers to apply for permission to work if, by 6 months, they had not received their initial decision on their asylum claim.

¹⁷ Philip Rudge, independent consultant; Diana Yeo, Director of RefAid; Nick Killick, International Alert; Frances House, International Business Leaders Forum.

¹⁸ Community Development Finance Association (CDFA), Chamber of Commerce, Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), Employability Forum, the Work Foundation, UK Social Investment Forum, Forum for the Future and Business in the Community.

¹⁹ World University Service (UK), Pan London Refugee Training & Employment Network (PLRTEN), Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres (BASSAC).

potential partners/donors. Finally, a number of relevant conferences²⁰ were visited for networking and promoting the project.

Interest in FREE

On the whole the idea of setting up FREE was received positively. However, this general interest has not yet been followed by any commitment. Contributions will depend on receiving more information concerning FREE's structure, management, administration, budget, activities, and the commitment of other sources, in particular the willingness of the European Commission to make a substantial contribution to FREE. Nevertheless, four organisations (the Charity Bank, the Prince's Trust, the Refugee Council and the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics) that are already involved in funding refugees' training, education and business start-up have indicated that they are interested in a partnership.

The Charitable sector

Trusts and foundations²¹

There are about 8800 grant-making trusts and foundations in the UK. They give in total about £1.25 billion per year to charitable causes. To this might be added £320 million given by the National Lottery Charities Board and £280 million by a dozen large operating charities which make grants in the course of their work, making £1.85 billion in all.

Total grant giving to the voluntary sector by trusts is about the same as that of central or local government (apart from government grants to housing associations and employment schemes), and larger than the corporate sector²². Trusts can only preserve their distinctive role by doing special things. They therefore like to concentrate their funding on:

- New methods of tackling problems.
- Disadvantaged and minority groups that have trouble using mainstream services, or which are inadequately served by them.
- Responses to new or newly discovered needs and problems.
- Work which is hard to finance through conventional fundraising.
- One-off purchases or projects, including research.
- Short- and medium-term work which is likely to bring long-term benefit and/or to attract long-term funding elsewhere.

Core funding is not ruled out for work which falls into one or more of these categories.

Trusts vary enormously in their policies, styles of working, and administrative capacities. Therefore when applying it is recommended to:

- Do your homework beforehand.
- Prepare your application carefully.
- Leave plenty of time.

²⁰ Managing Migration (London, 15 January 02), organised by the Foreign Policy Centre; Focus on Opportunity (London, 18 April 02) organised by the Employability Forum; Ethical Corporation Europe 2002 Conference (London, 25, 26 April), organised by Ethical Corporation Magazine; Valorisation of the Leonardo da Vinci Programme (Madrid, 29/30 April 02), organised by EU Leonardo da Vinci Programme; European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) Bi Annual Meeting (BGM) (Seville, 7-9 June), organised by ECRE; The RET symposium (Geneva, 18, 19 September 02), organised by the Refugee Education Trust.

²¹ Extracted from the Guide to mayor trusts 2001/2002.

²² The figures are, however, notoriously difficult to analyse, so comparisons can be misleading.

The policies and criteria of trusts clearly indicate those which will not be interested in FREE. For example the geographical area (local or national projects only), field of work, sort of beneficiaries, age groups could be excluding criteria. FREE also has to consider the size of the grants the trust can award before applying.

The application procedure could include calls for proposals at certain times in a year. While writing applications it is important to address the following points:

- The purpose of the work to be funded – who it will help and how, what is distinctive about it, what will be achieved if a grant is given. One of FREE’s strong points is that results will be measurable (e.g. number of scholarships leading to qualifications, business start-ups)
- A budget for the project – the needs should be worked out carefully and specific sums of money should be requested.

In principle, projects concerning refugees, training, education and business start-up fall within the scope of various donors.

The Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) - The Charity Bank Limited

The Charity Aid Foundation (CAF) is a charity that has been working for over 75 years to help increase the financial health of charitable activity in all its forms. Today CAF works on behalf of 300,000 organisations and donors in up to 20 countries, handling over £600 million a year in valuable funds.

In September 2002 CAF founded the Charity Bank (as a successor to Investors in Society). The Charity is the first bank combining the financial flexibility and regulatory protection of a bank with the social purpose and legal recognition of a registered charity. Investors in Society accumulated a fund through returnable deposit of almost £10 million and made loans to some 200 charities of up to £250,000 per project/organisation. The Charity Bank is expected to invest larger sums over longer periods.

The Charity Bank seeks to reach people and organisations within disadvantaged communities, including refugees, and recognises differences in cultural background. FREE, therefore, definitely meets the type of initiatives the Charity Bank supports. Furthermore, the Charity Bank has a large network of other sources of funding within the UK and Europe and has the ability to take risks.

The Charity Bank is interested in becoming a FREE partner and could be involved in:

- Administering the activities (grants/scholarships/loans) of FREE in the UK in a tax-efficient manner. Being involved in the financial administration is also a condition for participating.
- Seeking leverage through their network of donors to supplement the other (European) sources of funding.
- Providing loans on an interest-free basis.
- Outreach opportunities for the implementation of FREE, using their network of organisations in the refugee field.

The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust exists to help young people to fulfil their potential. The trust works with 14 to 30 year olds who face disadvantage, offering them the support, encouragement and basic financial assistance they need to achieve their goals. Last year the Prince's Trust helped over 30,000 young people. On a yearly basis around £51 million is raised for various activities across the UK. Refugees are a priority group for the Prince's Trust.

One of their core programmes is the Business Start-up programme, which provides low-interest loans of up to £5,000, grants of up to £1,500 for individuals and £3,000 for groups, and mentors and other support for 18–30 year olds who want to start a business. Since 1983 the Prince's Trust has helped launch over 47,000 businesses. Last year they supported 34 refugees.

Development Awards, grants of £50 to £500, are available for unemployed UK residents, including refugees, aged 14–25, who have training, education or employment goals, but lack the money to support or reach them.

The Prince's Trust is interested in a partnership, in particular concerning their Business Start-Up and Developments Awards programme.

The Environment Trust

The Environment Trust is an independent company and charity set up in 1979 to promote environmental and educational projects, primarily in the East end of London. The Trust provides small credits for business start-up in a consortium with other organisations (like Street Cred) and has the expertise to manage these loans. The Environment Trust has no capital to contribute to FREE, but is possibly interested in a partnership to increase micro-credits for refugees.

The Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA)

As mentioned earlier CARA provides grants for tuition fees, bench fees, books, travel, and research expenditure for a limited number of refugee academics. CARA supports the FREE project and is interested in a partnership to increase their activities.

The Refugee Council

As mentioned earlier the Refugee Council is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. The organisation has nearly 180 members, of which a significant number are refugee community organisations. The Refugee Council supports the FREE project and is interested in a partnership regarding the implementation of FREE.

The Corporate sector

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)²³

‘Responsible business practice’ is a well-established concept in the UK, reflected in the large numbers of companies across all sectors that endorse it, and the many productive relationships that exist between the private, public and voluntary sectors. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is generally understood to be the expression of a company's commitment to and acceptance of its role in society.

Certain areas of CSR have gradually made their way into the mainstream corporate radar often with a particular event suddenly bringing the topic under the spotlight. For example, human rights became seen as a mainstream business issue after well-publicised accusations against BP operations in Colombia in 1997 and Shell operations in Nigeria in the early 1990s. Similarly, NGO groups such as FairTrade, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International, Oxfam and Traidcraft have successfully campaigned on certain issues, thereby bringing them under the spotlight of corporate practice.

Other significant themes are: employee involvement, education and training, regeneration, equal opportunities, ethical principles of CSR, ethical investment and cause-related marketing. Refugee integration is not part of this CSR agenda (yet), although there are links with themes such as education and training, regeneration and equal opportunities. On the whole it is seen as a governmental rather

²³ Information from the website www.csreurope.org.

than corporate issue. However, skills shortages are an important issue for employers, but the awareness is lacking that refugees could be part of a solution for this problem.

Motives of UK businesses addressing CSR vary considerable, from company to company, but obviously their own interests play a key role. Benefits could be:

- Gain a competitive edge in the marketplace by building the reputational value of the brand.
- Gain better coverage from the media.
- Attract sustained investment.
- Attract and retain more talented, motivated employees.
- Create new ways of sharing knowledge to promote innovation.
- Develop strong, reciprocal relationships with the communities with whom they do business.
- Build the competitiveness of their local communities.
- Leave a monument behind (for founders of big companies).

Many companies set up separate foundations or have Community Affairs departments, which develop policies and define criteria to manage the budgets for CSR purposes in similar way as charitable trusts and foundations work. FREE's activities should fit into these policies and criteria to qualify for funding, which unfortunately is often not the case. In recent years, however, CSR has increasingly become a focus for functional areas, including human resources, public relations, purchasing, marketing and product research departments.

An additional difficulty for FREE is the negative public perception of refugees, branded by right-wing politicians and media as bogus claimants and illegal immigrants. Since, a business's image and publicity are crucial, they might not want to be associated with refugees. Furthermore, the climate for corporate giving is not ideal due to economic downturn. As long as stock markets go down companies will be less generous in support of initiatives like FREE.

An opportunity on the other hand could be 'Public-Private'-partnerships, which are high on the agenda of the current government. Partnerships have been set up in the form of task groups led by business leaders to develop large-scale projects that are supported by both companies and government.

Business in the Community (BITC)

Business in the Community is a unique movement of companies across the UK committed to continually improving their positive impact on society, with a core membership of 700 companies. The movement is also part of a European network of similar organisations (CECILE network). The network could be used to enhance the support for FREE among employers.

Chamber of Commerce

The Chairman of the UK Chamber of Commerce, G.K. Noon, came as a refugee to the UK, and has spoken at several refugee related conferences. G.K. Noon is also the founder and chairman of Noon Products, which is a major high technology food producer supplying Sainsbury's and Waitrose and other leading retailers with over one million Indian chilled meals a month. The company currently employs 400 refugees, in particular from Sri Lanka. The network of the Chamber of Commerce could be used to enhance the support for FREE among employers.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI)

CBI's mission is to help and sustain the conditions in which business can compete and prosper. CBI has a leadership position as the voice of British Business. Susan Anderson, CBI's director of HR policy, says: *"The CBI recognises that the employment of refugees is an important issue and one that is part of a wider debate. We have skills shortages in some sectors and many of those currently unable*

to work could fill them."²⁴ The network of the CBI could be used to enhance the support for FREE among employers.

Employability Forum

The Employability Forum was launched in February 1999 by a group of organisations which wanted to provide practical help for refugee job seekers so that they could be more easily integrated into the world of work. Their employers network is not suitable to raise funds, but they could be a partner in raising awareness for refugee employment. They want to be informed about the results.

The Work Foundation

The Work Foundation, formerly The Industrial Society, combines leading-edge analysis of the modern workplace with practical experience of what inspiring and successful businesses and public sector organisations look like today. It is a new kind of organisation – part research institute, part business consultancy and part advocate. A team of employment experts, economists, commentators and researchers, working together with their network of member organisations, The Work Foundation provides crucial research into what is happening in UK workplaces today and key emerging trends. It is research based in reality and aimed at generating practical solutions. Nurturing, developing and respecting human capital and advocacy work to influence public debate are important elements of the Work Foundations' work.

Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs)

Community Development Finance Institutions are a new financial instrument for social, economic and physical renewal. CDFIs supply capital and business support to individuals and organisations in order to create wealth in disadvantaged communities and under-served markets, such as social enterprise. They aim to fill in the gap left by mainstream finance reluctant to invest in these markets. CDFIs are all independent financial institutions, funded from a variety of sources including individuals and charitable foundations as well as banks and government, but they use different methods to achieve their social and financial goals (more info: www.uksif.org). We had an appointment with the Community Development Finance Association, which referred us to a number of CDFIs, for example the Environment Trust (see below).

The Public sector

The Government is looking at a range of ways in which to increase the number of refugees in work, including provision exclusively for this group. However, decisions on 'the right approach' have been postponed until after the results of an evaluation on barriers for refugees are known (expected in December 2002). The current programmes are, in general, aimed at finding refugees any kind of employment without enough consideration of their professional backgrounds and training needs, which often leads to underemployment.

In addition, the decision to remove the concession that allows asylum seekers to work after 6 months will condemn asylum seekers to a life of dependency and poverty. Furthermore, asylum seekers are excluded more and more from mainstream training and education provision. These measures will in particular delay and obstruct the integration of those refugees who have to wait a long time before they get permission to stay. More specifically, on 31 December 2001 around 38,800 asylum seekers were still awaiting an initial decision and in 2001 around 10% were granted refugee status after often long appeal processes. Given the shortages in the labour market it seems foolish not to utilise the labour potential of asylum seekers or facilitate their training (for integration or return) while they await their case.

²⁴ Extracted from the information leaflet of Refugees into Jobs: *Who we are, what we do*.

Meanwhile, the European Social Fund EQUAL programme has been established to address labour market inequalities and the capacity to provide employment, education and entrepreneurial help for refugees. The next bidding process will take place in 2004, which could be an opportunity for FREE.

Another possible budget line for FREE is the national strand of the European Refugee Fund, established in September 2000 for financing projects relating to conditions for reception, integration, and voluntary repatriation, and managed by the Home Office. The total budget for 2003 is around €8 million.

In addition, the Learning and Skill Councils had a total budget of £ 206 million for the financial year 2001/02, covering the following areas: Further Education (£171 million), Work-Based Learning (£18 million), Adult and Community Learning (£9 million), Workforce Development (£3 million), Information, Advice and Guidance (£1 million), Local Initiative Fund (£5 million), Administration (£5 million) and other (£4 million). Learning and Skill Councils have also been approved to administer the European Social Fund Objective 3 programme on a co-financing basis. Their policy priorities include support for refugees. Getting funding for FREE would mean joining the bidding process after calls for proposals and adapting the project to their requirements.

Furthermore, the London Development Agency (LDA) is another co-financing organisation for London based projects only. Their measures include priorities for projects concerning the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Getting funding for FREE would mean joining the bidding process after calls for proposals and adapting the project to their requirements.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Why is FREE necessary?

In the UK many charities, trusts, refugee community organisations, educational institutes and governmental organisations, working locally and nationally, support refugees with numerous initiatives, projects and programmes. Services and activities vary from organisation to organisation, depending on their aims and the type of funding they receive, often comprising giving advice and support on asylum, housing, education, welfare benefits and employment.

Mainstream and other funding (grants, scholarships and loans) for refugees is available for language courses, vocational training, further and higher education and professional (re)qualification, but the demand is much higher than the availability. Furthermore, refugees' access to these provisions is limited because each provider has its own criteria regarding nationality, status, age, gender, types of study etc. In particular asylum seekers are more and more excluded from provision. Thus, financial constraints play a key role in preventing refugees from following the training or education they need to (re)qualify for employment reflecting their skills, educational background and working experience. In addition, refugees face difficulties in accessing finance to set up their own businesses.

Looking at the high rates of refugee unemployment and underemployment we have to conclude that the total impact of existing provision and activities is insufficient for refugees to access employment reflecting their skills and experiences. A Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE) could, working in partnerships with other organisations, address this significant barrier for refugees and plug this gap.

Potential partners and donors

The British funding system is characterised by European and Governmental budget lines and hundreds of trusts, foundations, businesses, supporting numerous charities and other organisations in various fields. One of the difficulties is that all these donors and budget lines have their own policies and

criteria for allocating funding to charities or projects, limiting the fundraising possibilities for FREE. An additional difficulty is the negative public perception of refugees, branded by right-wing politicians and media as bogus claimants and illegal immigrants. Since, a business's image and publicity are crucial, they might not want to be associated with refugees. Furthermore, the climate for corporate giving is not ideal due to the economic downturn.

Nevertheless, in principle projects concerning refugees, training, education and business start-up fall within the scope of various donors. Access to this kind of funding is only possible by submitting applications following the donors' guidelines for the bidding process. More detailed information (parameters) on the size of the demand for scholarships, grants and loans as well as information concerning, for example, FREE's structure, management, administration, budget, activities, and the commitment of other sources, in particular the willingness of the European Commission to make a substantial contribution to FREE, is necessary to apply successfully. One of FREE's strong points is that the results of the intended activities are measurable. Moreover four organisations have indicated that they might be interested in a partnership: The Charity Bank, The Prince's Trust, The Council for Assisting Refugees Academics (CARA) and the Refugee Council

Structure for management and administration

The ideal structure would be an independent European Fund, working in close partnerships with national refugee organisations. A European management adds weight and authority, appears to be more independent, allows better networking and possibly has better fundraising opportunities. The activities, though, should be administered locally to minimise bureaucracy and to assure that beneficiaries can easily access the provisions. Local administrations also allow closer contacts between donors/partners and the organisations that carry out FREE activities.

Setting up FREE

A business plan should be written that includes information about the legal structure, management, administration, mission, aims, activities, budget beneficiaries, etc. Start-up capital has to be raised to set up FREE or to set up FREE partnerships and/or pilot projects. An advisory committee should be set up with representatives from the public, corporate, and charitable sectors to strengthen the support for FREE.

Much emphasis should be put on fundraising and getting involved in the bidding process of various trusts, foundations and other sources. To get funding from the corporate sector personal networks of presidents, vice-presidents, trustees and other people with good reputations and networks should be used to get introductions with people in key positions. Raising awareness among employers and other donors is necessary to combat preconceptions and prejudices, showing that refugees can make a valuable contribution to society and the economy, by providing more factual information on refugees' skills and qualifications.

Thus, the feasibility of FREE in the UK will depend on the willingness of potential donors to contribute financially and the commitment of partner organisations and other actors in the refugee sector to carry the process of starting up FREE forward.

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