

Annual General Conference 2023, 15 June, Torino

Europe and Displacement: What works?

Polo del '900

Workshop 5: Sala Didattica, 14h30 – 16h30

Title: Right to Work: Promoting the Inclusion of Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Lead organisation(s): ECRE and Mosaico

Objectives:

The workshop aims at fostering an exchange of views among different stakeholders on the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees through rights, with the following objectives

- To share good practices, initiatives, and projects in which different stakeholders collaborate together to overcome the barriers faced by asylum seekers and refugees to access labour market
- To assess the impact of EU initiatives, including EU funding, in the area of the right to work and inclusion through access to the labour market
- To identify policy recommendations directed at policymakers from the local level to the EU level

Opening remarks: Yagoub Kibeida, Executive Director Mosaico and Board Member ECRE

Moderator: Fatimazhra Belhirsch, Chief Executive Officer, UAF, the Netherlands

Speakers:

- Fulvia Mantino, Foreigners and Ethnic Minorities Service, Municipality of Torino
- Oumarou Lengglengue, Sotto il baobab, Italy
- Teresa De Gasperis, Project Manager, ACCEM, Spain

Closing remarks: Francesca Morra, Frantz Fanon Association

Structure/method:

It is planned as a roundtable discussion including presentations of each speaker and an open discussion between speakers and participants to which all participants are welcome to contribute.

Description:

In the EU, for refugees, the right to work is recognised immediately after they receive protection status, and asylum seekers have access to the labour market at the latest within nine months after their application. The right to work of refugees and asylum seekers has been repeatedly recognized in international agreements. Nonetheless, many refugees and asylum seekers today face significant legal and practical barriers to full economic inclusion in the labour markets of their host countries.

Eurostat data [shows](#) that the employment rate for EU citizens of working age in 2021 was 74%, while it was only 59.1% for non-EU citizens. The gap widens even more for refugees and asylum seekers, who are one of the most vulnerable groups in the job market. For refugees it often takes up to 20 years to reach the same employment rate as native-born citizens. There are also significant differences for refugees as compared to other third country nationals migrating to the EU, which is sometimes termed the “refugee gap”. Asylum-seekers face varying levels of job market access across the EU, depending on how each Member State transposes the Reception Conditions Directive into its legal framework.

Many challenges hinder job market integration of refugees and asylum-seekers, such as lack of language and vocational courses, lengthy procedures for granting legal status or a work permit, issues with recognition of qualifications, challenges with accessing housing and education, and inadequate child care services, among others. Asylum policy can have a significant impact, particularly when coercive, restrictive or punitive measures are used, such as dispersal mechanisms which may distribute people to parts of the country where job prospects are limited; the use of detention or isolated accommodation facilities which may serve to limit contact with communities and networks; precarity of residence statuses; and restrictions on the freedom of movement. Early intervention is vital to eliminate challenges and increase opportunities for refugees and asylum-seekers to enter the job market and have a sustainable and dignified life.

Various stakeholders, from the public to the private sector, from civil society organisations – including refugee-led organisations – to trade unions and international organisations have established good practices on access to employment for refugees and asylum seekers. This includes initiatives to help protection seekers and beneficiaries prepare for and join the labour market, by providing tailored information, recognizing qualifications and skills, offering training and language courses, and removing practical barriers to work. The European Union also plays a key role in providing funding opportunities to support these initiatives, in particular under the European Social Fund + and the Asylum Migration Integration Fund. On the other hand, ongoing lack of compliance with national and international standards in asylum matters and pending reforms to EU asylum law may undermine the right to work.

This workshop aims to share ideas and good practices among stakeholders and address specific and common challenges facing refugees and asylum-seekers in various European countries. The workshop will also identify policy recommendations to address policymakers to ensure inclusion through the right to work.