REST
Refugees Employment Support and Training

30-CE-0837679/00-89

Transnational research report:
Barriers and best practice examples of labour market integration of refugees in Europe
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Content

1. Introduction

"Refugee Employment, Support and Training" (REST) is a two-year-project, led by Landkreis Kassel (Germany) in consortium with eight more partners from Austria (die Berater GmbH, Syrian Forum), Bulgaria (CATRO), Germany (blinc e.G., BUPNET GmbH), Greece (4Elements), Italy (CESIE) and France (ADICE), funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Union.

The project aims to establish a comprehensive support system for small and medium size enterprises' (SME) employees, human resources managers, in-company trainers and supervisors when it comes to the employment, insertion and in-house training of refugees. Thus, the activities are planned to be implemented on local level and make difference on interpersonal level. National and regional solutions may provide financial, legal and administrative structural support; however, they do not influence much the situation on local and interpersonal level where real integration takes place. Steps in that direction aim to address the demographic and labour market challenges (ageing workforce, shortages of skilled and lows-skilled professionals, etc.) that most of the countries in Europe face. However, due to refugees' unclear legal and professional situation, many employers are hesitant to hire and employ refugees. Through its comprehensive training and support system REST intends to exactly answer the needs of the enterprises that have already hired and/or are willing to employ refugees. The aim is to enhance staff managers' and employees' competences to successfully interact with refugees. REST has three main phases - stocktaking phase, development phase and implementation phase, whereas this report is the main output of the stocktaking phase.

2. Methodology

Three main sources of information have been used in the stocktaking phase:

- ➢ **Desk research and best practice analysis in the 6 partner countries** (Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, and Italy) and **4 other countries** (Finland, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey). 25 best practice examples for employment and integration of refugees/immigrants have been selected and presented in the Annex 1 and Annex 2 of this report. Highlights and their specific impact on the set-up of the REST system has been analysed in the part Findings.

- ➢ **Online survey on the barriers to refugees' integration and existing training and support needs of enterprises** has been distributed to targeted enterprises and

organizations in the 6 partner countries and gathered around 120 responses. This was a good basis for further detail analysis of the discovered trends in the interview phase. The survey has been sent to the international networks of the project partners and reached out countries beyond the partnership such as Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Poland, Denmark, Ireland and Netherlands. However the responses from each of those countries are negligible figures (each 1% of the total) and are not considered in the thorough analysis of the report.

Chart 1
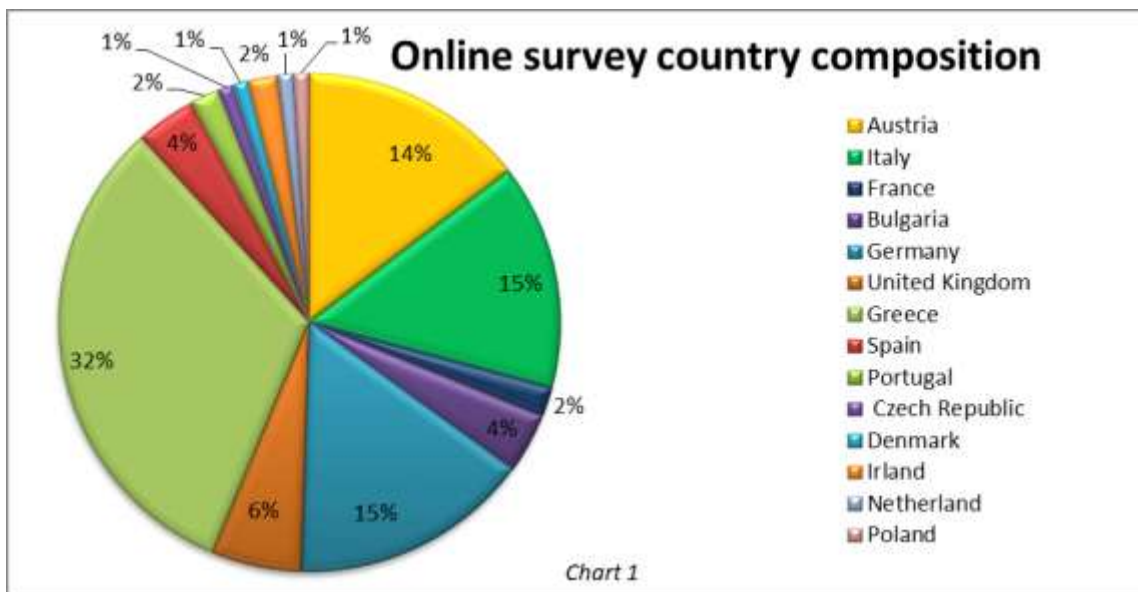
- **Qualitative semi-structured interviews** with enterprises on the one hand and with researchers/policy makers/experts working in the area of integration of refugees on the other hand. Altogether 29 interviews have been conducted in the six partner countries.

The results of the online survey shown in *Chart 2* present what is the share of the EU companies, who had taken part in the survey in regard to employing refugees. Only 3% of them have once hired refugees. This data is concerning, but at the same time is confirming the importance and value of projects like REST.
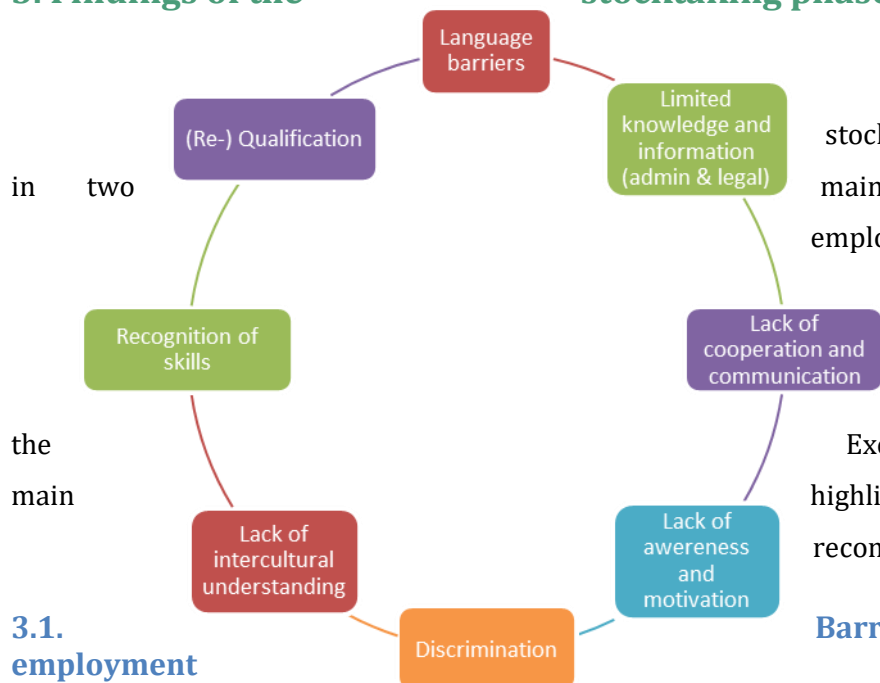

Chart 2

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3. Findings of the stocktaking phase

The findings of the stocktaking phase are elaborated in two main areas – barriers to refugee employment and training, coaching and other support needs of EU enterprises and organizations. The focus in Executive summary is on the highlights, key finding and recommendation.

3.1. Barriers to refugee employment

Eight main barriers to refugee employment are identified in the stocktaking phase of the project in the following areas: **1) language barriers, 2) limited access to knowledge and information (both administrative and legal aspects), 3) lack of cooperation and communication among all actors in the employment process involved, 4) lack of awareness and motivation among the employers, 5) discrimination during the process of employment (towards refugee integration in general), 6) lack of intercultural understanding, 7) recognition of skills, and 8) (re-)qualification** (visualized in *Graph 1*). All these barriers are mentioned in more than two countries of the study; they are mutually influencing and depending on each other, having different impact and intensity in the partner countries. They explain the complexity of the refugees' employment process and why additional support and training is needed to facilitated both employers and potential employees. All of them are elaborated in details in the "Transnational research report" with examples from all the partner countries.

Graph 1: Barriers to refugee employment

## 3.2. Advantages/benefits of hiring refugees

Based on the analysis of the quantitative and qualitative information provided by companies, NGOs and other stakeholders, the following main groups of advantages have been identified: **1) new perspectives and broadening of horizons; 2) intercultural diversity and awareness; 3) the rejuvenated workforce; 4) corporate social responsibility (CSR) image; 5) tap into new product markets and gaining new clients; 6) strong will and motivation of refugees/immigrants; 7) available funding for the employment of refugees**. They are presented in the graph below (*Graph 2*), starting clockwise, with the advantages that are mentioned in most countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, France and Italy), as is the advantage of "gaining new perspectives and broadening of horizons", reaching to the advantage of "available funding for the employment of refugees" that was mentioned in only two countries (Germany and Italy).

Graph 2: Advantages of hiring refugees based on the interviews

3.3. Training, coaching and other support needs of EU enterprises and organizations

Based on both qualitative and quantitative needs' analysis, four main areas of training and support needs are identified: **1) Providing information and strengthening cooperation; 2) Awareness raising and intercultural dialogue; 3) Internal mentoring and on-going support; 4) Job matching.**
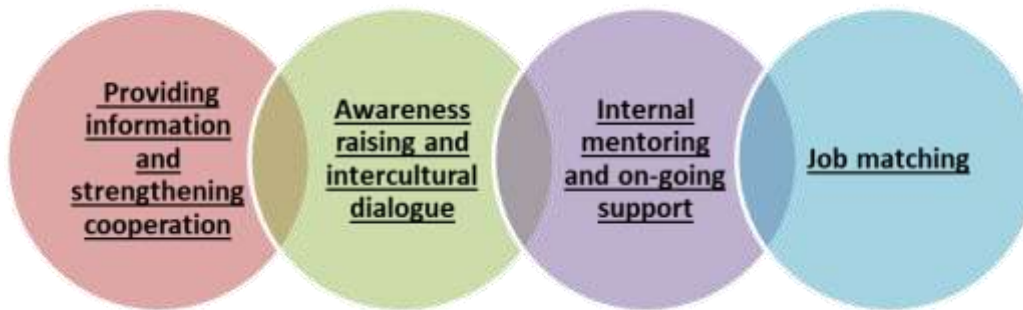
Graph 3: Training and support needs' clusters

Information is needed in regard to *legal and administrative procedures* of employing refugees, but also about *funding and support measures* and already existing services provided by governmental or civic organizations.

Awareness raising and intercultural dialogue appears as an important need in all partner countries and it is approached through different angles, such as refugee situation as a whole (cultural/religious background, reasons for flight from their countries etc.).

The training need of learning more about different aspects of *intercultural communication* is essential and expressed as highly needed in regard to smooth interaction at the work place and managing potential problems. Guidance on how to implement *internal mentoring system* for refugees is also very valuable, as there is a need for on-going support, but especially in the first integration part: Mentoring support for employers could be provided in the form of face to face workshops, but also online.

Employers expressed their need of support in facilitation of the *job matching processes* that could be done by specialized job fairs, career forums, and exchange of information between different stakeholders dealing with labour market integration of refugees with emphasis on the specific role the HR agencies can play.

4. Recommendations

Grounded in the research of the stocktaking phase in all the partner countries, the following conclusions are deduced to inform the REST comprehensive training and support system. Based on the barriers to employment analysis and the training needs research results, there are several components of training and support measures that could be taken in consideration. All of them could be used as separate modules or combined in various ways in modules upon the request and needs of the employers. The derived recommendations from the needs' analysis in the partner countries will be taken in consideration in the REST support system.

Graph 4: Training and support measures components

Information package component
- Legal and administrative issues
- Employers rights and obligations
- Support & funding programmes
- Language and VET providers

Awareness raising component
- Specific background of refugees
- Possible psychological traumata
- Benefits of hiring refugees
- Improved CSR strategies

Intercultural training component
- Intercultural communication
- Conflict management
- Addressing fears (esp. religious)
- Fighting discrimination

Mentoring and ongoing support component
- Training mentors how to assist smoother integration of refugees;
- Providing ongoing support in recruitment, training, motivating them at work;

Job matching component
- Initital mapping of skills and competences
- Identfiying need for further and re-qualification
- Participation in career forums, job fairs in cooperation with NGOs working with refugees