

**Committee:** ECOFIN

**Topic:** The question of measures to create job opportunities for refugees

**Chair:** Leah Rossiter

**School:** St. Andrew's College

---

## Summary

One percent of the global population is now displaced – including 26.4 million refugees, 48 million internally displaced persons and 4.1 million asylum seekers, 35 million of which are children. 68% of all refugees originate from just five countries – Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. 39% of all refugees are hosted in five countries – Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Uganda, and Germany.

The vast majority of refugees live in low- and middle-income countries where they are often faced with legal and practical barriers to entering the formal labour market. These barriers not only affect refugees' self-reliance and well-being, but they also create a wide range of costs and forgone benefits, including lower economic productivity for the host country and forgone tax revenues. Given the protracted nature of the refugee crisis, the need to enhance refugees' socio-economic wellbeing has been a focus of recent years. 'Self-reliance' (defined by UNHCR as the ability of refugees to actively participate in the social and economic life of host countries) is one of just four key objectives of the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees.

The EU Common Basic Principles of Immigrant Integration state that "employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible". Participation in the labour market is seen as the most important factor favouring long term integration into society. Labour market integration is also central to the fiscal contributions that refugees make to the host country. Labour market integration differs significantly between countries. Evidence from countries with longstanding experience in hosting refugees, such as Norway, suggests that most refugees enter into employment faster when labour market conditions are good and strong support policies for labour market integration are in place.

While a number of actions have been carried out in order to aid labour market integration for refugees there are still a large number of refugees unable to find job opportunities. Refugees represent one of the most vulnerable groups of migrants in the labour market. Their employment rate is 56%. In addition to this, one in five economically active refugees is unemployed, one in eight is unemployed for 12 months or longer, and about one in fourteen is unemployed for 2 years or longer.

## Definition of Key Terms

**Refugee** – a person who has fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and has crossed an international border to find safety in another country.

**Refugee crisis** – refers to any mass movement of refugees, internally displaced persons, or any forcibly displaced persons.

**Refugee Camp** – temporary facilities built to provide immediate protection and assistance to people forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution, or violence.

**Internally Displaced People (IDPs)** – someone who is forced to leave their home but who remains within their country's borders.

**Asylum** – the protection granted by a state to someone who has left their home country as a political refugee.

**Asylum seeker** – a person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another country.

**Stateless** - people who are not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law.

**Refoulement** – the forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution.

## Background Information

### Rights of refugees

As stated in the 1951 Convention, refugees have a right to non-refoulement, right to family life, right to freedom of movement, right of liberty and security of the person, and other rights. The basic principle of refugee law, non-refoulement, refers to the obligation of States not to refoul, or return, a refugee to “the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”. The right of liberty and security of the person plays an important role in how refugees are treated in their host country. According to the right of family life, where an individual is granted asylum, their dependent relatives can be granted protection status. However, should that individual's refugee status be terminated, the status of dependent relatives will also be terminated. The 1951 Convention also protects other rights of refugees, such as the rights to education, employment, access to justice, and other fundamental freedoms and privileges.

### Barriers to employment for refugees

There are a number of barriers to employment for refugees. Some of these include:

- i) Language – lack of English language skills is one of the most significant obstacles to obtaining employment. Those with poor language skills are likely to have access to a much smaller range of employment and training opportunities.
- ii) Gaps on CV – significant gaps on the CV due to prolonged asylum process during which the majority of refugees are unable to work can greatly impact upon refugees' ability to participate in the labour market.
- iii) Social stigmas – racism and negative stereotyping can have a significant impact upon refugees' ability to obtain job opportunities. Perceptions of employer discrimination are evident among ethnic minorities generally and among refugees. In a study carried out by the Policy Studies Institute it was reported that a fifth of those interviewed said they had been refused a job on the grounds of their race or religion. Cross-cultural misunderstandings can also contribute to barriers to employment.

### Refugee status determination process

There are a number of States who are either not a party to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Optional Protocol or who do not have laws or policies in place to address asylum claims. These states include a number of countries with significant refugee populations such as Egypt, Jordan, India, Malaysia, Lebanon, and Pakistan.

Refugee status determination by the UNHCR is similar to asylum adjudications conducted by States. After registering with the local UNHCR office, asylum seekers meet with an eligibility Officer who examines their application and supporting documentation. All asylum seekers have the right to an individual in-person interview, and they may be accompanied by a legal representative. All applicants are informed in writing of the Eligibility Officer's decision. If the eligibility officer has decided not to award refugee status, the applicant is entitled to an explanation of the negative determination and are entitled to an appeal. All individuals and derivative relatives granted refugee status are issued a UNHCR Refugee Certificate which sets out that the holder is a refugee and therefore is entitled to protection, including protection from refoulement. However, unfortunately, in practice issuance of a Refugee Certificate does not always guarantee the individual's ability to work or protect them from being detained in their host country.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

- **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** – UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people.
- **Syria** – Altogether, more than two-thirds of all refugees worldwide come from just five countries, with Syrian refugees accounting for almost one-third of the world's refugee population. About 6.8 million Syrians are refugees and asylum-seekers, and another 6.7 million people are displaced within Syria, meaning 13.5 million Syrians in total are forcibly displaced, more than half of the country's population.
- **Turkey** – Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees, with nearly 3.6 million Syrian refugees and 4 million refugees in total.
- **Germany** – 39% of all refugees are hosted in just five countries. Germany is one of the top 5 host countries of refugees. As of the end of 2020, Germany hosts 1.2 million refugees.
- **Colombia** – Colombia is one of the top 5 refugee host countries, hosting 1.7 million people as of the end of 2020.
- **Pakistan** – Pakistan is one of the top 5 refugee host countries, hosting 1.4 million people as of the end of 2020.
- **Uganda** – Uganda is the largest host country in Africa and is one of the top 5 host countries in the world, hosting a total of 1.4 million people as of the end of 2020.
- **Afghanistan** – Following the recent return to power of the Taliban there have been rising numbers of refugees fleeing the country. Secretary-general of the United Nations has urged countries “to be willing to receive Afghan refugees and refrain from deportations”.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description
14 December 1950	– The UNHCR is created
15 March 2011	– Syrian civil war begins
11 May 2015	– The European Commission proposes quotas for the relocation of refugees between EU member states
August 2015	– German Chancellor Angela Merkel announces an open borders policy towards refugees coming into Europe
11-12 November 2015	– Valletta Summit on Migration
26 January 2016	– The Danish parliament passes a law allowing state entities to seize valuable in possession of migrants to finance their upkeep
March 2016	– The Balkan route through Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary is officially closed
March 2016	– EU-Turkey deal is signed
4 May 2016	– The EU proposes a €250,000 fine for each refugee not accepted under the quotas set by the European Commission.
19 September 2016	– The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly
17 December 2018	– The United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact for Refugees.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- **Global Compact for Refugees 2018** – On 17 December 2018, the United Nations General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact for Refugees. The Global Compact for Refugees is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognizing that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation. Its four key objectives are to: Ease the pressures on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, expand access to third-country solutions, support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.
- **The 1951 Refugee Convention** – The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the key legal documents that form the basis of the UNHCR's work. It is a United Nations multilateral treaty that defines who a refugee is and sets out the rights of individuals who are granted asylum and the responsibilities of nations that grant asylum.
- **New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants** – The New York Declaration reaffirms the importance of the international refugee regime and contains a wide range of commitments by Member States to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect refugees and migrants. It was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2016.
- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** – Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights grants the right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution.
- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families** – The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families is a United Nations multilateral treaty governing the protection of migrant workers and families.
- **Valletta Summit on Migration (11-12 November 2015)** – The Valletta summit on migration brought together European and African Heads of State and Government in an effort to strengthen cooperation and address the current challenges but also the opportunities of migration.

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

- **Housing** – Ensuring that people have access to a place to live is essential to ensure that children, women, men, older persons and youth alike can live in security, safety, and dignity. Housing plays a major role in the integration process as housing location, accessibility, and habitability have a direct impact on the ability of inhabitants to seek employment. The provision of adequate and affordable housing is the primary means through which an integrative process can be supported, alongside opportunities to access employment as well as education. Housing for refugees and asylum seekers is tackled differently from state to state. For example, in Europe housing for refugees is often covered by charities. In Canada, the government usually rents apartments located in residential areas for individuals capable of integration.
- **UN Treaties and Events** – As previously mentioned there are a number of UN treaties and events with regards to protecting the rights of and providing job opportunities for refugees such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Global Compact for Refugees 2018, the 1951 Refugee Convention, and more.
- **Education** – A number of countries have taken steps to provide a better educational system for refugees in order to aid their integration into society. For example, the Irish Refugee Council manages a small grant scheme which provides financial assistance to people in the protection process to access further education. The European Commission has offered 100,000 refugees and newly arrived migrants access to Online Linguistic Support with the aim of helping individuals integrate into their host society by providing them with the opportunity to learn the local language. As well as this, a number of universities give scholarships and tuition waivers to refugee students, encourage student groups to welcome and support refugee students through language training and support for cultural integration, and create and develop connected learning programmes.

## Possible Solutions

- Training programmes should be provided to refugees to provide them with the skills needed for job opportunities as well as provide them with the opportunity to learn the local language where necessary. Scholarships should be made available for refugees wishing to attend universities. Education should also be provided to employers to eliminate racism and negative stereotyping. In addition to this, work placements, internships, mentoring programmes, and apprenticeships can all greatly improve refugees' opportunities for employment.
- Companies should be incentivised to hire refugees whether it is through quotas, subsidies, tax cuts, or other methods.
- Countries should implement appropriate legislation regarding providing job opportunities for refugees and should also sign and ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.
- Minimising the time necessary for the process is crucial. Long-term unemployment often deters prospective employers. In Switzerland, an additional year of waiting for a decision on the asylum claim reduced refugees' likelihood of employment 16-23%. A faster asylum process would also reduce government costs.
- Refugees should be provided with housing located in areas where there is a high number of job opportunities. When refugees are located in urban areas, where economic activity and multinational corporations cluster, there is a greater likelihood of being in close proximity to potential employers.

## Bibliography

'Refugees', UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugees.html>

'Barriers to Employment', Breaking Barriers, <https://breaking-barriers.co.uk/the-cause/refugee-employment-crisis/>

'The Global Compact on Refugees', UNHCR, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html>

'Refugees' Right to Work: Progress and Remaining Challenges', Centre for Global Development, 10 July 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/colombia/refugees-right-work-progress-and-remaining-challenges>

'10 Facts About Refugees', UNHCR, 16 August 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/28427-10-facts-about-refugees.html>

'Syrian refugee crisis: Facts, FAQs, and how to help', Kathryn Reid, 13 July 2021, <https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/syrian-refugee-crisis-facts>

'Valletta Summit on migration, 11-12 November', European Council, 27 May 2019, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/international-summit/2015/11/11-12/>

'Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and Good Practices', Regina Konle-Seidl & Georg Bolits, March 2016, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)578956\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf)

'Housing for Migrants and Refugees in the UNECE Region Challenges and Practices', United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2011, [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Housing%20for%20Migrants\\_compressed\\_0.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Housing%20for%20Migrants_compressed_0.pdf)

'Asylum & the Rights of Refugees', International Justice Resource Centre, <https://ijrcenter.org/refugee-law/>

'Employment and Education', UNHCR, <https://help.unhcr.org/ireland/living-in-ireland/employment-and-education/>

'Higher education for migrants and refugees', European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/higher-education-for-migrants-and-refugees\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/higher-education-for-migrants-and-refugees_en)

'Universities providing scholarships to refugees call on others to do the same' UNHCR, 26 November 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/protection/conferences/5ddcdf3c7/universities-providing-scholarships-refugees-call-others.html>

'Refugees, opportunities and barriers in training and employment' Alice Bloch, 2002,

[https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/40887773/Bloch\\_DWP\\_2002\\_Refugee\\_Employment\\_-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1629205600&Signature=FITyOyyvcP4ZO4OD8OyJvc~N0xgcXg6mZepm3mEjAEwmNISPkGiqY0Fk3b7IOQ7~vXP4QL3U28aGcA1LJAxvzrfnCK~yqB1N7MsMKgBwRShfOaEXPNN8U1ni-dCsLIMIS9wcN6k-jF32ISDHvrOfzp-oij2wP78pycK8e7m-sO59PtPM0hvseedKjANB0v9r~MZ-ogurCWXVfLNeKQY8Ej7kT1jnwYYoyErU9qRy08zT~y6Yegc7eFG6LILVybckVDh0zdGJyb1mlBAcz61c0nnSosaGfXamln6o9hMSjOcdzH5E1CBxXXWtFmE3LZoE6bSWkSGwiOEM58igFR1CZw\\_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/40887773/Bloch_DWP_2002_Refugee_Employment_-with-cover-page-v2.pdf?Expires=1629205600&Signature=FITyOyyvcP4ZO4OD8OyJvc~N0xgcXg6mZepm3mEjAEwmNISPkGiqY0Fk3b7IOQ7~vXP4QL3U28aGcA1LJAxvzrfnCK~yqB1N7MsMKgBwRShfOaEXPNN8U1ni-dCsLIMIS9wcN6k-jF32ISDHvrOfzp-oij2wP78pycK8e7m-sO59PtPM0hvseedKjANB0v9r~MZ-ogurCWXVfLNeKQY8Ej7kT1jnwYYoyErU9qRy08zT~y6Yegc7eFG6LILVybckVDh0zdGJyb1mlBAcz61c0nnSosaGfXamln6o9hMSjOcdzH5E1CBxXXWtFmE3LZoE6bSWkSGwiOEM58igFR1CZw_&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA)

'Are Refugees Located Near Urban Job Opportunities?', Cindy Huang and Jimmy Graham, June 18,

2018, <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/are-refugees-located-near-urban-job-opportunities>

'How to Help Refugees Get Into Work Fast', Philippe Legrain, 19 September 2017,

<https://deeply.thenewhumanitarian.org/refugees/community/2017/09/19/how-to-help-refugees-get-into-work-fast>

'How are refugees fairing on the labour market in Europe?', European Commission and OCD, 2016,

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwiOkImskrijAhX0mFwKHa7DA38QFnoECAMQAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FBlobServlet%3FdocId%3D16130%26langId%3Den&usg=AOvVaw3rAQoZ-vjM0JzOsIkj06oA>