

BACKGROUND REPORT

**KNOWLEDGE-SHARING ON PATHWAYS FOR THE LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS**

September 30, 2021

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FORWORK Report

**ITCILO**

September 30, 2021

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1. **INTRODUCTION: OPERATIONAL CONTEXT**
   1. **ILO & DECENT WORK FOR MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

Of concern to the International Labour Organization (ILO) is that often only a very small minority of refugees gain access to labour markets in the formal economy. Access to work or livelihoods may be prohibited or restricted by law and refugees who do manage to find work do so mostly in the informal economy. The precarious situation of these populations renders them vulnerable to discriminatory practices which can lead to exploitation, the denial of fundamental principles and rights at work, and situations of forced labour, bonded labour, and child labour. This impact on working conditions may have a knock-on effect more widely across labour markets, ultimately affecting all workers. As displacement becomes increasingly protracted—UNHCR calculates that refugees are displaced for 17 years on average—urban areas may become increasingly appealing as they appear to offer better economic prospects than camps and rural areas. However, access to urban labour markets may be constrained by unclear legal status and degree of enjoyment of economic and social rights. At the same time, there is widespread recognition that refugees and other forcibly displaced people contribute to host societies by bringing skills, extensive social capital, talents and competences that may contribute to the development of host countries. In addition, in some circumstances, they can help meet labour shortages due to, for example, changing demographics in the form of ageing populations and declining workforces.

For host countries and populations, protracted displacement can also lead to severe socioeconomic costs and impacts. For example, in some countries, particularly those hosting large movements of refugees, public services come under strain, more pressure is placed on already fragile labour markets and some macroeconomic development gains may be at risk of being reversed. Sometimes these pressures translate into political and social tensions between host and refugee populations, especially in already ready poorly served and overcrowded urban areas where refugees settle. Recognizing these challenges, a paradigm shift is taking place among international development and humanitarian actors and donors to look beyond critical humanitarian assistance and to include early intervention of development actors. The ILO, alongside the international community, has therefore increasingly acknowledged the need to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian assistance and the development dimensions of the overall response to these situations with decent work strategically placed at this intersection. This approach enables refugees to participate in and contribute meaningfully to the economies and societies of host countries, while not disadvantaging national workers and host communities. This is essential to mitigate fiscal stress, limit macroeconomic shocks, stabilize and support longer term development, alleviate labour market pressures and promote sustainable livelihoods that harness the productive capacities of refugees and their hosts.

Central to the ILO’s mandate is the “protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own”, including migrants and refugees.

* 1. **ITCILO’S PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES WITH SIMILAR PROJECTS**

ITCILO is the training arm of the ILO and it has a specialized cluster in the area of migration carrying out regular training courses, academies and capacity building projects in support of ILO objectives in the field of labour migration with the aim to strengthen the capacity of key constituencies involved in migration policies. A significant example of projects led by ITCILO includes the Migrants' Integration Academy (EU-MIA) project, implemented from 2012 to 2014 and funded by the EU Commission’s DG HOME through the European Fund for the Integration ‬(EIF). It was delivered by the International Training Centre of the International Labour ‬Organization (ITCILO), the International and European Forum of Migration Research (FIERI) and the Centre ‬on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) of the University of Oxford.‬ The main objective of EU-MIA was to establish dynamic and operational connections between researchers, public administration representatives and practitioners working in the field of social and economic integration of migrants at local level. The methodology of EU-MIA was based on continuous cooperation among local stakeholders with the project and was able to document innovative practices in the field of social and occupational integration at local level. Another significant example is the RE-LAB project, run from 2012 to 2014 with EU AMIF funds. The Project aimed at promoting entrepreneurial initiatives of persons holding international protection (refugees) in Italy by providing them with the necessary skills and tools to set up businesses.

* 1. **SUMMARY OF THE FORWORK PROJECT**[[1]](#footnote-1)

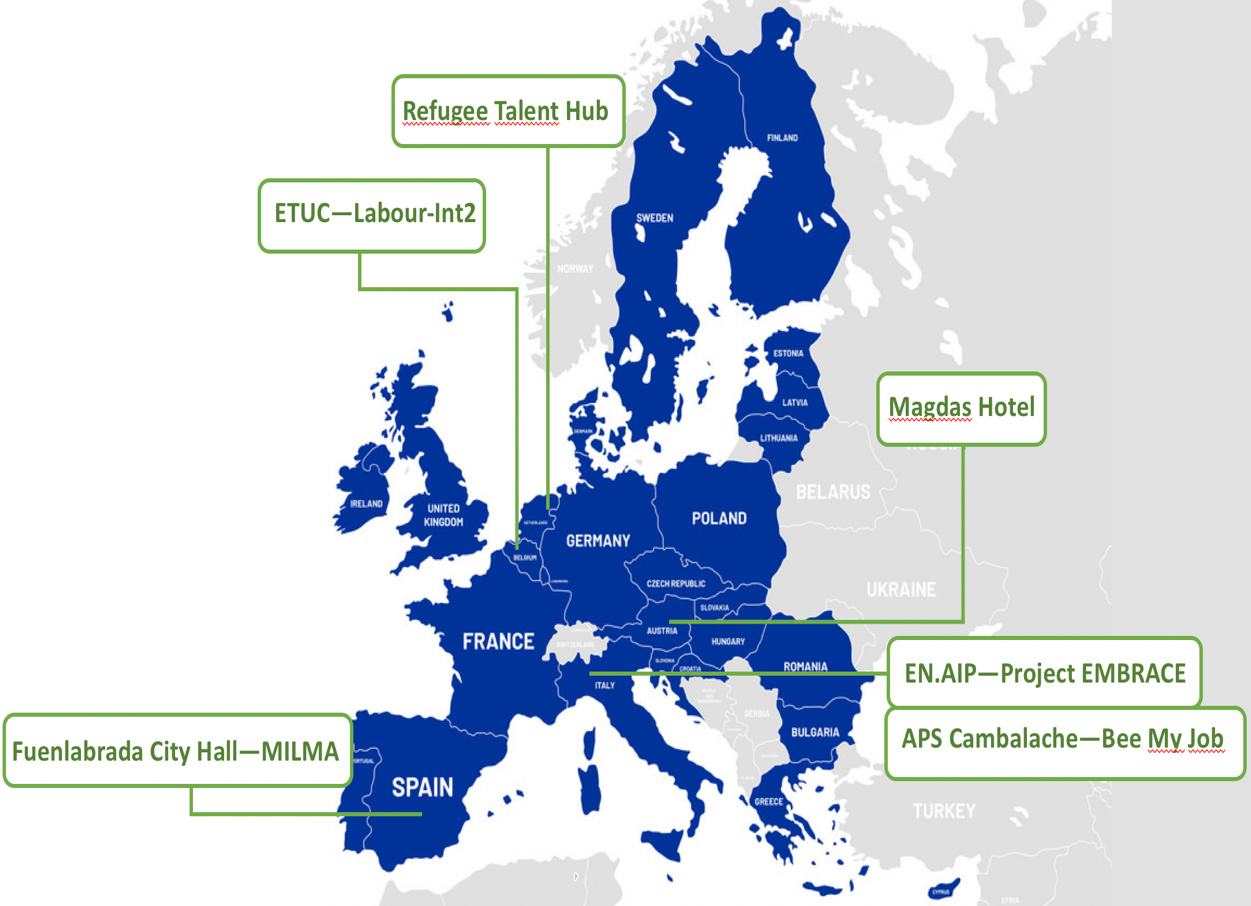
Notwithstanding the recommendations of the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the development of fully-fledged programs for the integration of asylum seekers in Italy has not mirrored the overwhelming number of arrivals in reception centers. Pilot studies are desperately needed to inform policy at the national level and to improve the opportunities of social and labour market integration. The proposed action outlines a new national model of integration, which we pilot in a large region of Northern Italy. It offers professional language and skills assessments, combined with gendered counselling, to develop an individualized integration plan for asylum seekers. The counterfactual evaluation will yield the causal effects of innovative paths to effective integration in the labour market and positive development outcomes. The consortium's strength will ensure randomized participation for a representative sample of reception centers, allowing the use of randomized-out centers as experimental controls. Expected outcomes will be measured integrating quantitative data from administrative sources, and qualitative data from baseline and follow-up surveys. Credible evidence on effectiveness will guide policy recommendations on which components to keep, scale-up or terminate.

* 1. **COMPONENTS TO BE DEVELOPED BY THE ITCILO IN THE FORWORK PROJECT**

The ITCILO component of the FORWORK action revolved around the following three objectives:

* Map **Functioning Practices implemented in EU countries**: Identify and review practices of labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers from other EU countries, including institutional approaches for multi-partner engagement in program and service delivery;
* Organize a **Share Fair Event:** Distil practical lessons with the aim of developing pathways for the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers and scaling interventions, in particular by disseminating them through conference[[2]](#footnote-2) events;
* Build a **Community of Practice[[3]](#footnote-3):** Share impact evaluation results of the actions and lessons learned in the FORWORK project’s implementation with partners and practitioners.

The six organizations (and their projects) that were selected as functioning practices cover five EU Member States: En.AIP, a vocational training association in Turin, Italy, which conducted the EMBRACE project; the Fuenlabrada City Hall in Spain, which coordinated the MILMA project; the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), based in Brussels, Belgium, which coordinated the Labour-INT project across Europe; the Refugee Talent Hub (RTH), a (largely) private sector initiative in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; the APS Cambalache NGO in Italy, which runs the Bee My Job project in the Piedmont region; and the Magdas Hotel, a social business in Vienna, Austria.



Map: Geographic distribution of selected FPs in the EU.

1. **REPORTING METHODOLOGY**

Today, debates about the ‘integration’ of ‘refugees’ in Europe remain contentious and often highly politicized. While there is equally a whole scientific debate on the exact sociological contours of the (often taken-for-granted yet normative) notion of ‘integration’[[4]](#footnote-4), institutional policy reporting (e.g., OECD) usually abstains from providing an explicit definition of socio-economic integration and rather tends to frame it (in a neo-Durkheimian fashion) as being an implicit compound of receptive processes that are inherently multi-actor, and of which the mutual engagements seemingly encompass also helping “refugees and their children find their place in the labour market, education system and society at large”.[[5]](#footnote-5) The practical rationale behind this background research is similar: instead of complicating heated and often polarizing (public and scientific) debates on what integration ‘really’ is, the guiding principle here is that by means of reporting on the bottom-up work that is already being done in the domain of socio-economic integration across the EU, one may able to distinguish very *functional* incorporation practices that could serve as noteworthy inspiration to others who are equally working in the field of migrant and refugee inclusion, enabling them in turn to emulate or scale such functioning practices for the benefit of the labour market integration of vulnerable migrant groups and overall social cohesion.

In surveying and reviewing a variety of so-called ‘functioning practices’ (FPs) that were successfully implemented in EU countries, ICTILO defines FPs in reference to the aforementioned EU-MIA project.

As such, FPs could be defined much in the way that ‘best practices’ are described, namely as a policy a term that “relates to successful initiatives or model projects that make an outstanding, sustainable, and innovative contribution to an issue at hand”[[6]](#footnote-6).

Hence, such terms are often applied as part of working methodologies that evaluate whether certain practices and interventions with a high social impact may be scaled to different situations and other contexts. Having said that, however, this report prefers to apply the term ‘functioning practices’ instead of ‘best practices’, so as to stress that the effectiveness of incorporation measures is usually strongly related to, and embedded in, the specific social, cultural and economic contexts of particular place. This implies that no perfect model of ‘integration’ practices is deemed to be inherently or immediately adoptable or scalable—at least wholesale—across different European contexts. By mentioning this note on terminology, it also becomes clear that a review of functioning practices is seen here as a practical way of showcasing certain degrees of success in relation to specific initiatives or projects that have already (or in part) been carried out, all for the benefit of exchanging know-how across practice communities, not least in terms of sustainability and innovation.

The methodology for the selection and overview of FPs was based on the following steps. First, an initial **mapping process** was conducted so as to aggregate an initial database of potential FPs for review under the auspices of the FORWORK project. In doing so, the ITCILO consulted with a number of internal and external partners in soliciting more information on promising integration practices in various EU Member States. Internally, ITCILO/ILO consulted the following ILO branches:

* Employment Policy and Analysis Program (EPAP)
* Enterprise, Microfinance and Local Development (EMLD)
* Employers’ Activities
* Workers’ Activities
* Partnerships and Programme Development Services (PRODEV)
* MIGRANT, ILO Headquarters was also consulted

Externally, the following partners were consulted:

* ENAIP Piemonte
* EURORESO
* Fuenlabrada Municipality
* European Training Fund
* Diesis, COOP
* Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona
* Universidade de Lisboa
* FORWORK partners

On the basis of these consultation, ITCILO was able to gather a basic profile on a total of **57 potential functioning practices**, which were compiled into a database. Based on this pool of organizational projects, a two-step disaggregation process took place. By first applying a general set ofpre-requisite criteria, a long list of **31 potential practices** was produced. The selection thereof was based on the following criteria:

* Measures in any fields which have clear goals in terms of promoting the economic integration and inclusion of people with a refugee background, be they refugee-focused or not (examples: Integration into the labour market in countries of destination; labour market integration and labour mobility of specific refugee groups (asylum seekers, recently recognized refugees, resettle refugees, women refugees etc);
* Measures carried out at regional, national or local level in the European Union.
* Anti-discrimination/equality of treatment and opportunity.
* Measures conducted by a variety of stakeholders, be they public authorities, enterprises, workers and employers’ associations, NGOs, universities etc.
* Preferably from 2015 onwards, or any previous year as long as it remains an ongoing activity or has been finalized not longer than 12 months ago from the inception of the review process.

Based on this long list, a second round of selection was conducted in order to generate a final list of 10 projects. This selection was based on another set of qualifying criteria, namely four key aspects of concern: **effectiveness, innovation, sustainability, and scalability.** Out of practical consideration, these qualifying features were applied to the long list in order to generate a score system from 1 (least fit) to 5 (most fit). The short list, including 10 projects, will then rank the individual practices on the basis of these four dimensions, going from the highest score possible (20 points) to the lowest (5 points).

It was then decided that, ideally, the first five practices ranked in this system would have their focal point contacted for the purposive of this review study. In the occasion that no response was received in due time, the extra five organizations/practices were to be contacted[[7]](#footnote-7).

The selected (10) FPs that were identified for the short list are the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Selected Practices** | **Leading Organization** | **Leading Country** |
| NewTalents4Eu | Simplon.co | France |
| LABOUR INT2 | CEEP | Belgium |
| Urbagri4women | Tamat | Italy |
| Magdas Hotel | Caritas Services GmbH | Austria |
| Refugee Talent Hub | Refugees Talent Hub | The Netherlands |
| Project EMBRACE | ENAIP | Italy |
| MILMA Project | Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada | Spain |
| Refugees Engineer (a new future at) Siemens | SIEMENS | Germany |
| Bee My Job | APS Cambalache | Italy |
| REFUJOBS | National High Commission for Migrants | Portugal |

For the purpose of this background research report, six organizations ended up responding in time and were thus reviewed in detail. In terms of deliverables, ITCILO thus conducted a **background research** on these six FPs (resulting in this research report), as well as completing related **Info Sheets** about the organizations. These two deliverables were completed on the basis of: **desk research, semi-structured interviews** with focal points of the six organizations on the basis of an Interview Guide (cf. Annex 3), and Information Templates (cf. Annex 2) that were sent to and solicited from these organizations. In reviewing the six FPs, the background research—and especially this report—has sought to focus on the following aspects:

* Context characteristics
* Objectives & purposes of the practice
* Summarized description of actions/activities involved
* Partners & networks
* Main outcomes, challenges and social impact
* Strong features in terms of innovation; sustainability, effectiveness; replicability/scaling-up
* Key lessons learned

In addition, ICTILO has also produced a series of visual story-telling videos presenting the six FPs, including the testimonials of stakeholders and final beneficiaries. All the informative materials that have been produced under the ICT component—background research report, Info Sheet, promo videos—will be developed in English. A final deliverable was the Share Fair Event, which consisted of two conference organized by the ICT as a way of concluding its work components under the FORWORK project. These events, taking place in September 2021, were aimed at encouraging participants to reflect on existing practices implemented to foster the socio-economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the EU labour market. Next to its own input, ICT invited participants who have been engaged in implementing functioning and innovative practices so as to give them the chance to disseminate the knowledge they acquired and also to list the strategies used to overcome some of the challenges. In so doing, a peer-to-peer approach was used to engage participants and CoPs (from inside and outside of Europe) in conducting in-depth exchanges of the lessons learned. This implies that these exchanges also formed part of the consultative process of information exchange, of which this piece reporting has equally been able to benefit.

1. **OVERVIEW OF DISTINGUISHING ‘FUNCTIONING PRACTICES’ (FP) IN EU COUNTRIES**

**3.1 APS CAMBALACHE—BEE MY JOB**



Bee My Job. Credits: Photo Cambalache

***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***

Bee My Job is a project coordinated by APS Cambalache[[8]](#footnote-8) (NGO) in the city of Alessandria, in the Piedmont region of Italy. Bee My Job started as a pilot project in 2015 and was renewed on a yearly basis ever since by APS Cambalache. Its main target group are refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Bee My Job applies a holistic working methodology and a multi-level approach. The beneficiaries of the project are therefore also the larger citizen-public given that they are equally approached and made aware (through e.g. advocacy in schools) about the sustainable role played by refugees in specific agricultural sectors (such as beekeeping) that combat climate change and its nefarious impacts in Italy. In 2020 UNHCR became a sponsoring partner of the project. Bee My Job is also supported by Ashoka Italy; beekeeping and agricultural representative bodies and consortiums in Italy; and a wide range of public and private partners in Italy, such as local schools, universities, municipalities, beekeeping companies, and NGOs.

***WHAT: CORE MISSION***

Bee My Job aims to help refugees gain skills and access to dignified employment in Italy. It tackles inequalities for refugees by providing professional training and facilitated access to dignified job opportunities in the beekeeping and agricultural field, next to building capacities of social operators in the design of innovative projects and services addressing refugees’ social and job inclusion needs.

***WHY: OBJECTIVES***

* Bee My Job promotes access to dignified job opportunities by offering professional training and internship opportunities in selecting ethical companies.
* Bee My Job team monitors the respect for labour rights within companies that are hosting internships.
* It raises awareness about risks of labour exploitation in the agricultural market amongst refugees, citizens and institutions, seeking out the commitment of companies and their representative bodies.
* It also counters widespread prejudices about asylum seekers by sensitizing about environmental sustainability among pupils in schools as well as the larger citizen public. In particular, it showcases the positive role that the inclusion of refugees may have through beekeeping in light of environmental problems and climate change in Italy, some of which include the dwindling annual bee populations.

***APPROACH***

The Bee My Job Academy is a beekeeping school for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from all over Italy. It offers theoretical as well as practical training courses in beekeeping that are completed within an intensive project cycle. It also delivers a series of complementary modules about safety at work, sectoral Italian language training, as well as introductory orientations to social services in the wider Piedmont region so as to promote the professional inclusion of refugees by means of showcasing their functioning practices. The training in the Bee My Job Academy is concentrated in early Spring. It offers access to scholarships and forms of temporary hospitality in Alessandria to participant refugees. The theoretical lessons in beekeeping are held by Aspromiele technicians, and the practical sessions take place at the urban apiary in Alessandria managed by APS Cambalache, at the ‘Forte Acqui’ public park. At the end of the training cycle by APS Cambalache, the Academy then promotes internships in various beekeeping farms across Italy. The participant farms and companies are identified in collaboration with trade unions and selected by APS Cambalache on the basis of the sharing of the ethical values of the Bee My Job project.

***INNOVATION***

* Dignified labour is promoted through the implementation of ethics charts and a code of conduct for participant companies, as well as the monitoring of access to safe living places when relevant.
* APS Cambalache advocates for refugee labor market inclusion through the lens of environmental sustainability: showcasing in very practical ways the labour of refugees and migrants in the beekeeping sector as a way of addressing larger concerns about environmental change in Italy. As such, advocacy about refugee labour market inclusion becomes part and parcel of broader campaigns and pedagogical sensitizing.

***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***

* Since 2015, Bee My Job has trained over 200 refugees and promoted over 120 internships, all over Italy. It has been awarded important prizes at the national and European level, and has been the object of university research and broad media coverage.
* Two refugee beneficiaries have started their own beehive cooperatives (cf. Abdul, in promo video of APS Cambalache[[9]](#footnote-9))
* An urban apiary and garden have been established in a public park in Alessandria, enabling the involvement of refugees in the production and marketing of products, as well as in awareness raising events and educational activities for school students.
* Beekeeping training modules were enriched with Italian classes, courses on safety at work, as well as introductory courses on citizenship and labour legislation.
* Longer-term assistance was extended to refugees in their job search activities so as to sustain their skill acquisition (even in other sectors).
* Activation and monitoring of internships in selected and assessed ‘ethical’ companies, in combination with housing solutions against all forms of exploitation.
* Organization of professional training courses in beekeeping in different training centers across Italy (Alessandria, Rosarno, Catanzaro, Firenze, Bologna, Roma).
* Capacity building of social workers through the organization of workshops and the publication of educational materials.
* Educational and urban agriculture activities, to raise awareness among youths and citizens on environmental sustainability and the labour market inclusion of refugees. Its various advocacy activities in schools with pupils has now neared the total of 1.500 students.
* A photo exhibition was created and toured, and a documentary made and presented at international Film Festivals.

***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***

* The Bee My Job project is still ongoing in Alessandria, and its training and advocacy activities continue in its urban apiary and public garden.
* Thanks to the support of UNHCR and Ashoka Italy, the scaling up of Bee My Job project has been extended and scaled up effectively to such Italian regions as Emilia Romagna and Calabria, and replicas will soon be running in Toscana and Lazio.
* From 2019 onward, almost 100 social workers from six different Italian regions were trained in how to design equally innovative projects which promote refugees’ labour market inclusion.
* APS Cambalache is currently reaching out to European partners that have a similar desire to set up beekeeping training for refugees. They are aiming to pool their expertise and jointly apply for structural EU funding.

***RISKS***

In terms of difficulties faced by the project, training a large number of asylum seekers during the first years of the project appeared to be a challenge given that only a very small percentage of them was allocated a work permit by the government. Given their limited resources, APS Cambalache has therefore had to shift their main focus onto those who already have been allocated a refugee status.

***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***

Bee My Job is located at the intersection of decent labor and sustainable food production and consumption. They showcase that sustainable agriculture and food can be produced and consumed through decent work—work that is at the same time beneficial to mitigating the nefarious effects of climate change. When they brought this to the fore during their advocacy campaigns in Italy, they focused not on ‘immigration’ or ‘refugees’ as such, but rather took on overarching themes of concerns, such as environmental sustainability, in order to sensitize students about the contributions being made on the ground through refugee inclusion projects in the labor market, not least in the particular sector of beekeeping.

**3.2 MAGDAS HOTEL**

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MAGDAS Hotel Team. Credits: Magdas Hotel

***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***

The Magdas Hotel[[10]](#footnote-10) is a social business in Vienna, which was set up by Caritas Vienna, a member of Caritas Europa—the network of Caritas organizations on the European continent. Following renovation works, the Magdas Hotel officially opened on 14 February 2015 under supervision of CEO Gabriela Sonnleitner. Hitherto, it has been operational for six years, and approximately 22,000 guests stayed in the hotel. Magdas is a social business hotel co-run by refugees as well as Austrian staff with long-term experience in the tourism sector. The pilot project that serves to kickstart Magdas was funded by loans from Caritas Austria and the Erste Bank, as well as a small amount gathered through crowdfunding sources.

***WHAT: CORE MISSION***

The Magdas hotel aims to create new job opportunities for people living in poverty and those who have lower chances of entering the job market. The idea was that a hotel could easily become a microcosm for the economic and socio-cultural incorporation of refugees and asylum seekers. Today, Magdas has grown out to a meeting place for people of over 16 countries, where about 20 languages are spoken, and where people with different cultural and social backgrounds interact on a daily basis.

***WHY: OBJECTIVES***

In the mid-2010s, there was a spike in refugees entering Austria. While this group had difficulties entering the labour market, there was also a lack of qualified staff in the tourism industry in Austria. Hence, Caritas Vienna realized that there was a complementary opportunity, which was not yet valorized. Caritas Vienna was convinced that many refugees had the potential to work in this sector, not least given their language skills. It therefore developed the concept of a social business hotel co-run by refugees accompanied by experienced staff from the Austrian tourism sector. The initial format was a pilot project with the goal of bringing together people with different cultural, professional and social backgrounds and to engage them jointly into a constructive labor project. Given it was quickly successful in terms of generating a client base, accompanied with very good customer reviews and client feedback, Magdas started operating as a self-sufficient social enterprise.

***APPROACH***

The hotel employs around 30-35 people, out of which 15-20 are refugees and 15-20 hotel professionals. Annually, Magdas aims for an intake of ca. 13 trainees. These refugee-trainees enter a national vocational training program, which lasts for three years[[11]](#footnote-11), after which they are granted a diploma certificate. Magdas trains them on the job in order for them to gain initial professional experience in the tourism sector. The training consists of developing sectoral skills, classes on intercultural training, and team building. Also, during this labour immersion, ever-greater proficiency in professional German language use is attained by means of everyday practice. For the purpose of training, Magdas received support from professional hotel consultants in the initial phase of setting up its social business. After graduation, trainees most often go on to work as regular employees in other hotels or other branches of the Austrian tourism sector, further diversifying their professional CVs as well as deepening their socio-cultural immersion in Austrian society. Over the course of this sectoral training, they receive a vocational training stipend from Magdas according to the standards of the Austrian apprenticeship training program.

The Magdas hotel is a former retirement home owned by Caritas Austria, which was then converted into a hotel. The fact that the property was owned by Caritas was a considerable aid in setting up a social business model (lowering the initial costs for rent etc.). The ensuing renovation[[12]](#footnote-12) process took nine months and involved several companies, neighboring stakeholders, refugees, and artists. The Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna was also involved at this stage. Some of the furniture was constructed from materials that was reused, recycled and recovered during workshops with these groups.

The Magdas hotel currently has 88 rooms and pursues a 75% occupancy rate. Next to hosting tourists, students and politicians have also visited the hotel in order to learn about Magdas’ incorporation approach as a social business. After starting to rent out rooms for commercial guests, various CSR-departments of companies started reaching out to Magdas, after which it was able to rent out conference rooms for private sector workshop events too. Magdas was able to become financially self-sufficient after three years of operation, and thus continues to apply a strict budgetary plan—adapted to the market situation every year—to be able to sustain this capacity. As such, Magdas was able to demonstrate its expertise as a performant social business. Ever since its opening in 2015, Magdas has received a lot of media attention (e.g., BBC, CNN, the Guardian), demonstrating an impressive track record in terms of public outreach.

***INNOVATION***

As a social business, Magdas tries to solve both economic and social problems by using innovative entrepreneurial tools. That said, however, their main focus is not the maximization of profit, but rather the maximization of societal benefits, solidarity and openness. Their way of dealing with ‘refugees’ centers around approaching refugees as potential workers first, that is, as new inhabitants who are willing and eager to contribute to the productive fabric of society. As such, they focus on the skills, talents and motivation of refugees rather than seeing them as a burden upon their host country or municipality. In doing so, Magdas has made an investment in building social cohesion in Austria. Through its original set up, the Magdas Hotel has been able to advocate on behalf of refugees as being a population that is inherently involved in the broader community’s activities, and not as people relying solely on public aid.

***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***

* Labour market integration for refugees with limited job opportunities. Their employment in Magdas furthers their economic stability through, for example, payment into the pension system. The target group thus becomes tangibly invested in a cultivating a longer-term perspective with regard to their residence in Austria.
* Training people with a refugee background to become professional staff in the tourism and hospitality sector.
* Annual renewal of an apprenticeship program for ca. 13 people (intake).
* Offering internships and trainings on the job (skills sustainment & skills development).
* More than 80 people with a refugee background have thus far worked in the Magdas hotel over the course of six years, of which the majority has finished their apprenticeship program, with many moving on to other sectoral companies to further strengthen their professional experience.
* Offer support courses in language skills, tutoring in different topics, and additional social work services on the basis of additional individual needs.
* Expanded their services from 88 rooms to also include a garden, a restaurant, and four workshop rooms, which are now hired by the CSR-departments of interested companies that seek to support their work, making use of an original environment for business and team building activities.
* The Magdas Hotel now serves as a model for the tourism industry, demonstrating that refugees may be an exciting target group as potential employees in Austria. As such, the project creates awareness about the fact that the skills of refugees enrich their societies. That said, it does not stress the fact that these people are ‘refugees’ only, but rather showcases the work of ‘professionals’ with a ‘refugee background’. Magdas thus advocates in very practical and diligent ways for a paradigm shift in terms of the public perception about refugees and asylum seekers in Austria, viewing their plights primarily as an opportunity rather than a burden for Austrian society.

***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***

The Magdas Hotel project still ongoing, and it has moved from being a pilot project of Caritas Austria into a becoming sustainable and self-sufficient social business. Moreover, it has always been their goal to develop the Magdas Hotel further into a social franchise scheme so as to facilitate the creation of other hotels co-run by refugees throughout Austria and the EU. However, starting up such a business model elsewhere remains a costly and high-risk endeavor that depends on financially capable and/or committed investors. Nevertheless, several restaurants in Vienna were opened using a similarly scalable format of the social enterprise. This means that Magdas is very much open to meeting interested third-party partners in other EU Member States, either to set up a Magdas franchise or to share with them their experience in setting up this sort of business model in the tourism sector.

***RISKS***

The current Covid-19 pandemic is evidently a challenge for the Magdas Hotel. However, thus far, they have received support from the Austrian government and are coping with the situation at hand, much like other businesses in the Austrian tourism sector.

What Magdas has additionally learned along the way is that a minimum of language proficiency and an extraverted profile is required from a refugee-trainee willing to work in the tourism and hospitality sector, mainly given the nature of labour that is required. This means that a face-to-face exchange and evaluation process has been set up to take place before the intake, all in order to confirm that a joint interest is at hand, followed by an initial three-month trial period of work at Magdas.

Another lesson learned is that Magdas needs to ensure a well-balanced ratio between experienced staff and new trainees. This ratio currently stands at ca. 4 expert-mentees to 4-6 trainees. Half or more than half of the staff are now expert staff. Magdas soon realized that one needs a high degree of investment in terms of training and mentoring. It takes on a well-monitored approach so as to ensure that their professional services as well as its vocational training outcomes are high.

Last, but not least, Magdas focuses on delivering precisely what they are good in, meaning that they can train refugees and help them gain professional starting experience in order for them to kick start their careers. This equally means that Magdas is not, and cannot be, an all-round social service. Although it tries to help those trainees with additional needs and requirements by means of employing an additional social worker—given that they remain part of a more vulnerable group—Magdas remains very self-aware about the fact that it simply cannot deliver everything in terms of assistance to the target group. Hence, if needed, they refer trainees and participants to the services of other social organizations specialized in other aspects of social care and incorporation. This approach is understood by Magdas as strength given that it allows them to become more successful (and thus inclusive) in terms of their core activity each year.

***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***

* Structural and ongoing support from Caritas Austria.
* Applying innovative entrepreneurial tools and renewed ways of thinking in dealing with the question of refugee incorporation in Austria.
* Focusing on the skills, talents and motivation of refugees in light of the acute needs that are actually present in the Austrian labour market rather than seeing them as a burden upon society.
* Promoting an open-minded approach and environment in terms of staff training and dealing with guests.
* A balanced (and almost 1-1) ratio in terms of experienced hotel staff and refugee-trainees, delivering quality rather than quantity in terms of vocational training and commercial service provision.
* Finding the right profile of trainees for the project is key to ensure its success (a minimum of German language proficiency is required, as well as an extravert profile, in order to deal with the nature of work in the hotel and tourism sector).
* A governmental apprenticeship scheme, which their trainees can enroll in during their time at Magdas, and which allows them to be allocated a vocational stipend for a period of three years so that they may acquire on the job training, a diploma certificate, and at the same time earn income.
* The focus not being the maximization of profit, but the maximization of societal benefits, solidarity and openness.
* Aiming from day one to be self-sufficient in terms of financial turn-over, all in order to develop a sustainable social model business model that could serve as an inspiration for others working toward the labour market incorporation of refugees and asylum seekers. This means striking a balance between operating as a social enterprise and maintaining profit for the sake of financial stability.
* Sticking to its core business of providing for the vocational training of refugees in the hotel and tourism sector, rather than trying to become an all-round social service, going by the credo ‘doing mainly what one does best’. It leaves other aspects of social care to those organizations (which can be referred to) which are specialized therein.
* Lots of visibility by the media worldwide has provided more public support, as well as serving as a way of promoting their commercial services as a social business for potential clients (also in the private sector for e.g. conference rooms etc.).

**3.3 EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ETUC)—LABOUR-INT**



Credits: Logo ETUC

***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***

The Labour-INT project was extended into a second phase as of 2017 (Labour-INT 2), following Labour-INT 1. In this capacity, it was coordinated by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)[[13]](#footnote-13), based in Brussels, Belgium. The main beneficiaries of Labour-INT are asylum-seekers and refugees as they directly benefit from the action and from the improved capacity of businesses, trade unions and migrant associations to assist them into transitioning faster into the labour market and workplace. Among others, some of the Labour-INT partners include: UnionMigrantNet (UMN)—the European Trade Unions’ Network of Assistance for Migrants’ Integration, led by the ETUC; the European Refugees Integration Action Scheme (ERIAS) project, led by Formaper and supported by EUROCHAMBRES; European Migrant Entrepreneurship Network (EMEN) project; Employers (a European Commission initiative); OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities (OCEEA); UN ILO.

***WHAT: CORE MISSION***

The Labour-INT project promotes the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in the labour market. Building on the interest and capacities of trade unions, businesses, chambers of industry and commerce, and migrant associations, the Labour-INT project promotes multi-layered integration paths, from arrival up to the workplace, passing through education, training and job placement. Labour-INT is a European-wide collaboration, but its implemented actions are local. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as the coordinating organization in Labour-INT, seeks to center the project’s implementation on the basis of such core values as solidarity, dignity, labour rights, and social dialogue.

***WHY: OBJECTIVES***

The LABOUR-INT project aims to:

• promote decent employment as a key part of the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers in the society.

• support multi-layered and multi-stakeholder integration paths for recently arrived third country nationals across the EU.

• establish an innovative approach, based on the cooperation, dialogue and commitment between economic actors and social partners as complementary labour market stakeholders, and to build or foster a fruitful collaboration with other relevant partners both in the public, private and not-for-profit sector.

To achieve these aims, LABOUR-INT has built on the existing capacities of trade unions, employers, chambers of commerce and industry, migrant associations and migrants themselves. Through the LABOUR-INT project, ETUC has sensitized key partners (employer organizations) about the fact that there is a joint interest in supporting a stable and skilled workforce. By guaranteeing equality of opportunity and treatment between national and migrant workers, workers are more easily adapted to the needs of companies. With this collaborative aim in mind, an Expert Group on Skills and Migration (EGSM) was set up within the ETUC umbrella in order to increase the capacities of all key players within a multi-layered integration strategy, with the concrete goal of performing standardized practices of skills assessment and matching, according to the specific conditions of asylum-seekers and refugees in each European labour market.

***APPROACH***

The project’s overall implementation approach was based on four methodological axes:

* Network building: All the actions involve multiple stakeholders, so the focus lay on exchanging functioning practices across national level. As such, consultations also serve to identify shared challenges, policy drivers, and common working plans.
* Capacity building: Partners upgrade their capacities to create operational frameworks autonomously or in partnership with other (public and private) partners of their own choosing. The project builds on the existing capacity of trade unions and employer organisations. Hence, the focus lay on improving-by-doing of what is already in place, rather than designing abstract strategic plans that are not even backed up by an existing infrastructure.
* Result-oriented pilot actions: Pilot actions are crafted and selected for testing there where conditions to obtain tangible and long-standing results are identified on the basis of initial cross-national consultations. Pilot actions have been selected in Belgium, Italy, Germany, Greece and Austria. Selection criteria: more favourable environments, existence of structured labour market policies, larger presence of asylum-seekers and consolidated presence of partner networks. They adapt existing methodologies (e.g. for unemployed and disadvantaged workers) to the specific conditions of asylum-seekers and refugees.
* Develop working tools for skills assessment and skills matching. Capitalizing on existing theoretical frameworks, partners set conditions for a more effective detection and matching mechanism of professional skill sets among the refugee population.

***INNOVATION***

The outcome of the ETUC’s EGSM in Labour-INT was the development of an approach, to be adapted to national and local contexts, that could help economic and social partners to set up actions and strategies aimed at enhancing the labour market integration of refugees. The process is understood by ETUC to be multi-stage and multi-stakeholder, consisting of several stages through which a new labour market entrant should proceed:

* skills assessment and profiling
* skills development
* skills matching and placement

Several actors, including economic and social partners, public authorities and agencies, civil society organizations and training institutions, have had a crucial role to play at each of these stages. In this process, the ETUC made sure to advocate in innovative ways for the importance of equalizing labour rights, not as a mere ‘addition’ but rather as being an integral part to any model of successful labour market integration. For ETUC, refugees are vulnerable workers who need to be informed about their rights. This is what ‘labour integration’ means for ETUC, that is, ETUC goes beyond the need for language and technical skills training only. Out of this conviction, ETUC organized trainings modules, workshops, and consultations with governments on the national as well as local levels. Via its UMN network and UNM’s website, migrant workers were made knowledgeable about the geographic location of trade unions in their vicinity, thus enabling access to legal support. Through advancing such standard practices, various national unions were able to mimic each other’s functioning practices with regard to refugee and migrant inclusion.

***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***

For the initial Labour-INT project, three different pilot actions were initiated. They took place in three countries over the course of a two-year implementation period:

* In Belgium, 40 asylum seekers were trained in the restauration and construction sectors, and successfully passed the admission test for acceding VET. A collaborative mapping was developed on which information about trainings was to be found for the direct benefits of asylum-seekers and refugees, as well as the design of a training manual.
* In Italy, 40 asylum seekers concluded language and civic education courses as well as a professional training in the restauration sector, in ICT or in the mechanical sectors. All of them have undertaken a paid internship and 25 of them were able to access permanent jobs.
* In Germany, 13 vocational trainers and workers representatives have been trained with the aim to prepare the workplace for the better integration of asylum-seekers and refugees. A training manual has also been published. An online tool (Aikom Pass) has been developed to assess the informal skills and qualifications of asylum-seekers and refugees in the metal and electrical industries in Germany.

For Labour-INT 2, actions were initiated in three countries:

* In Athens, Greece, five integration training seminars on ‘Bridging the gap from reception to integration’ were implemented by EKA, a regional trade union organization in the Athens area. A total of 84 refugees have thus been trained. These migrants also underwent nine digital competences training.
* In Tyrol, Austria, more than 600 refugees consulted one or more additional counselling meetings, implemented by the *Tiroler Soziale Dienste* *GmbH* (TSD), a charitable organization that falls under the Province of Tyrol. Besides enrolling in the ‘traditional’ Tyrolean Integration Compass (TIK) counselling of TSD, participant refugees were/are also informed about the additional methods/modules of the TIK.
* In Naples, Italy, 40 participants were selected and underwent training activities (language, civic education, and on the job training in the agri-food sector); six of them performed an internship, and some have continued to work within the associations where they carried out the internship (agricultural cooperatives). A short film was produced, to be used as a source of information and awareness-raising in primary schools in the provinces of Naples and Caserta, all in order to disseminate a positive account about functioning integration and inclusion.

***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***

* The Labour-INT project was renewedfor a second cycle: currently (2021) Labour-INT 2 is implemented. This extension of the project provides the partners and stakeholders with more timeto strengthen their connections and expertise on the ground.
* Labour-INT has established a sustained cooperation between public and private businesses, chambers of commerce and industries, trade unions and migrant associations, which will last into the future and across EU Member States.
* Functioning practices concerning refugee and migrant inclusion were shared across national unions through ETUC’s UMN (by means of e.g., trainings and awareness building with Central and Eastern European Union unions, which were at first more reluctant to work with the target group of refugees).
* The Labour-INT also generated visibility among the general public and policy makers on the scalable potential of the work that was thus far completed, showcasing the important bridge work that unions may perform in society. Hence, in terms of organizational expertise related to ‘migration and refugee integration’, ETUC’s role is now more visible and recognized, both by the general public as well as the EU Commission.

***RISKS***

Being a multi-stakeholder project across EU member states meant that managing and sustaining the level of cooperation between all economic actors and social partners was at times challenging. Moreover, elections and political developments in different countries across the EU complicated the effectuation of already established dialogues and paths of action. On top of that the financial crises in certain countries made governments less prone to invest proactively in the labour inclusion of non-nationals. Also, the Covid-19 pandemic made it more difficult for national (partner) unions to meet employers face-to-face. The health situation also made redundant a lot of previously established national workers, stretching the capacities of unions—who usually depend for their funding on working members­—with which to engage proactively for non-national workers. Despite these challenges, a strong political will of all partners prevailed, mainly to learn from past experience and to further strengthen cooperation, both at the European and national level. As a consequence, the European Commission and the European Social and Economic Partners renewed their commitment to the European Partnership for Integration in September 2020.

***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***

* A multi-stakeholder approach between key and complementary actors in the labour market (trade unions, employer organizations, chambers of commerce and industries, migrant associations etc.).
* Drawing on *existing* expertise, infrastructures and capacities of key organizations such as labour unions rather than starting entirely anew with abstract plans and small-scale or ad hoc NGOs that dependent entirely on governmental funding cycles. This meant that labour unions could commence immediately with their outreach to e.g. employer organizations about their refugee-focused work.
* A rights-based approach in ‘integration’ debates and actions, thus enlarging the role of important societal stakeholders for the benefit of migrant and refugee inclusion. By involving unions and employer organizations in tandem it is demonstrated that trade unions too hold crucial expertise as organizations when it comes to the labour market inclusion of ‘migration’ and ‘refugees’.

**3.4 REFUGEE TALENT HUB (RTH)**



Refugee Talent Hub. Credits: Refugee Talent Hub

***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***

The Refugee Talent Hub[[14]](#footnote-14) (RTH) was founded in 2016 by Accenture, AkzoNobel, Arcadis, the Council for Refugees (*Vluchtelingenwerk*), and the Foundation for Refugee Students. Based in Amsterdam in The Netherlands, the RTH considers itself to be a social ‘hub’ that seeks to match companies that have empty vacancies and that are willing to train job seeking migrants, on the one hand, with refugees and asylum seekers who want to become financially independent by being incorporated into the labour market, on the other hand. The Refugee Talent Hub is today a self-sufficient organization. Much like the Magdas Hotel in Vienna, they are entirely self-funded at the moment given that they apply a business model in dealing with the labour market inclusion of refugees. The RTH has partnered with over 35 (rather large) private sector employers, as well as with civil society organizations, such as the Council for Refugees (*Vluchtelingenwerk*) and the Foundation for Refugee Students.

***WHAT: CORE MISSION***

The Refugee Talent (RTH) brings affiliated employers together with job-seeking refugees through small-scale, customized activities and meetings with paid jobs as the goal. During their activities, meeting one another is key, as it is deemed a great way to get to know candidates personally and to look beyond CVs. All activities are tailor-made and in line with the specific wishes of the partner employer and employee. RTH’s dream is a labour market with employers who see, value and make use of the talents & craftmanship of refugees and, in the long term, create a more divers and inclusive labour market.

***WHY: OBJECTIVES***

Many refugees in the Netherlands are eager to start working, yet not everyone is able to find a job. This has various reasons. At times, degrees do not match the Dutch labor market, language is an issue, and work experience or competences are not always being valued correctly. Prejudices are often in play too. But perhaps most importantly: if you are new in the Netherlands you often have a *small* network. At the same time, many employers are eager to fill in outstanding vacancies by welcoming refugees but are often unable to find them. In sum, a joint network was missing. In 2016 Accenture thus presented the idea of the Refugee Talent Hub to a group of CEOs at the World Economic Forum in Davos, urging employers to fulfill their social responsibilities, highlighting also the aforementioned mutual interest at stake. Following the formal launch of RTH in the Netherlands, many employers have committed to supporting it financially, helping it grow out to an efficiently mediating ‘hub’.

RTH believes that connecting potential employers to refugees is in the interest of everyone: the refugee, the employer and society. They go by the credo that having a job contributes to rapid societal inclusion, and that employers with a diverse workforce are oftentimes more successful. Moreover, for refugees, having a job is about more than just making money. Having work also means structure, social contact, self-development, financial independence as well as the feeling of being part of society and belonging. That is why the Refugee Talent Hub—an employer initiative at its core—brings together employers with refugees. In their philosophy, a job opportunity starts with a personalized meeting.

***APPROACH***

From the days of its conception, the Refugee Talent Hub has been an employer initiative for employers and refugees. That is why most of its partners are today located in the private sector. They work with the principle of paid partnerships. Depending on the type and number of joint activities, our partners donate € 10,000, € 25,000 or € 50,000 per year. As a result, RTH is financially fully supported by its partners. In some cases, RTH makes separate agreements with small companies for whom the partner contribution is an obstacle.

The Refugee Talent Hub method is based on the ‘hub’ concept. RTH connects their knowledge, experience and contacts among a large network of employers with refugees and social organizations. The Refugee Talent Hub does this, among other things, by stimulating the *exchange* of knowledge between employers and by working closely with civil society organizations. The Refugee Talent Hub organizes various activities, such as company visits, targeted trainings, courses, work experience programs and other work-related activities; all to increase refugees’ chances to ultimately find a paid job. Some of these activities include the following rationales:

* **Workshops**

Together with companies, they work on refugees’ professional skills (e.g., LinkedIn trainings, interview seminars, or courses about building websites). This has proven to be an accessible way for interested companies to get acquainted with job-seeking refugees and valorize the basic exchange of know-how.

* **Meet-and-greet**

This activity is centered around the personal meeting with a group of job-seeking refugees and a company suitable for recruitment. RTH has them meet in a small group (with five people or more) or by organizing a larger event (with about a hundred people). Their meet-and-greets are informal, practical, and largely centered around doing something together, e.g., they work on a business case with financial service providers, they dive into the kitchen at restaurants, or they pick up drills and other tools at technical companies.

* **Training**

In a crash course of various weeks or months, employers teach a group of refugees key skills in their sector, such as IT programming or dealing with technical control programs. These intensive ‘classes’ help participating employers to recruit interesting candidates, who are willing to fill in available vacancies or trainee programs.

* **Internal training program**

During this program, the employer trains job-seeking refugees through its own in-house course (e.g., Rabobank). After completing this training successfully, the candidates are ready to start working immediately at the relevant company whenever there are job vacancies. Otherwise they have built up experience in a Netherlands-based company, which is key and could thus serve as a future reference for their ongoing job applications in the Dutch labour market.

* **Mentor program**

During this program volunteer-employees (already working since long in a certain company) are matched with a refugee-mentee (entering the company). During this period, and with the help of a very experienced mentor, they work together towards a clear, work-related goal, and thus exchange everyday knowledge, networks and professional experiences.

***INNOVATION***

* RTH applies a *private sector model* in dealing with refugee labor market inclusion and is a largely self-sufficient organization.
* It takes on an *individual* mentoring approach; beyond e-databases with large-scale matching.
* The focus on generating as much *face-to-face meetings* as possible leads to actual and direct contact, mutual exchanges, and mutually beneficial inclusion. This hands-on approach, which is always more individuals, thus also allows for long-term monitoring (generating ever more feedback on how to finetune labour insertion processes).
* *Sensitizing all level*s of company staff (CEO, mid-level floor managers, HR) in private sector partner to the idea that diversity in private sector teams is mutually beneficial (in terms of performance and output). RTH remains adamant to only proceed when it has secured such entrenched in-house support (beyond HR or CSR).

***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***

* In 2020: 62 events organized with employers; 9 employer sessions; 76 direct matches for work placements; 964 refugees present at Refugee Talent Hub events; 550 employees present at Refugee Talent Hub events; 3.686 subscribed members to the newsletter; a media reach of 850.0000; 1 scientific research.
* Established various partnership agreements, both with the private sector as well as public sector. For instance, Microsoft Netherlands has committed to train refugees as cloud engineer managers through a placement program; a pilot project is being run at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, which has committed to employ 6 persons for a period of 1,5 years; Ikea Netherlands has committed to train 500 refugees for 3 months, with the option for them to choose in which of its 14 shops (and which department) they would be interested to work.
* RTH has set up a mentorship program within the companies it works with so as to further cater for a more sustainable model of labor socialization (making sure incorporation is qualitative).
* RTH tries not to use the term ‘refugee’ excessively, focusing rather on ‘newcomers’ or ‘professionals with a refugee background’. It also organizes sensitizing campaigns in the media as well as workshops within companies about the way forward to incorporate refugees in the labor market, aiming generate broader support (for their work and vision) across society.

***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***

* The RTH is still operational in The Netherlands today.
* By advocating for an openminded environment among private sector staff at various levels in companies, RTH creates the practical grounds for the labor market integration of refugees.
* RTH allows for refugees to acquire skills so that they may over time alleviate their professional profiles, thus valorizing the time that they are in The Netherlands. They smoothen this process by extending their Dutch network to refugees, which they can then draw upon themselves in combination with their CV credentials, and according to the sector the seek employment in.
* RTH tries to make sure that after the placement period, some fixed positions are available (e.g. for a minimum of a year) in each company. As such, people can refer to their Netherlands-based employers as they go along with their labor market insertion in the Netherlands over time (gaining sectorial experience with various employers as they go along). Consequently, RTH generates ‘local’ professional experience, enabling refugees to further build sustainable working lives in The Netherlands.
* RTH aims to increase its pool of affiliated companies given that the share of refugees participating in its activities has been growing each year.

***RISKS***

* Initially, the first approach taken by RTH centered around a ‘digital matching platform’, and consequently the large-scale matching of employers (and their vacancies) with refugees. However, through experience it was learned that a purposive database alone does not serve an adequate outcome. Learning from this experience, RTH now focuses mainly on (digital) support rather than matching only, as well as scheduling very personalized and smaller scale meetings between employers and refugees. Taking up a more hands-on and mentoring approach, the results (in terms of labour insertion) became much better. Having had to shift towards an intensive mentoring and monitoring approach per each client-refugee consumer a lot of time and energy. Yet, given its highly desirable outcomes, taking up such a tailor-made approach also indicates what may be required in the field of migrant worker integration: time, energy, resources, and the perseverance of committed staff on an almost surgical scale.
* The commitment in companies has to be well-attained and mainstreamed. When dealing first with the CSR or HR departments of a company, it is adamant to equally secure the commitment of the more senior and executive staff (CEOs, floor managers). This commitment is key to the successfulness of RTH’s tailored work—without this cross-departmental backing inside organizations, RTH prefers not to proceed hastily in accepting donations. Instead they first sensitize all levels inside companies about the benefits of working on this project together, highlighting for instance that training this worker public does not a priori lead to a loss of revenue—on the contrary.
* RTH used to focus a lot on rapid employment before status recognition—given the recognition processes by the government may take a long time—but at the moment they center their time-consuming activities mainly around those who *already* hold a (refugee and residency) status so as to valorize as much as possible their limited resources—not exclusively, of course (cf. RTH’s Microsoft training program, including also asylum seekers).
* Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, RTH’s tailor-made approach of small-scale live encounters had to be moved temporarily to online meetings. However, their approach (face-to-face, small-scale, individual support & monitoring) remains the same in essence. Hence, the shift has been managed well thus far.

***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***

* RTH focuses mainly on personalized support rather than (digital) matching only, as well as scheduling personal and smaller scale meetings between employers and refugees.
* A case-by-case intensive mentoring approach, with real life meetings ensures a high success rate and a sustainable effect in terms of labor market inclusion. A tailor-made approach is necessary and has become the core dimension of RTH’s work.
* The idea is to aid refugees in attaining financial stability of their own through paid work, and by building up a professional network step-by-step. For instance, a remunerated placement or internship alone is not a goal in and of itself, but a mere stepping stone in a larger picture of social and economic integration. Therefore, RTH does not work with ad hoc vacancies as such, but as a ‘hub’ it rather caters for a professional insertion scheme through longer-term monitoring and network building.
* The commitment in companies has to be well-attained and mainstreamed. When dealing first with the CSR or HR departments of a company, RTH puts a lot of energy in securing the commitment of the senior executive staff too (CEOs, floor managers). RTH moves beyond a private sector desire for mere PR (in what is often standardized CSR-outreach). RTH is thus after longer-term sensitizing and social transformation, specifically by working very closely with like-minded partners in the private sector, who are equally convinced of the mutual benefit that can be found in mentoring and employing job-seeking refugees.
* Instruments like the ‘mentor program’ help nurture a refugee’s professional networks over time, and this also beyond the immediate company in which a first placement is effectuated (a mentor becomes a personal and professional contact, who may then be able to share intercompany contacts with the mentee). Such interpersonal experiences render RTH’s small-scale approach to the labour market inclusion of specific migrant publics more sustainable in terms of its incorporative dimensions.

**3.5 FUENLABRADA CITY HALL**—**MILMA**

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| ***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***  The MILMA Project (Migrants Labour Integration Model based on Acculturation Project) is led by the Fuenlabrada City Hall[[15]](#footnote-15) in Spain. It started in 2018 and is slated to run until 2023. MILMA focuses on labour market inclusion and social cohesion through efficient access to decent work. Its main target groups are unemployed refugees, migrants and the local population. In the execution of the MILMA project, the Fuenlabrada City Hall has partnered with the Fuenlabrada Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CIFE), the Santa María la Real Foundation, ASALMA, CESAL, and the Fuenlabrada Islamic Culture Center. In 2017, funding for MILMA was attained from the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) program, a European Union initiative that provides urban areas throughout Europe with the resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges.  ***WHAT: CORE MISSION***  The objective of MILMA is to generate an efficient model of access to employment, work reconversion and inclusion. It seeks to expand the professional horizon of vulnerable migrant groups by promoting exchange and interaction between locals and inhabitants with a migrant background. As such, it promotes inclusion processes that benefit the overall strengthening of social cohesion in Fuenlabrada. This is done mainly by means of promoting labour insertion and reconversion, on-the-job skills training, and through the promotion of entrepreneurship.  ***WHY: OBJECTIVES***  Fuenlabrada is a city located south of the metropolitan area of Madrid. Fuenlabrada’s population has almost tripled in the past decades, expanding from ca. 7.000 inhabitants in the 1970s to ca. 200.000 inhabitants today. Unemployment is particularly high among lower-skilled (migrant) youths. Increasing the access to employment is one of the principal elements of the city’s social inclusion policies. One of the main challenges of the city is the integration of people at risk of social exclusion, especially unemployed people with a migrant background. Its objective is to generate opportunities for these inhabitants as well as for locals. MILMA has thus facilitated job matching schemes and fostered opportunities to create and support local start-ups.  As such, MILMA’s core objectives are:   * Fight against social exclusion processes impacting the most vulnerable groups among the local and immigrant populations. * Improve the social cohesion between local and immigrant populations with the aim of reducing perceptions of segregation among Fuenlabrada inhabitants. * Reduce the number of unemployed inhabitants among the project participants. * Create a sustainable model for integration and labour reconversion, in particular by means of a diversity approach.   ***APPROACH***  The Fuenlabrada City Hall’s MILMA project is based on three principal axes of implementation. First, it conducts a prospection of interested companies willing to partake in the project. Second, it agrees on a basic set of co-training modules in which companies agree to train incoming apprentices in a hands-on fashion, that is, for them to acquire practical soft skills. The idea is to foster practical collaboration with companies with the aim of labour reconversion, implying that they jointly look for low benchmark entry methodologies to get potential workers acquainted with the specifics of a job in a particular labour market sector, even if they may hitherto have no experience therein. Third, a joint evaluation cycle is conducted in order to establish whether a trainee can consequently be employed on a regular basis.  These three steps for implementation adhere to the following methodological core principles MILMA:   * Employability: Participant enterprises will support those who are actively looking for work. They will use a ‘learning by doing’ method and will train them to help co-generate different services and products demanded by the market. * Innovation: An experimental learning model will be rolled out, based on so-called ‘Business Challenge Labs’, as proposed by the collaborating companies. * Co-creation: Companies are invited to participate at different stages and levels of the overall MILMA project, not least in the creation of general training content, and in terms of providing training and workshops. * Specialized training: This training matches with the required skills of the professional sector in collaboration with SMEs. * Experimental Teams of Employment and Integration ETEIs: Through a methodology inspired by *Lanzaderas de Empleo*, the most demanded market competences will be worked on. * Business Challenge Labs: MILMA proposes labour integration by collaborative work and entrepreneurship using an innovative methodology called ‘Business Challenge Labs’ (BC Labs). This initiative looks for active participation from enterprises so that any training would match with the real demands of the market. Companies help to define the theoretical and practical training modules, teach according to areas of their professional expertise, offer internships or jobs, and support new business initiatives. * Some of the BC Labs that were requested by companies include: Light Flooring Installation; Gardening Assistance; Design and Front-End Web Development; Urban creation and Recycling; Logistics and Storage; Health Institution Wardening; Restauration & Kitchen Assistance. * In terms of partner companies, an active role was sought out for sustainable and social economy companies, which hold the potential of employing more staff (Green Production, Urban Creation and Recycling, Communication & Production/Multimedia Development, Technical Integration & Installation of Devices, Digital Production, Provision of Elderly Care & Catering). Ultimately, the MILMA project expects that the BC Labs will strengthen social cohesion by collaboratively integrating migrants into the social and economic fabric of Fuenlabrada.   ***INNOVATION***   * From the outset of the MILMA project, the Fuenlabrada Town Hall took the lead in implementing the project directly. As such, they decided to train 15 full-time municipality employees, who were then involved in job searching and training activities for the targeted group. This innovative approach to ‘insource’ as many aspects of the project early on helped gain sustainable expertise for the near future, that is, when funding streams end. Today, they have built an adequate in-house capacity to deal with labour recoversion and social inclusion—an expertise they can thus also share with other municipalities in Spain and in other EU Member States. * Work directly with SMEs, asking their input from day one with regard to what sort of profiles are needed in the labour market and what is needed in order to train these profiles. Collaborating also with these participant companies for the ensuing on-site training, showcases the importance of adjusting to companies' market-based requests in promoting inclusive job creation. * A strong focus on small companies—which represents 95% of companies in Spain—because most large companies usually have their own social inclusion funds and projects. This was beneficial to the MILMA project because it allowed the Fuenlabrada City Hall to work more bottom-up and generate collaborative dynamics for the medium to long term.   ***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***   * More than 600 companies were initially prospected and 119 of them have collaborated with the project. * The establishment of a network of collaborative companies that co-design most of the BC Labs, its structure and contents. Moreover, they helped to define the access profile and provided non-labour practices as well as punctual seminars. The incorporation of social companies into the training activities of the BC Labs has allowed for the improvement of the personal and technical skills of the participants according to real labour market needs. * Four training editions with 28 training itineraries in 14 different market sectors were completed. Throughout the four training editions, more than 6,000 hours of theoretical and practical training and more than 2,000 hours of practical training in companies have been carried out. The close contact between locals and migrants during the BC Labs modules has improved the practical integration of migrants in their social context. * 508 people have been part of the MILMA Project training itineraries, 168 of which are of immigrant or refugee origin from 40 countries. * Based on follow-up survey research, 60% of the participants claim to have established new relationships of mutual support or friendship within the MILMA Project with people of different origins, thus positively increasing social cohesion in Fuenlabrada. * At least 35% of participants in the project were inserted into the labour market during the training modules, or within the three months following the training action. * At least 20 long-term unemployed inhabitants were inserted in the labour market during the training, or within the three months following the training action.   ***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***  Although MILMA Project has not yet finished and the evaluation process is underway, the Fuenlabrada City Hall will support its continuation until 2023. The lessons it has learned, the specific approach that it has developed (BC Labs), and the managerial expertise that it has gained are deemed to be conveyable to other municipalities in Spain and EU Member States.  ***RISKS***  As Fuenlabrada does not have many refugees and asylum seekers[[16]](#footnote-16) as such, initially the City Hall focused on second-generation youths. However, in finding that many of them were very focused on attaining tertiary education in the medium term, it was decided not to overly persuade them into practical job reconversion trainings. By contrast, the population segment that showed a high interest in the MILMA project on their own account were unemployed inhabitants in their 40s or 50s, with families, and a clear sense of purpose, that is, the urgent need for a stable income to sustain their households. Given their motivation and determination, the success rate in working with these profiles was high. Hence, taking on these people was also a flexibility that the City Hall attended to in order to cope with both the real demands of its inhabitants as well as that of the local labor market.  ***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***   * The personal and labour commitment of stakeholders and partners. * The involvement of other departments from the City Hall. * The capacity building process in the Fuenlabrada City Hall by means of ‘insourcing’ rather than outsourcing all key components of the MILMA project. This adds to the overall capacity for sustainability and replicability of similar projects in the near future when funding streams run out. * The collaboration with NGOs and social entities related to migration. * The commitment and involvement of companies who share the MILMA project’s objectives and the practical ethics underpinning it. * The project’s inherent flexibility and resilience. It would not be possible to implement this kind of project without these characteristics. The project had to be able to adapt to developments in the labour market, which is always changing, including through the severe social impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. |

**3.6 EN.AIP—EMBRACE**



Project Embrace (Project Officer & Client). Credits: Photo En.AIP. Piemonte

***WHO, WHERE, WHEN***

The EMBRACE project, or the ‘Enhancement of Migrants Abilities and Recognition of their Acquired Competences in Europe’, was led by En.AIP Piemonte[[17]](#footnote-17), a vocational training association in Turin, Italy. The EMBRACE project ran from September 2016 to August 2019 in the Piedmont region of Italy. EMBRACE aimed at improving access to the European labour market for immigrants who recently arrived from countries outside the EU. As such, its main target group were refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Partners included: MFR Ventavon, Acli E V, VIFIN, Pressure Line, Oxalis, CFIQ, and Tradigenia. The project was funded by the Erasmus+ Program (Key Action 2) of the European Commission.

***WHAT: CORE MISSION***

Led by En.AIP., EMBRACE aims at devising a transnational working methodology able to identify, document, and validate non-formal and informal skills and competences acquired by immigrants in their country of origin—or in another EU Member State. As such, it promotes a philosophy of *inclusive* skills recognition in reception work dealing with refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

***WHY: OBJECTIVES***

Oftentimes, immigrants may arrive in the EU without substantial documental evidence of their previous studies or professional experiences. Even in the occasion that they would possess them, they can often not be validated because in EU countries there hardly exist any instruments for the validation and certification of such previously acquired skills and competences, which thus hinders the labour market integration of such migrant groups. Moreover, the tools currently used for this purpose do not take into consideration personal histories, cultures, and professional experiences gained in productive systems different from the European one. To fill this gap EMBRACE has sought to create a transnational methodology for the validation of non-formal and informal competencies with the ambitious aim of constructing a common reference framework for future reception work dealing with the labour market integration of refugees.

***APPROACH***

When EMBRACE started, a lot of pilot research was done, enquiring with partners in Europe what sort of skills recognition tools and schemes existed at the time in other EU states. Given that there was not much, they realized that they would have to develop the groundwork themselves and come up with a working methodology in terms of modeling a potential skills identification, validation, and certification (IVC) tool.

EMBRACE focuses on the Italian food and agribusiness sector (production, transformation, distribution) in terms of labor market sector for potential employment, partly because this is often the main workforce needed in Italy.

Hence, following the completion of pilot research, a ‘Catalogue of Professional Needs’ in the agri-food sector was compiled, which functioned as a list of all the professional profiles that En.AIP identified as being the most frequently employed in this economic sector. They researched the professional needs mostly according to each partner country’s agri-food sector, and in parallel we studied an impressive number of CVs of unemployed migrants seeking for job search support in our services. By crossing these pieces of information, they came up with a synthesis of the main work profiles and core of professional skills, which would altogether hold a high probability of employment in the labour market.

From the start, En.AIP’s EMBRACE project took on a participatory approach to skills evaluation. Through EMBRACE, En.AIP then developed an implementation model for labour inclusion with the following employment services on offer:

* A first meeting to welcome a user with the aim of jointly compiling a Personal Dossier. Here the operator goes uses the pre-screening interview tool, a list of suggested questions that cover five areas of interest, and which may be covered depending on the profile of the participant: (1): Motivation to take part in the IVC process; (2): Academic achievements and vocational training experiences; (3): Professional experiences; (4): Personal story and socio-economic information; (5): Other fields of activity. From this pre-screening moment onward, the user has two weeks of times to gather various pieces of evidence supporting his professional skills (work contracts, pay slips, photos, videos, etc.).
* A second meeting after two weeks for the validation of each single piece of evidence and for assigning a score to each evidence gathered. By studying the professional and academic narrative of the user, the operator has a first critical indication about how much a user’s prior professional experience fits with a professional profile enlisted in the Catalogue of Professional Needs.
* If there are enough formal evidences, the operator sends the user to the final step of the consultation process, a practical examination with a topic practitioner/professional expert (in the field). On the contrary, if there is not enough evidence at hand, the user will receive an offer for professional or vocational training guidance to foster and empower his/her skills with the aim of gaining more practical experience and evidences to fill the Dossier.
* Then follows a practical examination—immediately or following additional vocational training—that could lead to two different outcomes: a ‘Full Professional Profile Certificate’, released when the user shows complete mastery of each core skill for the specific professional profile; or a ‘Professional Skills Certificate’ when a user shows to perform only some of the skills of a specific profile.
* Aid those with certification enter the labor market by means of contacting stakeholders in the agri-food sector.

It is important to mention here that the skill certification documents produced by En.AIP through the EMBRACE project did not hold legal value. However, En.AIP’s EMBRACE team actively consulted with the local authorities of the Piedmont region to showcase their work, urging for a minimal transfer of practices. The local Piedmont authorities were impressed with their work and given that their targets were similar they accepted to revise some of their own practices based on EMBRACE’s methodology. For instance, when someone already held five years of practical experience in their country of origin —and this was certified through the alternative EMBRACE format of processing skills recognition\_ then that person would hitherto receive a deduction on the number of hours spent in vocational training in that field in Italy. As such, a degree of flexibility was attained, and the whole bureaucratic process became somewhat lighter and shorter for a group that doesn’t have much time or resources to spare in the first place.

***INNOVATION***

When it comes to labour market integration, En.AIP started from the realization that the Italian bureaucracy is no easy matter for the target group. In this respect, En.AIP realized that refugees are often not properly informed during the welcoming phase—they may have the impression that they need to ‘wait’ and remain stuck. They therefore decided on a more innovative approach, centering around flexibility in terms of skills recognition, including also non-formal and informal skills into the picture, all for the purpose of rendering more efficient and qualitative the economic incorporation of the target group. As such, they devised their own step-wise methodology for this, not fixating *only* on formal and documented skill sets, while equally incentivizing additional vocational training (skills development) on the basis of the prior skills that were able to be identified and matched with potential vacancies. En.AIP’s hands-on approach, thus catered for an early and speedy skills identification, followed by a tailored offer for additional vocational training.

***ACHIEVEMENTS & SOCIAL IMPACT***

The EMBRACE project worked towards generating three main outputs:

1. Develop a catalogue of professional profiles and competences needed in the EU and in the (Italian) agri-food sector.
2. Methodological guidelines to identify, validate, and certify (IVC) competences of citizens coming from third countries, tested with 33 migrants and on 36 case studies within the agri-food sector in Italy, but transferable to other contexts.
3. Establish a toolkit for counselors and certification operators in order to provide them with a ‘step by step’ guide to support immigrants in their search for a new or better job, through the identification and validation of their non-formal and informal competences and skills.

In addition, two multiplier events were carried out:

* E1: Seminar for the diffusion of the Catalogue on the needs, profiles and professional competencies in the food and agribusiness. Event Title: ‘The professional profiles in the food and agribusiness: an opportunity for integration for migrants.’
* E2: Final conference in Turin for the public presentation of the project outputs. Event Title: ‘Methodologies and tools for the integration of migrants: the value of non-formal and informal competencies.’

Furthermore, given the aforementioned liaison between En.AIP and the local Piedmont authorities—with the latter taking some inspiration from the former’s EMBRACE methodology in terms of a more flexible approach to skills recognition (and the deduction of hours for additional vocational training needed in Italian training cycles prior to employment)—concrete outcomes and lasting social impacts were made by En.AIP’s EMBRACE project.

***SUSTAINABILITY & SCALABILITY***

The whole methodology developed by EMBRACE, and each single tool created and tested was also transferred to an online platform, providing users and operators the opportunity of carrying out the identification and validation process autonomously and at a distance.

The methodology developed in the EMBRACE project is the result of a comparison between country partner’s best practices about recognition/evaluation/assessment and certification of professional skills. This created shared and common repertoire of expertise, which could one day be proposed as a systemic practice to be implemented in the first welcoming phase of particular migrant groups coming from extra EU countries. Hence, to a certain extent, EMBRACE’s methodological approach is already transnationally replicable.

The EMBRACE project has had an impact on the Piedmont local authorities’ approach *already*—sensitizing them to be more flexible and hands-on in terms of skills recognition practices—thus generating a more sustainable set of practices in terms of (speeding up) migrant and refugee economic integration in this Italian region.

***RISKS***

It was perceived that at times it could be difficult to motivate members of the target group into actively participating in an alternative evaluation and training process—i.c. compiling a Personal Dossier, thereby aggregating informal evidences of their school achievements and professional experiences. Yet this remained crucial for the EMBRACE working methodology. Some refugees—for instance, those fleeing from acute violence and insecurity—may be more focused on attaining a recognized status than on the labour-centric approach develop through EMBRACE.

The replicability may be limited in terms of sensitizing local authorities to be more flexible regarding skills recognition, mainly because this remains co-dependent on the interaction between embedded organization and local authorities, as well as on the funding streams of each (partner) NGO.

When it comes to sensitizing potential employers, it needs to be mentioned that agricultural partners in Piedmont were—as expected—focused primarily on maintaining their economic activity and targets. While it was always possible to schedule meetings between them and potential workers, the latter need to have a certain degree of attestation, at least in terms of residency permits. That is why the local authorities need to be sensitized and involved at some stage too. Ultimately, employers—however interested in our services and recruitment efforts—also held an interest in a more smooth-running integration and documentation process of labour migrants. This means that bottom-up FP would also need to be adopted and mainstreamed by public institutions if the aim is large-scale impact in terms of creating an effective and fair labour market integration for migrant workers.

***WHAT MAKES IT WORK***

Key facilitators in terms of perceived success were:

* The inclusive, flexible and innovative philosophy about migrant skills identification and recognition.
* The face-to-face approach with individual users of the target group, taking the time to explain potential benefits, and mentoring uses through a skills recognition and skills development process.
* The very close cooperation between En.AIP and the Italian and European networks they built with NGOs and associations. This is certainly aided to generate key pilot projects insights early on, as well as during the ensuing dissemination phase of the project’s tool development to beneficiaries and potential stakeholders.

1. **CONCLUSIVE REMARKS**

This report has detailed at length the whereabouts of six selected ‘functioning practices’ (FPs) within the auspices of the ‘Fostering Opportunities of Refugee Workers’ (FORWORK) project, funded by the European Commission and coordinated by the Italian National Agency for Active Employment Policies (ANPAL) in collaboration with eight partner institutions. Under the auspices of this project, the International Training Center of the International Labour Organizations (ITCILO) in Turin, Italy, committed to identify functioning practices of labour market integration for refugees and asylum seekers from other EU countries, so as to promote the exchange of knowledge between the organizations behind those FPs and the FORWORK project.

The six FPs were selected on the basis of a purposive mapping and evaluation process that was conducted, one that first aggregated a long list of relevant FPs into a database, and then proceeded to contact those 10 organizations with the highest score in terms of four key indicators (effectiveness, innovation, sustainability, and scalability). The six organizations (and their FPs projects) who responded to ITCILO’s outreach (for reporting) were then reviewed in detail. In total, these FPs cover five EU Member States: En.AIP, a vocational training association in Turin, Italy, which conducted the EMBRACE project; the Fuenlabrada City Hall in Spain, which coordinated the MILMA project; the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), based in Brussels, Belgium, which coordinated the Labour-INT project across Europe; the Refugee Talent Hub (RTH), a (largely) private sector initiative in Amsterdam, the Netherlands; the APS Cambalache NGO in Italy, which runs the Bee My Job project in the Piedmont region; and the Magdas Hotel, a social business in Vienna, Austria. The above overview (section 3) gives a detailed account of the work of each of these organizations’ FP.

The interviewed coordinators of these organizations all conveyed interesting and original insights into their long-term engagement in the field of migrant labour market integration. All of them have been able to devise local strategies to enhance the labour market inclusion of vulnerable migrant groups, albeit in place-specific ways and often on a small-scale. They all had to deal with various challenges and risks, but equally had an impact on their localities and target groups, often sensitizing local authorities about their working methods as well as advocating to the larger citizen-public about the productive impact made by refugees and asylum seekers in the local economy. Given the nature of their qualitative work, the societal impact of these FPs is ongoing, insofar that it is deemed to materialize in the medium to long-term (rather than through ad hoc, quantitative deliverables). Today, debates about the ‘integration’ of ‘refugees’ in Europe remain contentious and often highly politicized. The practical rationale behind this background research, however, was that by means of reporting on the very functional work that is being done on the ground and across the EU, one is able to distinguish noteworthy practices that could be an inspiration to others working in the field of migrant and refugee inclusion, enabling interested parties to emulate or scale them.

Yet it needs to be pointed out that each of the six organizations has been working in its specific social, cultural and economic context. Hence, although most of their work has at least one sustainable component to it—and most of the projects continue to be in operation today—it remains to be seen how scalable certain practices and bodies of know-how would be on the EU level. That said, based on interviews with these six organizations, as well as desk research, four general communalities between all of the projects were identified. First of all, what often made these projects work, and therefore ‘functioning practices’, was that the organizations behind them took firm control as principal initiators from day one. The dimension of ownership is of course more obvious for private sector initiatives or social businesses (e.g., RTH or Magdas Hotel), but for others in the public sector, or NGOs, it meant, for instance, less outsourcing, and more in-house capacity and infrastructure building. This was done as a way to generate more a sustainable dimension for future replicability in the occasion that streams of (top-down) public funding would be cut. Secondly, they are all characterized by a hands-on approach, always aiming for practical outcomes, and by a format of learning-by-doing. This implies that the principal rationale of these organizations was always: How can we get refugees incorporated into the labour market in a given context as smart, as diligent, and as practical as possible? The inherent flexibility in terms of their working methodologies, as well as their overall tendency to focus on delivering very practical solutions for the target group—already in a more vulnerable social condition, often lacking time and resources—thus also allowed for making quick organizational adjustments on the ground. To this end, before structural work was done, a lot of smaller pilot projects were launched and tested, leading to various practical adjustments, not least in taking a more tailor-made and small-scale approach. A third key aspect was the aim of being result-oriented and the keen desire to have social impact. The latter was a clear ethical commitment of each of the organizations involved. That said, they were also very self-aware in terms of their capacities, going by the credo: ‘This is what we do, this is what we do well, so here—and mostly here—we could make a change’. Taking on this realistic approach meant indeed that they tried to stick mainly to their particular niche and own expertise—of course, in collaboration with others, who held different expertise. As a result of their focus in terms of implementation, they were able to generate concrete impacts. Last but not least, their teams consisted of highly committed people, that is, staff who were often involved and grounded in the communities they worked with, and therefore equally holding a stake in the (local) societies they work in.

The FORWORK project and ITCILO experienced a very active participation and involvement of all its network partners, not least ANPAL and the Agenzia Piemonte Lavoro. In conclusion of the FORWORK collaboration, two closely-related Online Share Fair Events were organized and led by ITCILO, namely on September 8 and September 28, 2021, under the (single) conference title of ‘Knowledge-Sharing Event on Pathways for the Labour Market Integration of Refugees and Asylum Seekers’. During the first conference event, the audience had a chance to learn about the implementation process of six selected functioning practices promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Europe. This event generated inspiring exchanges and thus proved to be engaging and productive. During the second Online Share Fair Event, the focus lay on the overall support measures that were implemented under the framework of the Fostering Opportunities of Refugee Workers (FORWORK) project. On this occasion, the inputs came largely from the project’s partners rather ITCILO only. The guest speakers were able to share their experiences, challenges, and lessons learned in working within five different types of support measures that each promote the socio-economic inclusion of refugees. During these two events, many institutional stakeholders were also invited (e.g., UNHCR, EC Commission DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, Universita Bocconi, Inforcoop Ecipa Piemonte) as well as a variety of field practitioners, both from within as well as outside of Europe. These conference events served as way to disseminate, scale, and exchange the know-how that was accumulated during the FORWORK project, to nurture small-scale cooperation into the future, and to foster exchange between various stakeholders interested in developing pathways and interventions for the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

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**ANNEXES**

**ANNEX 1—LIST OF INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Selected Practice** | **Leading Organization** | **Country** | **Contact Person** | **Title** | **Interview Date** |
| LABOUR INT2 | ETUC | BE | Mercedes Miletti | Project Officer | 19.08.2021 |
| Magdas Hotel | Caritas Services GmbH | AUS | Gabriela Sonnleitner | General Manager/CEO | 02.09.2021 |
| Refugee Talent Hub | Refugee Talent Hub | NL | Eva Huson | Project Manager | 19.08.2021 |
| Project EMBRACE | EN.AIP | IT | Davide Marcato | Project Manager | 03.08.2021 |
| MILMA Project | Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada | ES | Juan Carlos Navas | Director for City Projects | 09.08.2021 |
| Bee My Job | APS Cambalache | IT | Mara Alacqua | President | 20.08.2021 |

**ANNEX 2—FUNCTIONING PRACTICE INFO TEMPLATE**



The purpose of this template is to conduct an initial systematization of functioning practices in the field of socio-economic integration and inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in EU countries and therefore highlight their degree of effectiveness, innovation, sustainability and replicability. By doing this, we aim at promoting their visibility and to inspire other actions to increase their chances of success.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Overall Identification** | |
| **Title of the Functioning Practice** | *Please include the name in full and its Acronyms, if applicable* |
| **Website** | *Website home page* |
| **Contact Person** | *Name*  *E-mail address*  *Telephone* |
| **Start year of implementation** | *Please enter the starting dat.* |
| **End year of implementation** | *Please enter the ending date, if applicable* |
| **Countries involved** | *In which country does the practice take place?* |
| **Leading organization** | *Please enter the name of the leading organization* |
| **Other organizations** | *Please enter the name of other partners* |
| **Targeted beneficiaries** | *Please indicate as appropriate: Asylum-seekers/Refugees/Migrants* |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Categorization of the practice** | | |
| **Line of Action**  *Please select as many as applicable* | Skills Development | language courses  access to vocational education and training  specific professional skills development  access to traineeships, apprenticeships and internships  promotion of entrepreneurship  mentoring  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Job Intermediation | labour counselling and professional orientation  access to labour market information, job matching and placement services  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Recognition of skills and qualifications | validation and certification of skills (including formal and non-formal qualifications and skills)  recognition of qualifications  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Incentives for economic integration | support for self-employment and entrepreneurship among refugees and asylum seekers  incentives for employment of recognized refugees or asylum seekers  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements of the functioning practice** | |
| **Context and challenges** | *What is the starting situation and the context of the action?* |
| **Objectives and purposes of the practice** | *What does the initiative aim to achieve in response to which challenge? Please express your objectives in quantitative and qualitative terms.* |
| **Main activities/actions implemented by the practice** | *Which actions does the practice involve?* |
| **Outputs and outcomes of the practice** | *Quantitative and qualitative results in relation to the objectives. What are the users/target group’s views of the activity?* |
| **Effectiveness of Methodological Approach** | *What methodology(ies) has(have) been used to address the challenge that led to a successful outcome and overall achievements?*  *Has(have) the methodology(ies) proven to be successful, with demonstrable results?*  *How do the stakeholders and beneficiaries perceive the overall success of the practice?*  *What was the process and how was it participatory and peer-to-peer?* |
| **Key challenges** | *What are/were the main challenges during implementation? What were the risks involved in the implementation from a conceptual point of view?* |
| **Key conditions for success** | *What are key conditions for success in your view? What elements (internal, external) have contributed for a successful implementation of the project?* |
| **Source of funding and Resources used** | *What source of funding did the practice benefit from? Be as specific as possible.*  *What resources were used? Which of these resources were crucial?* |
| **Method and type of assessment** | *Was there any internal/external assessment? If yes, was it qualitative/quantitative assessment?* |
| **Participatory approach** | *How were beneficiaries involved in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the initiative?* |
| **Interview with stakeholders and beneficiaries** | *Please provide the name and contact of at least 3 people involved in the project among partners and beneficiaries.* |
| **Resources** | *Please list any additional resources developed under the actions of the initiative (training manuals, guidelines, technical fact sheets, posters, pictures, video, audio documents, etc)* |

**ANNEX 3 – INTERVIEW GUIDE**



**STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION**

Name:

Contact:

Functioning Practice:

**PROPOSED QUESTIONS[[18]](#footnote-18)**

Introduction:

How did you get to be involved with the functioning practice in case?

Did you have any specific roles? If yes, what were they?

Would you be involved again if you had a chance? If yes, what would you do different?

Effectiveness:

What were the main outcomes and achievements of the action?

How do you perceive the overall success of the practice?

Innovation:

In what way has the action contributed to advancing economic integration and inclusion of refugees in EU?

What were the innovative elements that make it interesting for other country contexts?

What is special about the practice that makes it of potential interest to others?

Sustainability:

Is the practice and/or its benefits likely to continue in some way, and to continue being effective, over the medium to long term?

Are the any strategies already in place or developed?

Scaling-up/replicability:

Is this a practice that can be adapted in similar situations or settings?

Have they proven to be successful, with demonstrable results? Although the practice is localized, does it have characteristics that are transferable to other settings or situations? What are those characteristics?

What are the possibilities of replicating it to other contexts?

What are the conditions that should be met to ensure its replicability?

Can it potentially be scaled up and applied more widely (nationally, regionally or internationally)?

1. Extract from ITCILO’s FORWORK’s document, titled ‘Concept\_Note-V9.pdf’ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A single Share Fair event in Turin was initially foreseen under the ITCILO component of the FORWORK. With the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing mobility restrictions, the Share Fair event was transformed into an on-line activity, taking place in September 2021 and only in part at the ITC premises in Turin (see details below). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Communities of Practices (CoPs) are groups of people who share a specific area of work, interest or passion, in a knowledge domain. CoPs share knowledge, learn from each other and interact regularly with peers in an enabling networked environment. Organizations use CoPs to share knowledge based on specific themes and areas, to break down organizational silos and stimulate interdisciplinary teamwork. Communities of practice are driven by the willing participation of their members (the principle of self-selection). For more information, see also: https://blog.itcilo.org/the-compass/methodologies/communities-of-practice/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See, for instance: Schinkel, W. 2017. *Imagined Societies: A Critique of Immigrant Integration in Western Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Crul, M., E. Keskiner, and F. Lelie. 2017. ‘The Upcoming New Elite Among Children of Immigrants: A Cross-Country and Cross- Sector Comparison.’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40, no. 2: 209–229; Dahinden, J. 2016. ‘A Plea For the “De-migranticization” of Research on Migration and Integration.’ *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 39, no. 13: 2207–2225; [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. OECD (2016), *Making Integration Work: Refugees and Others in Need of Protection*, OECD Publishing, Paris, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bendixsen, S. and Guchteniere, P. 2003. ‘Best Practices in Immigration Services Planning.’ *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management*, 22 no. 4: 677—682. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. For the sake of time valorization, all of the top 10 practices were contacted based on the assumption that usually one cannot expect a 100% for a variety of reasons. Six organizations ended up responding in time and were thus reviewed in detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For more information: https://www.cambalache.it/ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. See: https://globalcompactrefugees.org/article/bee-my-job [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. For more information, see: https://www.magdas-hotel.at/en/. See also: https://vimeo.com/202715972 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Some participants with prior experience can shorten their training cycles, while others can extend it for e.g. a year, in the occasion that they are faced with particular difficulties (due to their vulnerable background as refugees). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The Magdas Hotel is currently in the process of moving to a new unit, which is located on a new premise in Vienna. The renovation of the new site is still ongoing. Magas is planning to stay in operation as a social business in Vienna as long as there is a need for promoting professional opportunities and social inclusion for refugees in Austria. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For more information, see: https://www.etuc.org/en [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. For more information: https://refugeetalenthub.com/ [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. For more information, see: https://www.milma-fuenlabrada.es/ [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. At least 30% of participants held this background. Others, for instance, had an immigrant background from Latin America, North Africa, or Romania. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. For more information: https://www.embraceproject.eu/  
     [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. These guiding questions are to be adjusted and expanded considerably during each single interview, based on the role of the stakeholder in the project as well as the specific context of each FP. The interview is semi-structured, implying that the interviewer has the freedom to digress during the interview on topics and questions of particular interest and added value to the background research report. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)