



REST – Refugees Employment  
Support and Training

# Good Practice Brochure



## Authors

Four Elements NGO  
Landkreis Kassel  
ADICE  
Blinc e.G.  
BUPNET GmbH  
Catro  
CESIE  
die Berater  
Syrian Forum Austria

## Graphic design

blinc eG  
Bertheustraße 10  
37075 Göttingen  
Germany

## Publisher

The REST project  
This Good Practice Brochure can be downloaded freely from:

<https://rest-eu.org>



Co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and  
Integration Fund of the European Union

## Table of Contents

Good Practice Brochure  
General information about REST project  
Project activities  
Incentives for REST participants  
The REST Manual  
Success stories  
Greece  
Italy  
France  
Austria  
Bulgaria  
Germany  
Closing Remarks



This work is licenced under a Creative Commons Attribution- NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International Licence.



## General information about REST project

Dear reader,

Welcome to our REST good practice brochure. Maybe you are wondering what REST is, and what kind of good practices we do have in store for you.

“Refugee Employment, Support and Training” (REST) is a 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 did establish a comprehensive support system for enterprises and organisations that want to employ and integrate refugees at their workplaces. The project specifically targeted human resources managers, in-company trainers, supervisors and other key staff involved in the employment, insertion and in-house training of refugees.

We want to invite you, to join us on a little journey through the past 26 months of our project experience and present to you our most successful results.



## Project activities

During the first project phase, we realised that national and regional authorities provide support for the integration of refugees on the labour market concerning financial, legal and administrative structural activities; however, they do rarely influence the situation on local and interpersonal level where real integration takes place. Thus, the activities we implemented were explicitly focused on the interaction between employers and refugees to make a significant difference on interpersonal and organisational level.

However, due to refugees' unclear legal and professional situation, many employers are hesitant to hire and integrate them. Through its comprehensive training and support system REST did exactly answer the needs of the enterprises that have already hired and/or are willing to employ refugees. During the development and implementation of the REST system our main goal was always to enhance staff managers' and employees' competences to successfully interact with refugees.

REST had three main phases – stocktaking phase, development phase and implementation phase. More specifically: The stocktaking phase consisted of a needs analysis to find out what barriers enterprises face in their attempt to employ refugees and which training offers are most needed as well as a desk research to identify successful integration measures to draw the inspiration from. The research was carried out in all partner countries. Based on the results five components were identified and adopted in the REST training and support system, to best address employers' needs.

### **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
- Initial mapping of skills and competences

### **Job matching component**

- Identifying need for further and requalification
- Participation in career forums. job fairs in cooperation with NGOs working with refugees.

In the development phase, the REST training and support system was set up. The result is a three-fold approach consisting of face-to-face workshops, coaching and counselling support and an online platform to facilitate the integration of refugees at enterprises and other types of organisations:





Recruiters, mentors, HR managers and other employees in enterprises need specific knowledge, social competences and skills to ensure a successful integration of refugees at the workplace. In order to enlarge those competences, it is necessary to gain basic knowledge about the integration process (e.g. legal conditions and administrative procedures, intercultural and language aspects, induction, onboarding of refugees) as well as to reflect on behaviour patterns when interacting with refugees or migrants. The three elements of our support system facilitate this process as follows.

The face-to-face workshops deliver specific knowledge and competences to successfully employ and integrate refugees in European organizations. The REST team developed six training modules that follow a process model based on the relevant integration phases.



# workplace

## **Legal and administrative aspects when employing refugees**

Information for employers to deal with administrative and bureaucratic challenges regarding the employment of refugees. Focussing on the legal situation of companies, questions on work permits and employers' rights and obligations will be addressed.

## **Recruitment of refugees**

Training for employers who want to recruit refugee job seekers that are not competing in the usual application processes on the job market. We provide you with a toolkit to choose and apply the most fitting screening methods for refugee applicants.

## **Induction of refugees at the workplace**

Knowledge, methods and tools that are essential for the successful induction of refugees at the workplace. The main focus is on developing an inclusive company culture, producing adjusted tools for 'refugee on boarding' and implementing an induction-friendly management style.

## **Mentoring of refugees for better integration at the workplace**

Learn about the role and the benefits of a mentor in an organisation. The module focuses on specific knowledge and skills how to build a successful mentoring relationship with a refugee mentee. The refugee background situation which might impact a smooth integration at the workplace will be addressed.

## **Intercultural aspect at the workplace**

An understanding of culture, in particular in the context of integrating refugees into your workforce, is a must. Become aware of your own culture and cultural differences and understand the key role of culture in all communication processes. Learn how to analyse cultural differences to resolve intercultural issues in your organisation.

## **Easy language at the workplace**

Language skills are a key aspect of successful integration at the workplace. Employers increasingly face the need to support job-related language development in employees with migrant background. Participant learn how to use easy to understand spoken and written language to simplify communication processes at work.



## coaching & counselling

The REST coaching & counselling was an additional offer for participants of the REST training modules, to provide them with professional support during the job insertion process of refugees. REST partners and trainers provided assistance in the recruitment process and in the integration phase as well as help in conflict cases.

### The coaching & counselling support assisted key staff to:

- overcome employment barriers, analyse chances and risks,
- match needs of potential employees or refugees,
- define specific needs as to training contents and arrangements,
- cope with intercultural issues and/or conflict situations.

The REST Open Learning Space is an online platform, which is free of charge and accessible for everyone who is interested in the REST programme. There you can find face-to-face as well as e-learning materials that focus on the inclusion of refugees in the work environments of their host countries.

### The internet platform provides:

- networking facilities
- online counselling
- informative content and learning activities

In the implementation phase approximately 300 enterprises and organizations with more than 400 employees participated in the workshops that were carried out in Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, France, and Italy and could benefit from our coaching offers and online platform.



## REST Successful Implementation

The feedback of participants was overall very positive. Most participants reported that the training content was very useful for their work and easy to integrate in their daily routines. Others reported that even though they were not sure yet how to integrate what they learned into their daily work, nevertheless they gained highly resourceful and interesting insights. The active participation of the audience can be considered a success for the REST implementation.

The coaching support on initial topics of the refugees' integration process like overcoming employment barriers, finding suitable refugee employees as well as support in legal questions was very well received by the companies. The REST team is quite proud that it was able to give very much needed individual support to companies. Increasing security (work permits and legal questions), trust and support in navigating administrative procedures have resulted in improved numbers of hired refugees in the REST project regions.

It is also worth pointing out that through the REST workshops, new networks have been created in our project regions. The project partners succeeded in involving regional stakeholders that are active in the refugee labour market integration. Organisations like UNHCR, Caritas and local NGO's and refugee organisations representing the refugee perspective, as well as local job centres and job agencies, vocational schools as well as chambers of commerce and crafts representing the employer perspective were frequent participants in our workshops and network sessions. During the REST project it became clear that many committed actors are needed to meet the challenges of integrating refugees and migrants into the local labour market and our society. Such networks and contacts are ideal support structures to bring these actors together and to act in a coordinated way.



## Incentives for REST participants

The participants in the REST training get the chance to validate their efforts in integrating refugees at the workplace via two different means. First of all, they were able to be awarded with the REST label for organisations that promote inclusive working climate and diversity. Participants were also able to validate their competence development with the innovative LEVEL5 methodology and to receive a European certificate.

### The REST label

The REST label is a European quality label that provides a clear signal that your organisation has not only committed to hiring refugees or people with migration background but also to apply approaches to successfully integrate them at the workplace.

It demonstrates to your employees, clients, customers, suppliers, etc. that your organisation is committed to implement comprehensive strategies to promote diversity and an inclusive working climate.

Who can apply: Any company, social enterprise, public sector or voluntary sector organisation including NGO's, based in one of the 28 Member States of the European Union, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

For more information, go to:

<https://rest-eu.org/rest-label>



## two successful events

In order to give you a better understanding of the REST label, we should mention the two successful events that have been organized in Palermo and Sofia where companies have been awarded with our label due to their commitment to the inclusion of refugees and migrants in labour market.

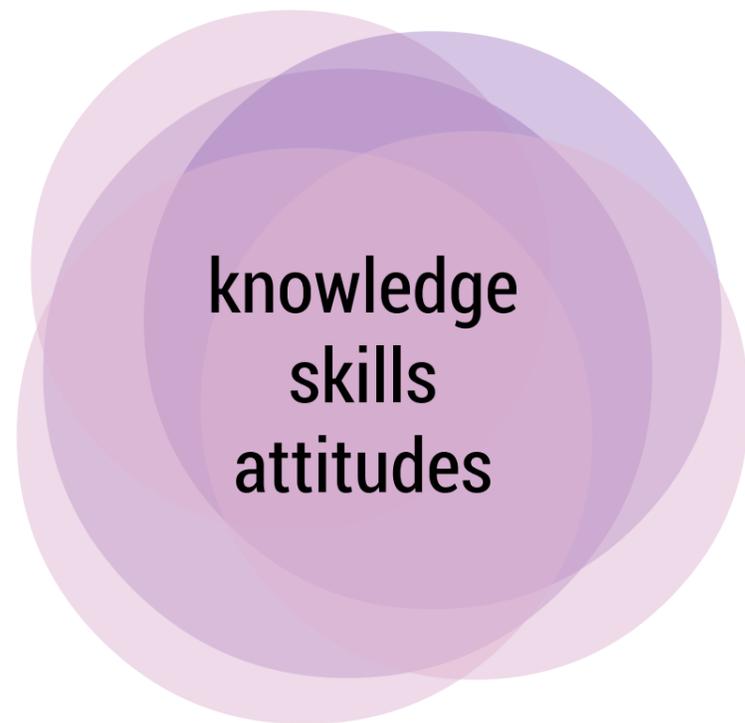
More specifically, the first event held on 23rd of October 2018 in Palermo, Italy was dedicated to social and occupational dimension of refugees' and migrants' integration. It had an audience of over 50 social inclusion experts. We shared some real-life success stories of refugees' and migrants' integration and discussed good practices from different countries.

During the final ceremony, we awarded the REST Label to recognise the efforts of local enterprises that have committed to the inclusion of refugees or people with migration background and that promote diversity and an inclusive working climate. The awarded enterprises were Sartoria Sociale and Moltivolti whose success stories are documented in a short video. You can watch the video and read about the case stories presented by these enterprises in the Success Stories chapter.

The second event and ceremony of the REST label took place in Sofia, Bulgaria on 8th of February 2019. We celebrated all small steps we have taken during the last two years, in an attempt to integrate refugees into Bulgarian companies under the motto REST. We started with the creation of real partnerships and ended with the distinction of those employers who managed to see the uncut diamond, which is the heart of the people seeking protection in our country.

Two companies received the REST label due to the good examples they presented to all Bulgarian employers by promoting intercultural working place. The companies are Petrov Technology and Prolet Ltd. More information about the two organizations, as well as the relevant videos where they describe their success stories, can be found in the Success Stories chapter.

## Validation of competence developments through LEVEL5



LEVEL5

Validation can be defined as ‘the process of identifying, assessing and recognising skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings’. Valuable competences, frequently developed through informal and non-formal learning, are rarely validated and certified by learning providers. Hence, a huge amount of interpersonal and intercultural competences cannot be demonstrated or proven to potential stakeholders. Therefore, validation represents a considerable opportunity for vulnerable target groups and those people working with them. Therefore, the REST team decided to offer validation to their participants.

One approach to validate competence development is LEVEL5 – a system developed and piloted in a series of European funded projects since 2005. LEVEL5 is suitable for the assessment and documentation of personal, social and organisational competences.<sup>1</sup>

The LEVEL5 approach builds on the notion that “competence” is the ability to apply a synthesis of

- knowledge
- skills
- attitudes

in a particular situation and with a particular quality (CEDEFOP 2006).

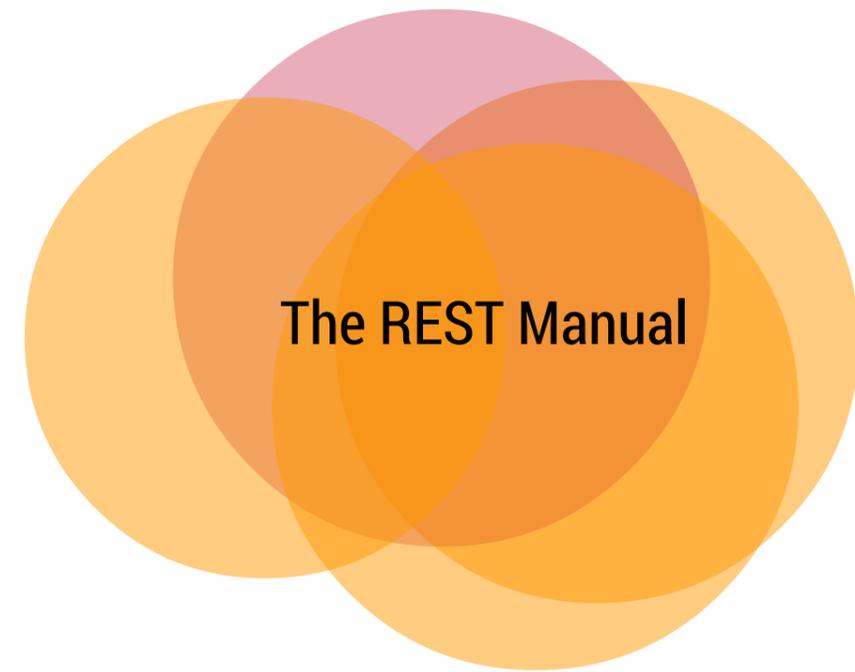
Consequently, the LEVEL5 system is based on a model to assess, evidence, and validate the cognitive, activity related and affective competence developments (cognition, actions, values). Competences are evaluated in a process-orientated way and, if desired, visualised in a three-dimensional cube model and fully documented in a specific software system.

LEVEL5 approach in REST: The LEVEL5 approach is based on a step-by-step procedure, starting with a description of the learning project and ending with the evidencing of learning outcomes and the validation of learners by means of the LEVEL5 software. The participants who followed this procedure received a LEVEL5 certificate which evidence and visualise their learning progress during the REST project activities.

<sup>1</sup> The “Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework” is an annex of a Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning that was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 30 December 2006/L394 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/L394/L39420061230en00100018.pdf>).



♥  
cognitive  
active  
affective



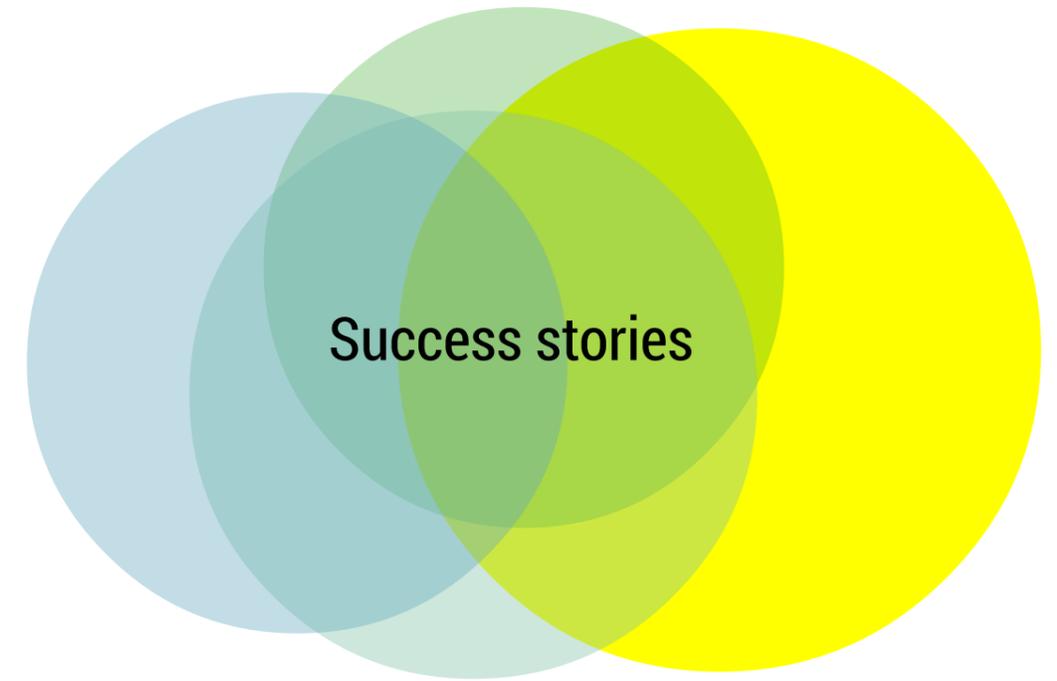
## The REST Manual

Are you interested in applying the REST training and support system yourself? The REST project team has published the REST Manual which:

- Informs about the three-fold approach of REST: face-to-face training, coaching and counselling support and online learning via the REST platform.
- Allows access to the developed materials
- Provides a detailed description of the online platform, which is available in two versions- one for trainers and one for learners- in six languages (English, German, French, Italian, Bulgarian and Greek).
- Provides practical tips to trainers for carrying out the REST training, coaching and counselling.

The Manual is available for download on the REST website:

<https://rest-eu.org/rest-label>



Maybe you wonder what kind of outcomes we achieved with all these activities. Could we inspire our participants regarding the inclusion of refugees in the labour market? Did the REST support system generate the expected impact? We collected some of the most impressive success stories from all of our partner countries – Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece and Italy. These success stories showcase individuals and businesses that applied the new knowledge they gained through REST in their workplace and actively worked towards a more inclusive labour market in Europe.



## Title

“Tools that offer a best future for all”

Mr. Pavlos Xenos represented his company with the name “Xenos Consulting”. This company operates in the provision of consulting services to private companies as well as public bodies and it participates in educational and training programmes focusing on social issues. The reason he decided to participate in the REST training was to come in contact with other companies, public bodies and organizations in order to see how they could integrate the migrants in their companies.

## Challenge

The main challenge was that big companies in the field are obliged to follow specific and entrenched policies regarding the social and labour integration of migrants. Several clients of Xenos Consulting have expressed willingness to adopt policies of corporate social responsibility with regards to migrants’ integration. However, the employers face multifaceted obstacles. For instance, the refugees from Syria have no necessary documents. Consequently, the Greek companies are reluctant to recruitment someone who don’t have the needed documentation.

## Initiative

After the REST training, Mr. Xenos commented that it wasn’t particularly easy to transfer everything he has learned in his company. For this reason, he organised an internal corporate seminar whereby he presented to his colleagues the tools, methodologies and procedures that REST offered him.



## Insight

This seminar provided deep insight on the migrate situation on one hand, and equipped the internal staff at Xenos Consulting with resourceful materials and REST tools on the other hand. Hence, the company enriched its portfolio with “Intercultural” module. Further, Xenos developed a new training course that could be integrated in an existing or new programme agenda. The programme aimed to create a bridge between companies and refugees, facilitating and promoting direct communication between the involved parties.

## Impact

The project provided new impetus in the field of social and labour inclusion of refugees and migrants in Greece. It allowed employers to process and apply new knowledge, methods and procedures in their CSR programmes. Hence, more companies are willing to hire people with different cultural background. Xenos, asserted that the REST training materials will enrich the services that his company provides to its clients and consequently the services that his clients offer.

## Lessons learned

“What I have learned is how significant is policy-making role, especially when there is a huge deficit in terms of tools and methodologies in order to be able to create an intercultural environment and in one company.

As I have mentioned before, the basic challenge was the change of the employees’ mind-set as well as the policies that a company follows. If I could participate in the REST training again, I would have taken with me some of my employees or colleagues in order to share with them this experience.”

You can watch the interview here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCHAjsjG-40>



## Greece 2nd success story

Eva Kofteridi  
Legal Counsel in  
MAST Consulting

### Title

“The useful list”

Eva Kofteridi works as a legal counsellor at MAST Consulting SA, a company which provides consulting services to third companies, and among its clients are companies that deal with vulnerable groups. She participated in this programme because she could get an expertise in the field of migration and obtain highly resourceful education materials which are free of charge.

### Challenge

The Greek law in terms of migrants and refugees’ employability is perceived as rather ambiguous. Also, the bureaucracy is another obstacle for the integration of migrants and refugees in the labour market. Therefore, it is not easy for legal representatives to implement different methodologies in order to help in this integration. Often, when lawyers do this it is “pro bono” (for free) or they work in an organization that help migrants and refugees in law issues.

### Initiative

Therefore, Ms. Kofteridi made a list of documents that a refugee or a migrant need in order to be eligible to work, as well as a list of documents those companies need in order to hire them. This list was distributed to the employees MAST Consulting.

### Insight

All her colleagues expressed interest and willingness to make use of the list. They recommended her to keep it as simple as possible because different types of organisations may be also interested to use it when hiring refugees and migrants.

### Impact

As legal issues are often complex matter, employers are not willing to take the risk of hiring refugees and migrants. Therefore, it is important to guide them how to overcome the obstacles that occur. It is possible that this list will be able to make them feel more secured as well as more aware of legal issues.

### Lessons learned

“This process inspired me to give valuable information to people that were in a high need of it. At the beginning the administration of MAST was surprised because they considered hiring a migrant/refugee very complex and difficult procedure, but the challenge was to persuade them in the opposite, and I did it! After creating the list, the challenges were eliminated since those who saw it, found it very helpful and a good starting point for the integration of refugees and migrants in labour market.”

You can watch the interview here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNPjtYAj3tA>

## Italy 1st success story Moltivolti

### Title

“The success story of Moltivolti – the company which embraced the diversity of all workers and built up one of the most successful social enterprises in Palermo.”

### Challenge

In Palermo, there is a social enterprise that acknowledges the asset of its employees and emphasis on wide range of collaborators worldwide. Moltivolti, an ethnic restaurant and co-working space, was founded in Palermo in 2014. It was founded by a group of 14 people, from 8 different countries, with the vision of a business cherishing diversity. They employ people from different cultures not because it is “a right thing to do” or for “charity”, they see a great opportunity in cooperation of people with different backgrounds and different points of view.

They want to bring a positive impact not only on their business, but also on their employees, clients and to the public. However, a collision of different cultures may cause difficulties even at a very welcoming workplace. New employees may have difficulties of respecting standard processes or assume responsibility.

This challenge is linked to cultural differences and insufficient or not optimally targeted personnel management. To improve such issues, REST suggested training focused on mentoring of refugees and migrants (M4) and training on intercultural and inter-religious aspects at work (M5).

### Initiative

Moltivolti was involved in the REST project from the phase of research. Therefore, we were able to acknowledge, monitor and evaluate their achievements, regarding to refugees’ and migrants’ labour integration and suggest the most suitable elements of REST support system. A representative of Moltivolti participated in the implementation of M4 Mentoring and M5 Intercultural aspects.



### Insight

The mentoring approach, which the company adopted, is based on peer-to-peer mentoring. An experienced social worker accepted the role of a mentor, providing advice and guidance to a new employee. Despite being spontaneous as a process, Moltivolti greatly values this role and, thanks to REST training module on Mentorship, they were able to identify new opportunities to support their in-house mentors.

During the training course dealing with intercultural competences, the staff could reflect on the different aspects of culture, religion and beliefs, influencing the work. Religion was the most discussed topic of the training. In the past, the employees encountered difficulties to understand of the company rules and some inter-cultural issues affected negatively the daily work.

For example, late arrivals at the workplace or specific behavioural restrictions related to religious affiliation (e.g. Friday prayer, Ramadan). The REST training course tackled key topics such as intercultural communication, management of cultural differences, religious aspects, multicultural teams, conflict resolution and integration at the workplace, providing support in order to facilitate the work integration process.

The managers of Moltivolti realised the need of such reflections because in the daily management they do the mistake of taking for granted some expectations regarding common behaviours of the staff. They forgot to clarify those expectations to the international staff - explaining them the culture of the hosting city and the needs of the customers and thus facilitating the common understanding. Regarding their religious practices, managers understood that both have to find compromise to better deal with those issues. They need to consider planning religious holidays or the whole month of Ramadan in advance, speaking frankly and fix an agreement that matches their requests and the needs of the enterprise.



Having sufficient intercultural and mentoring competences helps them manage newcomers' integration and provide adequate space to demonstrate their skills and potential.

## Impact

Employers, who adopted social responsibility, welcome diversity at the workplace and collaborate with people with migration background, may sometimes find themselves under huge pressure. Considering this, opportunities to learn, to talk about their experience, share it with other employers and build a network become crucial.

In this context, REST offered such an opportunity to Moltivolti and other employers and organisations. They had a chance to learn, reflect on their own work, confront with the others and grow a professional network which was very well perceived. Moreover, acquiring information on legal issues has given them more confidence to hire more people with a migration background and to involve them in internships, strengthening the active policies for the social and working inclusion of migrants. The mentoring module has allowed them to appreciate the relation established between new and old employees as a means for a professional growth of both parties, and a faster integration of new workers into the work environment.

Their curiosity, openness to learn, meet and share seems to be the key to the success of Moltivolti. To conclude and summarise this inspiring example of Moltivolti, we use their own words: "We have already learned so many things and many more are still to be learnt."

Given the opportunity to reflect and to question some specific issues has opened the managers' and employers' mind in order to embrace the diversity in a way that enhances the mutual exchange of experiences, cultures and new working styles. Moltivolti is an excellent example of labour and social integration of people from different countries, cultures and religions. We are proud that they took part in REST workshops and used our coaching support. For their efforts and achievements REST awarded Moltivolti with the Project European quality label.

You can watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrTyGSoVzNU&t=31s>



**Italy**  
**2nd success story**  
**Sartoria Sociale**

### **Title**

“The social tailoring cooperative, where respect to the environment and the people is the core value, and where creativity is without borders” Palermo, Italy

### **Challenge**

Sartoria Sociale, a social tailoring laboratory established by the cooperative Al Revés in 2012, offers an internship opportunity to young refugees and migrants who have background in tailoring and dress-making. In order to overcome the uncertainties regarding their competences, all interns are from the beginning accompanied by a senior tailor who assesses their actual competences and teaches them tailoring techniques.

Once an employee with migration background is on board, managers and trainers have to face another challenge – cultural and religious differences influencing the work performance and team interactions. People coming from different countries may be used to work in a different pace, using untraditional materials and techniques and also struggle to communicate in the local language. This may be quite demanding not only for managers and trainers but also for the whole team.

At the beginning of the internship, the interns spend most of the time accompanied by a senior tailor who also takes the role of non-formal mentor. The senior employees are not trained for the role of mentor and may encounter difficulties when dealing with issues related to intercultural differences.



### **Initiative**

With the aim of enhancing the skills and competences of managers, trainers and other key personnel, Sartoria Sociale decided to participate in the REST Training. The modules they considered the most relevant for their work were M4 Mentoring and M5 Intercultural and religious aspects of workplace integration.

Sartoria Sociale was also in fond of meeting other employers and professionals in order to exchange experience on the topic. They took the opportunity to talk about their own positive and negative experience and to learn from the others during the REST workshops and the Final Conference.

### **Insight**

The techniques of mentoring were very useful for all employees who train new interns and employees with migration background at Sartoria Sociale. They gained better understanding of the role of a mentor which improved their confidence in their own work.

The training course on intercultural and religious aspects of work integration supported the competencies of Sartoria Sociale to acknowledge and mediate the issues emerging during the first weeks and months of a new work experience. Sartoria Sociale employs people from different religions. Therefore, the part dedicated to dealing with religious differences at work was very useful and appreciated.



## Impact

Participating in the REST activities was very advantageous not only for the enterprise but also for the REST partners and other participants because Sartoria Sociale brought a great asset of their rich experience and ideas. Everyone got the opportunity to learn from each other, broaden one's horizons, and strengthen the integration competences. Sartoria Sociale, as an employer, got in contact with organisations supporting refugees and migrants in job searching. This can support the future job matching and migrants' employment opportunities.

Besides an opportunity for networking and exchange of experience, Sartoria Sociale gained valuable knowledge and skills in the field of migrants' integration at the workplace and reinforced the competences of its staff, especially in terms of dealing with intercultural differences at workplace and mentoring. The social worker representing Sartoria Sociale in most of the workshops used the LEVEL5 tool to assess the development of her competences and received the certificate. She stated that the training was useful and empowering, giving her tools for dealing with intercultural issues in her daily work with young refugees and migrants.

Participation in the REST project encouraged the enterprise to take part in similar initiatives supporting the employment of migrants in the future. To recognise their commitment and engagement REST awarded Sartoria Sociale with the Project European quality label.

You can watch the video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FnEXivocv7A>

**France**  
**1st success story**  
**Abdelouahab Zahri**  
**Entrepreneur**



## **Title**

“Intercultural exchange as an essential basis.”

## **Challenge**

This story highlights the experience of Abdelouahab Zahri, today an entrepreneur, but he has a long experience directly related to the socio-professional integration of refugees. He worked for a town hall for a long time, being in charge of educational policies, that is to say all educational activities from kindergarten to university, supporting schools.

In charge of innovative projects for a very long time in local authorities; thanks to this experience, he was able to realize that the specificity of the integration of people with a migration background is not taken into account by public institutions. It is therefore necessary to accompany and inform the public so that they can have access to public services as much as possible and that they can benefit as everyone else, on the other hand, also carry out a work of awareness among companies as does the REST project.

## **Initiative**

The participant has decided to create his own company called EduCare, it is a structure that manage education and training issues. Instead of working for local authorities, Mr Zahri is going to provide non-formal education training, and the REST system is going to be a good resource for him to raise awareness and change the way people can perceive refugees or migrants.

## **Insight**

This story highlights particularly the need to provide knowledge on intercultural aspects to be able to integrate better in our territories, in our institutions and private companies, people with a migrant background.

## **Impact**

This story shows that REST system will be promoted to the participants of the training. As most of the participant really appreciated the content of the training, they are going to become ambassador of this approach. It will help the company to employ refugees of course, but also it will allow the participants to share the knowledge acquired in their own network and create a large-scale impact.

## France 2nd success story Moussa Allem

### Title

“An engagement for social inclusion”

### Challenge

Moussa Allem is a project manager at DRJSCS (Youth, Social Cohesion and Sport Regional Department) which is a service of the French State. He works on public policies related to the youth and social cohesion; he is particularly involved on the urban policy.

The migratory situation and the arrival of thousands of people in France since 2015 raises the question of the integration of refugees, for whom access to housing and integration in the labour market are major issues. Faced with this phenomenon, local authorities' actors must define territorial strategies to ensure the socio-professional integration.

### Initiative

Until 2017, he was in charge of the BOP 104, it is an operational budget from the State that aims to support actions for the newcomers from outside of the European Union, with two particularities:

- The first is supporting actions for immigrant women
- Then actions in favour of the so-called Shibani: elderly immigrants.

In order to share good practices but also to learn from the content of REST system, Moussa participated in REST workshop as a representative of local authorities.



### Insight

Since 2018, this operational budget has financially supported associative actors who carry out projects in favour of the refugees and these actions consist, in particular, of French language learning, understanding how the French institutions work, the values of the republic and secularism. The REST system allowed to reinforce the knowledge in terms of intercultural learning but also allowed to create a network of local organization involved in the area of refugee integration. It helped to clearly identify who is doing something in this field and coordinate/exchange on the practices on the territory.

### Impact

Moussa Allem works for many years in the field of integration and social inclusion. As a REST participant from State's local authority, it has been interesting to learn about his experience and interaction with other participants. Moussa Allem has an extensive experience on empowering migrants. Hence, it was really useful for him to consider the issue from a different perspective. Following the REST modules, Moussa Allem will be able to spread these training possibilities to partner companies in his network.

### Lessons Learned

According to Mr. Allem, the intercultural competences are essential asset for each company. It is important to consider the psychological aspects beyond the aspects related to legal and administrative status. All obstacles related to the aforementioned aspects could affect the migratory experience. Therefore, the companies should carefully consider them when integrating migrants in their workplaces.

## Austria Shared experiences

### Title

“Positive effects of the REST Training programme”

### Challenge

In Austria, many companies are looking for skilled workers because there is a shortage of labour in some sectors. Consequently, they are dependent on the integration of refugees or immigrants into the labour market. Failed recruitment and induction attempts are therefore regrettable, not only for refugees, but also for companies, a loss of time and money.

However, the shortage of labour is not the only reason why the project has been well received. Modern companies are aware that today's world of work involves people from different cultural backgrounds working together. Building or expanding knowledge in this field can therefore only be beneficial for the long-term success of the company.

The REST training programme has enabled many Austrian companies to foster their knowledge in these areas. The participating companies included Excellent Birds, INOCON, Lubas Spezial Plastik, Müller Transporte, NÖM, SKI Bautenschutz and STARK GmbH.



### Initiative

The implementation of what was learned was discussed in the group with the REST trainers and participating companies. The exchange of experience contributed to the learning success of the whole group.

### Insight

- A mentoring programme was set up, based on the knowledge imparted by Module 4.
- The on-boarding checklists presented in Module 3 were adapted to the needs of the respective industry and integrated into the induction phase.
- Misunderstandings due to religious or cultural differences that arose during job interviews could be clarified. Here some examples like the different perception of gestures and the appropriateness of physical contact were discussed and understood. In this way, false assumptions could be invalidated.



## Impact

The participating companies share the view that successful integration requires effort from both sides.

Quotes from company representatives:

“It’s not about “giving in”, it’s about getting to know each other.”

“It is also the responsibility of every company to find out beforehand what is customary for the culture and what is not.”

“It is very important to speak openly from the very beginning and to encourage people with refugee experience to speak openly.”

“The positive relationship to each other is very important. People who feel welcome are in the most cases very loyal to the company and show great commitment.”

**Austria**  
**2nd success story**  
Adj. Prof. Ahmad Majid  
(Cafe ImmiCo, IH2Ö)

### Title

“Investing in the community”

### Challenge

In Austria, especially in Vienna, there is a high unemployment rate among migrants. Frequently, problems arise from misunderstandings, misinformation, different expectations and administrative hurdles. With his projects and initiatives, Prof. Ahmad Majid wants to act as a mediator.

The contents of the REST training programme equipped him with new possibilities and support measures which he can implement in his work and thereby provide assistance to entrepreneurs and job-seeking migrants.

### Initiative

Prof. Ahmad Majid works at the interface between job seekers with a migration background and their successful professional activities. On the one hand, he supports people with a migration background in finding a position in a company that matches their qualifications.

On the other hand, he plays an important role in the Austrian start-up scene. He stated that his mission is to support young entrepreneurs with a migration background in setting up a successful business.



### Insight

The core objectives of Prof. Majid's undertakings are to support entrepreneurs in finding the right workforce from a culturally diverse environment and to strengthen the relationship between employer and employee, and thus ensure a successful and long lasting cooperation. The synergies to the REST project are therefore clearly visible. He was present in all training events and is interested to cooperate with the Austrian Project Partners in follow up activities.

### Impact

In his work as an intermediary between companies and job-seeking migrants, Prof. Majid was able to use the resources from Module 1 (Recruitment of Refugees). One example of this is that he is able to present various methods and instruments for the selection of applicants, which are directly tailored to the needs of potential employees with a migration background, to his company contacts. In this way, he can actively support the application process.

In his work as a consultant for young entrepreneurs with a migration background, he supports companies willing to recruit employees in their ethnic communities and hence need legal and administrative support in this regard. Here it is also very helpful to be able to use REST training material as a resource, as Module 2 explains legal and administrative situations and also refers to experts in the respective legal fields.

## Bulgaria 1st success story Petrov Technology

### Title

“A story about the perfect match”

### Challenge

According to recent labour market studies and statistical data Bulgarian companies are suffering severe skills shortage and skills mismatch across all economic sectors but especially in the production and processing industry. Refugees and migrants might offer one of those new perspectives for diversifying and enriching the labour force in Bulgaria and for meeting the business needs of the companies at the same time. Their potential is still underexplored and companies are not really aware of all the benefits which the refugee integration could bring to their teams and organizations as a whole.

The main challenges in this process of identifying, hiring and integrating refugees in a Bulgarian company, are described below in several steps together with the action taken to cope with them.

### Initiative

The first step in the process was identifying the company Petrov Technology as an innovative production company which is expanding and searching for new employees at different levels in the organization. They highly appreciated the REST approach, implemented by CATRO in Bulgaria as something valuable for their company whose corporate culture is focused on the human being as the central point of the organization, and values such as: open and honest communication, integrity and responsibility.



Secondly, a crucial step was the participation of the Managing Director of Petrov Technology in the job fair organized by CATRO and CARITAS Sofia, combined with recruitment practices training. Here they could meet with Rafik for the first and were impressed by his genuine motivation, open and warm human approach.

Even if the level of Bulgarian language is still not sufficient yet, Rafik has strong motivation to give his best at work in his position as Quality Control Expert, and his professional knowledge and skills were the main arguments for convincing the rest of the team in his expertise. Of course, the improved language competences will strengthen this process and enable more informal relationships between people. In this process, the direct manager of Rafik – Assen shared the REST workshop about mentoring practices, intercultural differences and easy language were very helpful for him to support the communication and integration process.

### Insight

Although the company Petrov Technology has already some experience with Bulgarian citizens from different minority groups, hiring and integration a refugee was by far a step further in their diversity and inclusive company culture. Their real motivation trigger was the personal refugee story of Rafik and his professional background, which also corresponded very well to their current business needs. After more than 6 months of working together, both the company and Rafik are more than satisfied with the achieved professional results. But even more important – they have built friendly, almost family like relationships and this influenced his overall perception about the country. Moreover, beside his job as quality engineer he is offering support in his free time to other refugees and people in need in Bulgaria and in Turkey, as this increases his personal fulfilment.



## Impact

The strongest personal impact was generated by this life changing event for Rafik, who has found a safe, friendly and family like environment to grow and develop professionally but also to settle down in Bulgaria with his whole family. There is also personal impact for each of his managers and colleagues working closely with him, getting to know him better, and appreciating his motivation to give his best to achieve company goals.

The impact on the organization could be mainly measured focusing on their welcoming and inclusive culture, which proved to be open and flexible enough to enable the smooth integration of a refugee from totally different culture and background. At the end, the human relationships are the one that matter the most, and our ability to recognize the benefits of having diversity at the workplace.

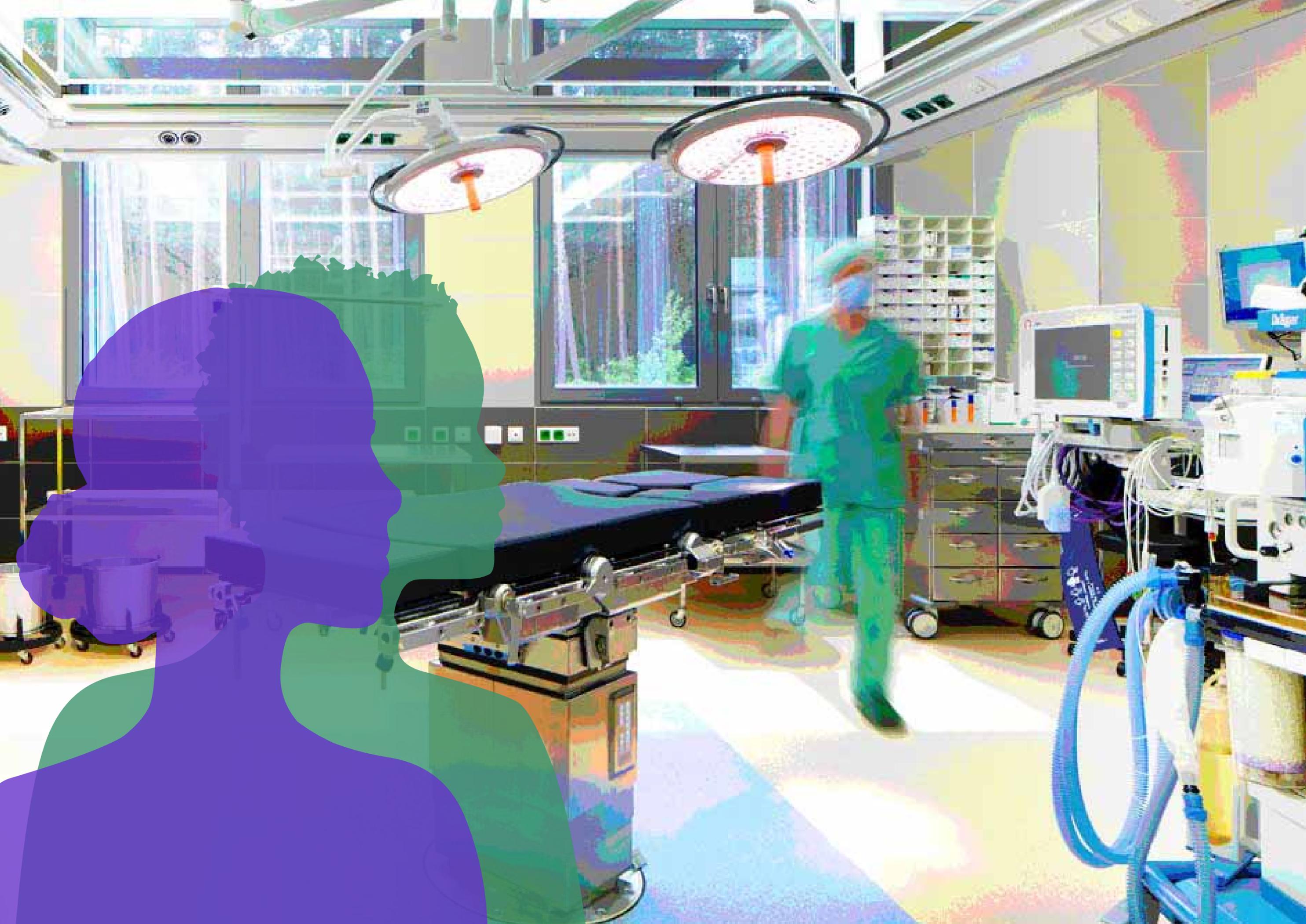
## Lessons learned

They have perceived all the challenges that they have encountered during the hiring and integration process of Rafik as part of the journey. The management is willing to continue employing refugees and people with humanitarian status, being very satisfied with the successful match due to the high professional profile and personal motivation of the candidate. In this case, they could make a compromise with the language skills of Rafik because is partly compensated with his knowledge and competences. However, they are aware that this might not be the case with each of the next candidates, especially if they are recruiting people with lower level of qualification and skills. In such cases, they will require at least B1 Level of Bulgarian language in order to ensure that the employees would understand basic working, health and safety instructions at work.

Despite the barriers in the recruitment and integration process, the management of Petrov Technology would further promote the cause of hiring refugees and recommend and support other companies to dare to employ and integrate people of diverse cultural and religious background. What really impressed us, were the humanity driven arguments of the management of Petrov Technology encouraging other companies to implement such practices. Apart from the business needs and corporate social image of employers, the efforts devoted in recruitment and integration of refugees are negligible in comparison to the huge impact on the person whom you have given a hand offering him/her a safety and friendly working environment which is like a harbour in one of the most turbulent moments of their life.

Success story video is available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruU73P2eV1c>





## Bulgaria 2nd success story Prolet Ltd.

### Title

"A Story about Honour and Gold"

The thrilling story of four young people from Afghanistan in one of the most modern production companies for handbags and leather accessories started unexpectedly for them and for the company. CATRO team, the Bulgarian partner in the REST project, decided to approach companies from the region Haskovo – Harmanli due to the location of one of the largest recipient integration centers for refugees in Harmanli and the potential job opportunities in the region.

Prolet Ltd. was one of the first companies who has showed interest in the REST workshop offered by CATRO and UNHCR Bulgaria, about specifics in recruitment, induction and mentoring of refugees. On the second day of the event, they participated in the job fair with refugees from the center Harmanli which was the first and most important step in this inspiring story!

As the HR Manager and the Managing Director of the company shared later with us, their first motivator was the growing business needs of the company. However, when they first met Mahnaz, a smiling young lady who had some previous experience in the leather industry but what was even more important – who was eager to explore this new job opportunity, they knew that this lady will bring some changes in the organisation.

### Initiative

A month after the job fair in October 2018, Prolet Ltd. hired not only Mahnaz, but also two of her brothers, and just recently one more young lady from the same refugee center in Harmanli. Only after 3 months their productivity has increased considerably which also reflects on their remuneration. These results are due to their great craving to improve themselves, their feeling of responsibility and their deep engagement with the company and the people that trusted them.

This positive and open approach from the HR people in the company was also shared by the other employees who were already used to diversity at the workplace as they have representatives from other ethnic minorities and the cooperation so far worked rather well especially if everyone is doing his/her job according to his/her best abilities. Mahnaz, Habib and Moheb and just recently Sadia, won the hearts of their co-workers with their positive attitude, their desire to learn, and contribute to the work process and the results of the more senior workers until they get familiar with all specific operations and last but not least, to start learning Bulgarian, as this is the way to get fully integrated in the team. In this regard, the HR experts really benefited a lot from the REST workshop of CATRO about induction and mentoring practices in the team, which helped them to talk with the employees and prepare them in a way for the new colleagues. They are also grateful for the good cooperation with Caritas, who managed to organise Bulgarian classes during the working time, whereas all the costs are covered by the company.

### Challenge

Of course, there were some administrative barriers in the process of hiring the refugees who are still in a procedure for obtaining refugee status. According to the Bulgarian legislation their registration cards (their personal ID documents which allow them also to get into official labour relationship) have to be renewed every 3 months which is not a big deal for the administration, but implies some uncertainty about the future development of those people and uncertainty for the company, too. Both sides invest lots of time, energy and efforts to make the new employees fully fledged members of the team, and they all hope that the final decision about the status of these young people from Afghanistan will be positive.

This is an administrative decision, which they cannot really influence but with the help of partners such as UNHCR, Bulgarian Helsinki Committee important lobbying steps in this direction could be done.

### Insight

The key milestones of this success story can be described as follows:

The decision to hire these four young people from Afghanistan was mostly initiated and justified by the HR team – Slavi and Diana, who managed to convince the Top Management that this is a step further in their care for the people – a policy which the company follows not just on paper but according to their main values: honesty, integrity and honour – human qualities which inspire the people to give their best at work.



These values together with the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of the owner and managers of the company make Prolet Ltd. a welcoming and fast technologically developing enterprise for everyone who shares them not depending on their cultural, ethnic or religious background. It is not a coincidence, that the Top Management of the company after seeing the positive impact of the new young employees, always smiling and friendly, working hard and enthusiastically, shared with us that they have found GOLD, without even having searched for it.

A wishful next step, which the whole Management Team is looking for, is hiring more refugees, if possible, people who have a positive decision about their refugee/humanitarian status, also from the 3 Registry Integration Centers in Sofia. In that case they will provide housing opportunities for the families coming to work in their company in Dimitrovgrad, a small town where the enterprise is located. Currently, they are offering free transport services for the people in the region, which includes also the refugees from Harmanli.

### **Impact**

Building on the key milestones of the success story, the impact could be described personal and organizational wise.

The strongest personal impact for the four young people from Afghanistan, is that this is not just another employment opportunity for them but a friendly and welcoming family-like space for their personal and professional growth. They appreciate so much that opportunity, that they really give their best to contribute to the success of the company, which makes them feel also valuable employees and responsible citizens of the Bulgarian society. They would also wish to relocate and move on with their whole family to Dimitrovgrad and settle down there, in case they get a positive decision about their refugee status.

The impact on the organization could be described with the statement of the HR Manager of Prolet Ltd. He had pointed out that those young people who have suffered so much on the way to Bulgaria and who have lost almost everything they had at the cost to come together as a family to a safer place in Bulgaria, are the shiniest, most smiling and positive people in the organization. They are the best role models for the rest of the employees who cannot always appreciate what they have and what they get, and on the top of that they proved to be really efficient, serious and engaged with their work which has direct impact on their financial stability and independence.

Success story available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-VeXL4CU54>



**Germany**  
**1st success story**  
**Sababurg**

## Title

“Being successful means working as a team – „problem“ is only a word and not an obstacle”

## Challenge

Many companies in Germany would like to hire refugees as new employees in their companies. In addition, a large number of the refugees show their commitment and willingness to work.

Normally, the process does not fail because of lack of willingness of those involved, but because of problems such as the possibility to develop a connection between employers and employees, the right integration at the new workplace or everyday communication. The team of the restaurant „Zum Thiergarten“ at the Sababurg Animal Park, and Antinaf have shown that these obstacles can be overcome - with some outside support.

When Antinaf came to Germany in 2016, it was clear to him that he still had a long road ahead of him. His goal: to contribute to his own integration and to show that he wants to be a part of the society and can stand on his own two feet in this new country.

He finally got this opportunity when he had the chance to do an internship in the restaurant „Zum Thiergarten“ with the possibility to start an apprenticeship afterwards, to get trained to become a chef.

The path from internship to apprenticeship sounds easy at first. Nobody did foresee that German bureaucracy and things like commuting to the workplace and the resulting change in the work situation would become the real difficulties.

The simple paperwork turned out to be an obstacle. Because of the different levels of the administrative system in Germany, it is not easy for someone like Antinaf as a refugee to take up an apprenticeship even if the offer is there. Thanks to the support of the REST project the team of the restaurant and Antinaf were able to find a way together to overcome the challenges.

## Initiative

In retrospect, the obstacles were easy to overcome, but the way to get there was the real challenge. First of all, the problem had to be recognized in order to tackle it successfully. The step-by-step approach proved to be the most successful concept.

Everyone who has to deal with the bureaucracy knows that understanding official German application forms is not easy. Even for someone who grew up with the German language, application forms represent a challenge. But this is mainly due to the fact that these forms have a legal basis and are therefore specially formulated.

It was hardly possible for Antinaf alone to meet this challenge without help, as something like „simple language“ is not used in this context. Thanks to the support of Mr. Heusner and the assistance and awareness rising REST legal module, this hurdle could be overcome.



In addition, it was also possible to draw on the knowledge gained from the mentoring workshop. Not only the pure knowledge about mentoring was helpful, but also the exchange with other colleagues.

This had the advantage that not only the mentoring of Antinaf was much more productive, but also the perception of the entire team was widened.

### **Insight**

The various techniques and approaches of REST mentoring could be implemented directly. Especially because Mr. Heusner was able to participate in the workshop, he was able to apply the knowledge and tools gained and share it with his colleagues. Through the direct commitment the success was clearly visible for him.

The result was a direct win-win situation because not only Mr. Heusner, but also Antinaf could benefit from it.

The awareness of German “easy language” had an even greater influence. It was not only in direct relation to Antinaf that more attention was now paid to using uniform terms. But also, in the context of the restaurant and its guests, texts and signs were scrutinized again and changed if necessary.

### **Impact**

The visible success in the restaurant „Zum Thiergarten“ shows the importance and necessity of the REST project. The integration of refugees into the German labour market may not be easy, but the right methods and techniques can solve many problems.

The example of the restaurant „Zum Thiergarten“ at the Sababurg shows that the use of easy language can have far-reaching positive effects and can go beyond the topic of integration.

In addition, the conscious mentoring of staff members is enrichment for every trainee or apprentice - regardless of whether it is a refugee, migrant or a local trainee.



## Title

"When the needs of a company and refugees come together"

## Challenge

The company SMA - Solar Technology AG is one of the major players and a global leading specialist for photovoltaic system technology. For more than 35 years, SMA has been setting technological trends and driving the development of renewable energies.

In order to maintain this position, they must be able to adapt quickly to changes in the markets - especially to the need for qualified personnel in their own company. The challenge, posed by the shortage of skilled personnel in Germany, opened up new opportunities for SMA. In order to cover their own interests and needs, they began to train the next generation of electronics technicians and engineers in their own facilities.

The group of trainees involves not only local forces, but also a group of refugees. This reorientation through the choice of the trainees represents a new kind of challenge for the company. This was and is the interface between the REST project and SMA. Already at an early stage of the project the contact between the two parties was established.

Workshops such as „easy language“ or „Mentoring of refugees“ were well attended and met with great enthusiasm during the time. The expected challenges could therefore also be tackled directly and never became a real obstacle. Mehdi and Hedayatullah also belong to the group of trainees at SMA.

The young Iraqis are enthusiastic, open and committed to learn new things and have the ambition to become part of the SMA family. Both have a technical background and a generally high interest in technology and electronics.

Since both have been in Germany for three and a half years, German language skills need to be enhanced. Hence, the central topic and the greatest challenge has remained their German language skills.

Above all, the differences between the knowledge learned in school and the technical German language - as Mehdi noted - requires „double learning“. The amount of time for learning remains correspondingly high.

## Initiative

Due to the fact that the German trainee learns on two levels - the training directly in the company and additionally the visit to a vocational school - the teachers of the vocational school had already predicted that there will be problems with the language. The nature of the obstacles was directly related to the context of the questions in the exams. The structure of these questions is designed and developed by the German Industrie- und Handelskammer („Chamber of Commerce and Industry“) and must - as Mr. Grebe is convinced - be adapted to this new type of trainee.

Therefore, the REST project presented simplified language content, in an attempt to deliver plausible and understandable learning and training approach. In fact, this aspect turned out to be the crucial point in the project. On the basis of these findings, SMA and Mr. Grebe chose an external teacher who explained the complicated questions to Mehdi and Hedayatullah and focused on the content. This includes, for example, topics such double negation, the use of subjunctives, but also metaphors. This additional input allowed the two students to understand the language used in the questions, especially for the exams. Because only by understanding the question a success rate could be achieved.

But not only the trainer and the teacher supported the two students to overcome the language barrier. Furthermore, all other classmates have always been willing to help Mehdi and Hedayatullah with specific contexts or questions in general. Thus, Mehdi and Hedayatullah with the support offered by their electronics trainer, Mr. Grebe, and the REST project team, managed to overcome language barriers.



## Insight

A central aspect in the integration process of refugees in a company, like SMA, is the implementation of good practices, which could substantiate existing training course in this field.

Once the language barrier is overcome, understanding the technical process is no longer a problem. In fact, overcoming the linguistic challenge solves most of the associated obstacles.

This is where the REST approach at SMA showed remarkable results. With the ideas from the workshop, the structural approaches and the suggestion for simple changes, companies like SMA can integrate refugees in their company without much effort. The consequences are not only positive for the refugees, but also for the other trainees in their apprenticeship. The additional measures thus offer equal incentives for all.

In addition, the committed behaviour of the other trainees shows that their awareness of intercultural exchange is beneficial for both sides. Learning by teaching - at eye level - is an advantage, because the development of self-confidence in dealing with knowledge makes a qualified trainee.

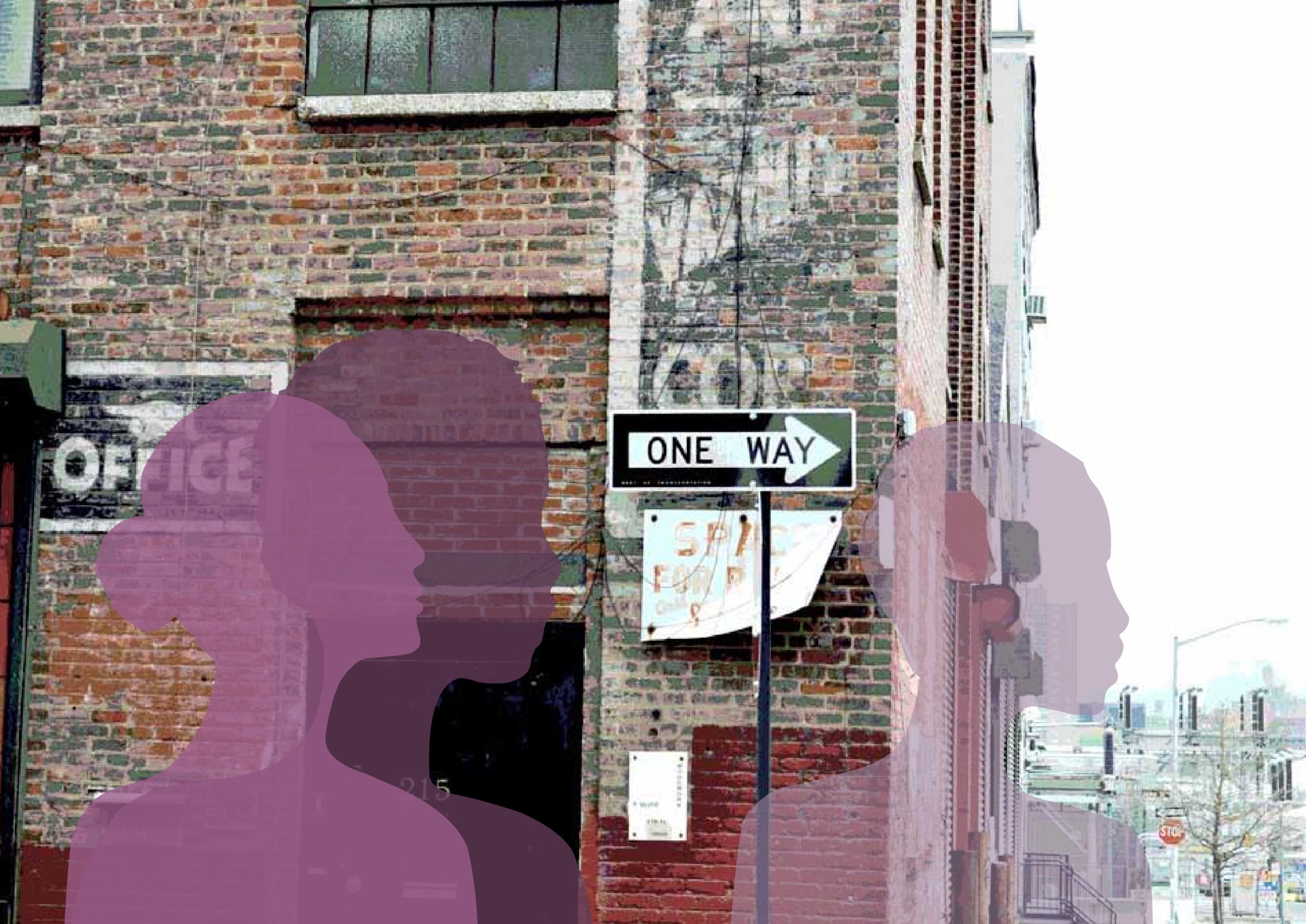
## Impact

Right from the start it was clear that challenges and obstacles were on the way. But with the right tools, most of the barriers can be overcome. Just to keep track of the important facts: In order to deal with language problems a company might need an open trainer, a teacher who is familiar with the content and present it in an easier to understand manner, and other students who are open to others.

Regarding the REST project (its numerous activities and approaches to support companies), it could be concluded that it presents a highly relevant teaching methodology in present Europe.

Medhi and Hedayatullah show a real interest in their training activities and a willingness to become exemplary employees. Up to date, Mr. Grebe, as their trainer, continues to support them. In addition, the REST impact was positive for all trainees - regardless of their background because intercultural perspectives can influence competences related to teamwork, creative thinking and open mindset.

SMA stands as a bright example that the employment of refugees is likely to result in a successful cooperation between the two parties.

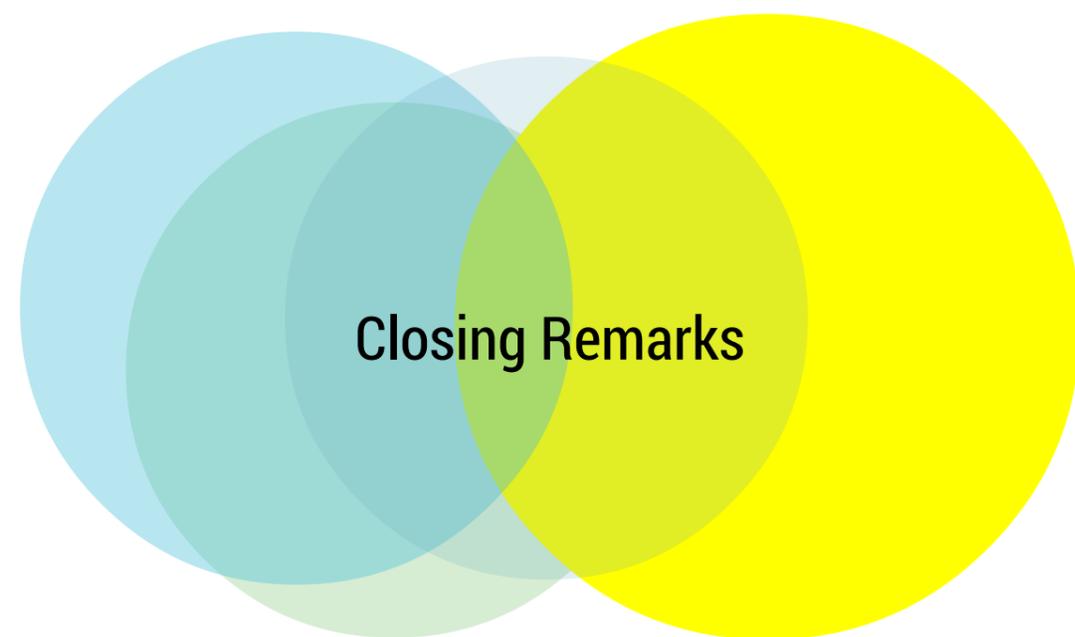


ONE WAY

SPACE FOR RENT

OFFICE

STOP



## Closing Remarks

We hope you get inspired by the success stories of the refugees who are now valuable employees at the companies involved in the project all over Europe. If you are interested in the training materials or would like to get further information about the REST approach, please visit

our platform:

<https://rest.dieberater.com>

and homepage:

<https://rest-eu.org>

Also, we have a manual that guides you through the implementation process...

and much more !!!