



LINK IT

Linking pre-departure and post-arrival support to facilitate the socio-economic integration for resettled refugees in the EU

EU Integration Practices for resettled refugees



LINK IT is an innovative project delivering better integration outcomes for Syrian refugees resettled from Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey to Germany, Portugal, Romania and the United Kingdom. The project focuses on strengthening the link between pre-departure and post-arrival integration support for refugees.

LINK IT activities include the development and piloting of a pre-departure skills profiling tool, tailored post-arrival support and products for resettled refugees and information sessions for receiving host communities. Through strong partnerships in participating member states, the project delivers pre-departure and post-arrival activities throughout the integration sphere and facilitates mutual learning and exchange amongst partners.

This brochure was designed for a conference on “**EU Integration Practices for Resettled Refugees**” held in Bucharest, Romania in April 2018 and presents a list of innovative good practices by NGOs, international organizations, and municipalities contributing toward increasing the quality and effectiveness of refugee integration.

Cover photo: Syrian refugees set up the Jeenda Sweet Factory in Domiz Camp, northern Iraq.
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This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

Published by The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC).

Editors: IOM UK, ICMC Europe.

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PRE-DEPARTURE AND POST-ARRIVAL ORIENTATION

IOM, the UN Migration Agency Pre-departure Interviews using Video Conferencing

For refugees resettled to the UK, IOM in the MENA region assist UK authorities to conduct **pre-departure interviews using video conferencing** and telephone facilities to identify the needs of refugees selected for resettlement to the UK.

IOM provides technical and implementation support to the UK Resettlement Programme to better match refugees to specific local authority areas in the UK and tailor support to the refugees through their resettlement on arrival.

The feedback received from the refugees selected for interview has been overwhelmingly positive. They are pleased to have had **direct contact with the UK authorities** and they comment on the care and sensitivity with which the interviewers received their responses. The experience provides assurances about their future in the UK and a greater understanding of the resettlement process.

The primary objectives of pre-departure orientation are:

- Providing refugees with accurate information about life in the destination country and the resettlement process.
- Helping refugees to develop realistic expectations about resettlement.
- Assisting refugees to develop the awareness and skills necessary for successful adaptation to their new society.
- Addressing refugees' concerns and questions.
- Empowering refugee women.



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JRS Romania Guidelines for post-arrival orientation



© JRS

JRS Romania participated in the development of guidelines for post-arrival orientation for resettled and relocated refugees.

The **Cultural Guide** provides geographic information about Romania, useful tips on adequate civic behaviour, information about the health and employment, and useful tips such as how to use the local currency, buy and load a phone card, etc.

Reception and integration support is delivered continuously to boost refugee participation in Romanian society from early arrival in Bucharest. Integration is provided through targeted services adapted to the identified needs of each group and to individual aspects taking into account the needs of each family member and individual aspirations.

As of 2014, JRS has strengthened relationships with organizations in Romania including IOM to support the integration of resettled and relocated refugees in Romania.

Continuing and Enhancing the Integration of People Relocated to Romania

JRS Romania has been part of the Working Group on Resettlement of 40 Iraqi refugees from Turkey in 2014 and has, after the arrival of the group, provided them with targeted integration support. JRS Romania is based in Bucharest where refugees that are resettled to Romania first arrive and continues to support reception and integration of resettled and relocated refugees.

SUPPORT TO EDUCATION

Kiron Higher Education Opportunities

Kiron is a non-profit organization that uses digital innovation and strategic partnerships with universities and online education providers to **bridge the gap between refugees and higher education**. Kiron's core innovative academic model offers tailor-made curricula by clustering massive online open courses (MOOCs) from renowned educational platforms, enabling refugees to begin their studies online as they work towards fulfilling formal requirements to earn an accredited Bachelor's degree at a partner university.

The MOOCs offered through the online Kiron Campus are combined with online and offline support such as tutorials and mentoring to guide the students in achieving their goals. Currently, around 3,000 students are registered on the platform where they can choose from five online study tracks. Kiron students can transfer to regular university degree programmes with the option of having their online credits recognised to earn a regular bachelor's degree.

Through the Kiron concept, therefore, refugees:

- 1) can start studying without proof of legal documentation;
- 2) do not have to pay student fees;
- 3) benefit from an enrollment capacity that accommodates all interested students; and
- 4) have access to high quality course content in various languages as well as language courses.

Kiron has a head office in Berlin, branch offices in Munich and Amman, Jordan, and has started operations in Lebanon to serve students with localized support. Kiron staff and students are supported by a strong network of German and international partners, amongst which governmental ministries, foundations, partner universities and experts in online education.



Vrije Universiteit Brussel Welcome Student-refugee Programme



© VUB

The **Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)** developed the **Welcome Student-refugee programme** in the wake of the emerging refugee crisis in Europe in 2015-2016 when 11% of refugees coming to Belgium had to abruptly interrupt their studies to flee to a safer place. The programme gives students with a refugee background a **fair chance to pursue their studies**, taking into account three main project pillars:

- 1) outreach to disadvantaged learners;
- 2) supporting access to higher education;
- 3) facilitating the integration of young students with a refugee background into the local communities in Brussels.

This initiative allows recognised refugees who had to stop their studies in their country of origin to apply to a regular university programme, through a separate online registration tool for student-refugees, different to the usual application for EU students. This 'special' application involves a pre-screening of the refugee candidate students.

The University conducted a comparative study between the Syrian/Iraqi and Belgian educational systems in order to map and identify equivalent study levels.

In the pre-admission check, the academic credentials of the refugee student are analyzed based on this research. If the student can prove his/her academic background according to the rules and regulations, he/she will receive a positive feedback. The student can then submit an application via the regular application system, used by all the prospective students at the VUB.

In 2016/2017, 50 refugee students joined the programme, in 2017/2018, 100 students were enrolled.

PREPARING LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND WELCOMING RESETTLED REFUGEES

ICMC SHARE network

Led by ICMC, the **SHARE Network** has since March 2012 built toward a network of European regional and local authorities and their civil society partners involved in and/or with a commitment to refugee resettlement, protection and integration.

As an integral part of the **European Resettlement Network**, coordinated by IOM and UNHCR, SHARE facilitates the inclusion of over 2,000 local and regional actors in the wider network, and ensures the visibility of the local and regional dimension of resettlement in European and global resettlement discussions and developments.

The SHARE Network in its third phase (2018-19) seeks to raise the profile of- and engage with smaller cities and towns to strengthen reception and integration planning of resettled/relocated refugees through targeted trainings and European best practice exchange at visits and seminars in collaboration with project partners in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania and the UK.

With its SHARE Working Group 'Mainstreaming+ preparing welcoming communities', SHARE engages experienced CSO actors to develop a training curriculum for smaller municipalities to include refugees' specific needs in mainstream service provision and to initiate and strengthen partnerships with public employment bodies, local authorities, mainstream service providers i.e. actors.

SHARE develops and promotes research and tools to support refugee integration, such as the **SHARE City Curriculum** and the use of innovative tools to train volunteers supporting refugee language learning through curriculum materials, intercultural communication tips and relevant tutoring techniques. SHARE promotes the use of these tools through partners during pre-departure and post-arrival phases.

IOM, the UN Migration Agency ADMIn4ALL



© ADMIn4ALL

ADMIn4ALL is a regional IOM preparatory action designed to increase the capacity of cities and municipal governments, as well as other service providers in Italy, Austria, Poland and Romania, in dealing with the multiple dimensions of long-term socio-economic inclusion of migrants and refugees in Europe.

The initiative focuses on **empowering municipalities** to provide suitable and accessible social and administrative services for migrants, as well as promoting partnership approaches to migrant integration at local level among various public, private and non-profit stakeholders.

This is achieved through a series of trainings and peer mentoring activities for the local authorities and both governmental and non-governmental service providers, including front-line workers dealing with the specific needs and situations of disadvantaged migrants in the participating countries.

The second phase of the project runs for 24 months as of 2018, extending the geographical scope to Greece, Spain and Malta. So far, 14 municipalities participated in training via Admin4All in Italy (Bari, Florence, Naples and Milan), Austria (Bruck an der Leitha, Tulln, Korneuburg), Poland (Poznan, Warsaw, Wroclaw, Krakow and Lodz), and Romania (Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca).

SINGA Inform. Connect. Innovate.

Founded in 2012 in France, SINGA is now an international network existing in 7 countries in Europe and Canada, gathering over 25,000 people in its community. SINGA aims to foster social innovation, cultural enrichment and job creation for refugees and newcomers by creating spaces for them to meet, exchange and collaborate.

Portuguese Refugee Council Training Programmes for Local Authorities

Through its 26 years of action, the **Portuguese Refugee Council (CPR)** has had a special focus on the inclusion of refugees in local communities. CPR has been working on providing **training to local communities and local service providers** to increase the quality of reception and integration practices. The CPR started by developing training to students, from kindergarten to university. Since the end of 2015, as more and more local authorities partnered with CPR to respond to the needs of asylum seeker, relocation and refugee resettlement, the emphasis on training has proven more important than ever.

CPR has an on-going collaboration with the High Commissioner for Migration. The partnership facilitates the mobilisation of the authorities and their participation. Through this cooperation, CPR provides training on refugee topics, raising awareness in local communities regarding practices against discrimination, the asylum procedure in Portugal and access to public services.

CPR increased its training capacity through the project *Começar de Novo* (AMIF funding), during which they consolidated three different training programmes for local service providers:

- 1) Beginners course on refugee issues
- 2) Integration through labour training
- 3) A training on transition of families and individual cases into autonomy.

These three tracks have proven successful: by addressing core issues separately, the main questions that service providers are facing at that particular moment in time are addressed more clearly. Before each and every action, CPR discusses with a local team leader which subjects would be more important, as to assess the local situation and what would be most essential to share or inform during the session. The factor that really makes the difference is to adapt the programmes to local realities, which has result in tangible positive outcomes in local reception and integration practices.



The municipality of Utrecht: “Plan Einstein”

For the past 15 years, Utrecht has taken a human rights approach to migration which has led to a generally inclusive and accepting attitude among citizens. Utrecht has a clear communication strategy about refugees' arrival and regularly host neighbourhood information sessions to address residents' concerns about refugee arrival, but also volunteering opportunities, involving a wide range of stakeholders (relevant politicians, NGOs, social workers, health professionals, and the police). Regular meetings help to reassure residents and encourage a positive attitude towards refugees. Utrecht coordinates all activities and information via its website (www.welkominutrecht.nl).

Utrecht's residents have organised 'eat and meet' events where residents invite refugees to dinner in their homes, with 350 residents hosting so far. Utrecht municipality is also partner of the EU funded project "Plan Einstein".

The project's focus is on preparing the neighbourhood for the arrival of a reception centre, while at the same time offering free courses (language, entrepreneurship) to both the neighbourhood residents as well as the asylum.

Local Government Association and Migration Yorkshire Resettling refugees: a guide for local authorities

Local authorities have a prominent role in the reception of refugees. In the UK, resettled refugees are entitled to different kinds of support during their five first years. This means that resettlement should be carefully planned to meet changing needs at different stages in time.

Based on the experience of local authorities in Yorkshire and the Humber, the **local government association and Migration Yorkshire** in collaboration with Refugee Council developed a **step-by-step resettlement guide** addressing local authorities who are developing or planning to develop a support programme for refugees. The guide covers topics such as mapping existing infrastructure at local level, setting up of partnerships or working groups involving key actors, organising initial reception and transport, taking into account the need for financial planning as well as engagement of local communities and cultural considerations.

The guide is an inspirational and effective tool providing a comprehensive overview of the resettlement process, good practice examples and of the practical steps to ensure quality service delivery.

VOLUNTEERING AND MENTORING ACTIVITIES

DUO for a JOB

DUO for a JOB carries out **intergenerational mentoring** by pairing young people with an immigrant background seeking employment (mentees) with experienced professionals above 50 years old (mentors) – who ideally have the same professional background. The aim is to support the youngster in his/her job search. The mentor and mentee form a 'duo' and work together a few hours a week for six months, with the support of a coordinator.

Several obstacles make it hard for migrants to participate in the Brussels job market. These barriers include an insufficient mastery of the national languages (French and Dutch), lack of self-confidence, and lack of support for building job skills and conducting job search. Mentoring offers an effective way to meet that need. Each mentor offers individualized support through an assessment of mentee's needs and developed through a personal action plan. Beside the interpersonal approach, a range of tools provide support to the duo and to the job seeker in developing his/her own skills in the job search.

The mentoring initiative of Duo for a Job is supported by a large and diverse pool of government partners, associations, private sector and foundations. Duo for a Job has been expanding its operations outside of Brussels since 2016. Local programme managers were recruited to diversify the actions in specific local contexts and abroad.

Of the 980 duos that had completed their mentoring in 2017, 73% had positive outcomes (permanent contracts, fixed-term contracts, internships, training and resumption of studies). 53% of the mentees found a job within 12 months after the start of the guidance (the average inclusion rate is 26%). More than 95% duos were satisfied with the programme, both personally and professionally.

Revenues from Duo for a Job mainly consist of charitable donations, sponsors, subsidies, funding from foundations, and from companies. Mentors offer their services on a voluntary basis.

The initiative has shown progress since its launch in 2013. In 2014, there were 85 pairs, 153 in 2015, and 245 in 2016. The objective is to reach 1500 duos by the end of 2018.

Caritas Friedland The Buddy Programme



© DUO for a JOB

Refugees arriving to Germany under a humanitarian admission or resettlement programme usually stay in the initial reception centre run by **Caritas in Friedland** for two weeks. After that initial period, refugees are dispersed all over Germany and arrive in their receiving municipality. The time in Friedland serves for registration as well as first orientation and to adjust to a different culture. Therefore, different measures are being implemented during the two weeks in Friedland for improving post arrival orientation (such as orientation programmes, individual counselling, and measures aiming at improving the communication between all relevant actors).

Caritas Friedland also organises regular events called **“Buddytreffen” (English “Buddy meeting”)**: a person who arrived through a similar humanitarian programme some time ago, is invited to come to Friedland every time a new group has arrived. The group of recently arrived individuals can then ask all their questions concerning their new life in Germany in their mother tongue to their volunteer “buddy”.

The buddy can talk about his or her experiences and share knowledge letting the newcomers gain more self-esteem. For the newly arrived individuals this is very helpful as it is a person giving the information in their own language and relates it to their own cultural background. This group event complements regular individual counselling and makes its contents well accessible.

Caritas International Housing Café



© Caritas International

One of the first difficulty for a refugee is the access to quality and sustainable housing. In Belgium, resettled refugees must leave the reception centre within a short period of time (2 to 4 months) and must overcome various obstacles in the search for housing (language barriers, discrimination, structural housing shortage, limited means to pay the guarantee or the first rent, etc.). Although the reception centre's social workers can act as mediators with the landlords, they often encounter the same barriers. To assist refugees in this difficult task, **Caritas Belgium** set up the first **Housing-café (HC)** in Liège in 2015. Today, there are HCs also in Brussels, Gent, and Antwerp.

HCs serve as a place for refugees, who received a residence permit and are in search of their first house, to meet a regional team of integration coaches and volunteers. The HC take place in a friendly and pleasant common room with several laptops and mobile phones available. The setting strengthens the possibilities for exchange and empowerment. During the HC, the refugee, together with the volunteer, start the search for housing by using the internet or calling telephone numbers found through advertisements. The refugees learn how to conduct housing search. If a visit is obtained, the volunteer tries to carry out the first visit. This exponentially increases the chances of finding housing.

HCs are more than just the experience of spending time together. They offer refugees the opportunity to connect with other refugees in search of accommodation as well as with people who already went through the integration process. Caritas facilitates this contact by working with intercultural negotiators. Refugees learn how to deal and negotiate with the landlords and how to set up their local network.

Once housing is found, the Caritas team provides a basic settlement kit. Furthermore, refugees are also assisted with registration at the municipality, health insurance, and the application for public welfare. In some cases, the Caritas team can offer support up to 12 months.

SPEAK Language and Culture exchange

SPEAK is a social tech start-up that connects migrants, refugees and locals living in the same city. At the core of this crowdsourcing programme there are **language and culture exchange courses and events**.

Throughout this learning process, SPEAKers get to know other people, learn and explore common interests, break prejudices, misunderstandings and even promote comprehension as well as cooperation. The events are aimed at creating a bond between SPEAKers and there is room for dialogue, celebration, and friendship.

The project is built to bring people closer together, breaks barriers, promotes multilingualism, diversity and equality, spreads knowledge, fights ignorance, and democratises language learning through an informal and innovative methodology. Anyone can apply to learn or teach any language or culture including those of the country where they are residing. Today, SPEAK is a global community of 12.9K members, from over 130 countries in 10 different cities.



© SPEAK

SPEAK strengthens solidarity networks in communities, particularly between migrants and locals, by promoting relationships between people of different backgrounds. SPEAK also promotes the full participation of all individuals in society, making for stronger communities.

FOSTERING ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Breaking Barriers

Breaking Barriers is a charity whose mission is to assist refugees in the UK to **integrate through employment, education and training**. Refugees in London face extraordinary barriers to employment including lack of knowledge of the UK job market, lack of professional connections, limited English proficiency, and difficulties with having their international skills and qualifications recognised by employers. Breaking Barriers aims to overcome these barriers by providing advice and guidance, English support and skills-based workshops to refugees seeking employment. It also provides opportunities for work experience and places refugees directly into jobs, working in partnership with organisations across the private and public sector who supply opportunities tailored to Breaking Barriers' service users.

By partnering with businesses in London, Breaking Barriers has created a unique business model which engages with the private sectors' Corporate Social Responsibility teams to provide placements to refugees with a wide range of skills, as well as receive funding. There are currently 25 businesses partnered with Breaking Barriers under the Academy Programme to offer employment opportunities, workshops or mentoring relationships, including IKEA, WeWork, Mayer Brown and the Bank of America. To ensure that employment will financially benefit its service users, and given the financial vulnerability of most refugees, Breaking Barriers only partners with businesses who will provide fixed contracts and are committed to paying London Living wage.

In the period of 2016-2017, Breaking Barriers' Employment Programme worked with 196 refugees, supporting 141 into employment opportunities. 65 of them participated in the Academy Programme and 32 attended English classes. Amongst the service users, there is a 64-36% ratio of men to women, and 16% are aged between 18 and 24. In 2018, Breaking Barriers continues to grow, opening a second delivery centre and expanding its provision of English and training courses. Thus far, in 2018, it has supported 45 people into employment or training opportunities. Breaking Barriers has been able to achieve the above by creating relationships with the private sector and advocating for the benefits of hiring refugees, to both a company's CSR programme and to their business as whole.

Action Emploi Réfugié

Action Emploi Réfugiés (AERé) is an online job platform which connects refugees and employers in France. Employers can publish their job offers on the website and refugees can respond. The platform was launched in 2016 online, and it now includes face-to-face contact with refugees. The AERé aims to offer solutions to 5,000 to 10,000 refugees per year who have the right to work in France.

Action Emploi Réfugiés is committed to the promotion of economic integration of refugees while also contributing to building a positive image of refugees. AERé works in partnership with UNHCR, OFII, municipalities, authorities and experienced refugee-supporting organisations in France as well as business associations.



© Breaking Barriers

The objectives of the project are:

- 1) To create the first online tool for the employment of refugees in France matching needs and resources
- 2) To contribute to bridging the gap between unfilled jobs and job seekers
- 3) Outreach at the national and then European level.

Beside the main **online job platform service**, AERé offers a wide range of **communication activities** (such as photographic exhibitions, videos) to research and advocacy about refugee integration.

ASTI Connections



© ASTI

Based in Luxembourg, **ASTI's "Connections"** project aims at integrating applicants and beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market. It is funded by the Oeuvre Grande Duchesse Charlotte – Mateneen call.

Beneficiaries of the project are:

- 1) applicants and beneficiaries of international protection who wish to enter the labour market in Luxembourg;
- 2) people who want to support, guide or advise newcomers;
- 3) companies wishing to offer an unpaid internship to applicants and beneficiaries of international protection.

The project aims to **create links between newcomers and companies**, to mobilize economic actors for the professional integration of newcomers, and to give them the opportunity to contribute to increased diversity in Luxembourg.

The project offers:

- A "screening" of skills based on an individual interview that determines the candidates' professional and educational background
- 14 infosessions about society, family reunification, the reception and integration contract, social security, and the equivalence of diplomas in Luxembourg (some presented by ASTI's partners).
- 6 specialized workshops on topics such as CV writing, preparing for a job interview, or internship, starting your own company, etc. (some are presented by ASTI's partners).
- An unpaid internship of up to 240 hours. Trainees are followed by an employment mentor designated by the company. An evaluation of the competences is done according to the ROME job classification system used by the National Employment Agency (ADEM).
- Free access to different trainings offered by the professional chambers of Luxembourg.

A logbook, a portfolio and a certification of the different modules followed by the participant help to document the efforts made by the participants and allow the ADEM to better orient the beneficiary once he/she received his/her international protection status and the access to the market is guaranteed. Connections is part of an integration concept for the asylum seekers and recognized refugees in Luxembourg. This concept has been developed by ASTI containing also literacy courses and intensive language courses in French.



© ASTI

Startup Refugees

Startup Refugees is a network of over 500 companies and organisations that want to support refugees with their employment and entrepreneurial ideas in Finland. In two years Startup Refugees has supported over 200 people to find employment and over 40 businesses in their development.

Services are provided in close collaboration with reception centers all over Finland. Asylum seekers in private accommodations and refugees currently attending integration classes can also participate in the programme. Startup Refugees connects people, companies, investors and business mentors to **help refugees develop their business ideas and professional skills** in inventive ways.

Skills and expertise of the refugees are assessed and identified through 'Match-made' within the Startup Refugees application, a national skills assessment tool created especially for refugees' employment and entrepreneurial purposes. Companies offer training opportunities, tools and professional advice to prepare newcomers' skills meet the requirements of the Finnish labour market.

FOSTERING ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET

Slovenian Ministry of Interior Info tujci

Info tujci ("Information for foreigners" in English) is an online platform hosted by the Slovenian Ministry of Interior. The available content is provided by the Ministry of Interior and by other stakeholders that are mentioned under different sections, consisting mostly of NGOs. It provides general information for foreigners and refugees about Slovenia by including detailed information about entry and residence, schooling, social security and health care, and other relevant insights pertaining to Slovenian society. Additionally, it provides information about Slovenian language courses, relevant events, NGOs, asylum/international protection, relocation and resettlement.

The information is available in Slovenian and in 6 additional languages. The platform has been recognized and widely used by both migrants and beneficiaries of international protection. The website was promoted through leaflets at different administrative units for foreigners, resulting in a significant amount of views. It has furthermore been recognized as an important source of information for workers' rights.

Although the website is mainly aimed at migrants and refugees, employers can also find extensive information about the employment procedures for foreigners. The website is low-maintenance, with little related costs. It nonetheless requires regular updates, as the information is subject to frequent changes.



© DUO for a JOB

Refugees work.at

Refugee work.at is a social enterprise that pursues the goal of creating equal chances on the labour market for refugee and to make refugee's potential accessible to the labour market mainly by providing an online platform that connects refugees and employers in Austria.

Employers can list traineeships, internships, apprenticeships and jobs using an online-forms or use the programmes search engine to find talents that match their vacancies. Refugee work.at proposes vacancies to refugee applicants, taking into account language skills, professional background, asylum status etc. An integrated calendar and messaging system makes scheduling interviews and communicating easy for both parties.

Refugees are supported by volunteers to write their résumé, list it on the platform, receive training for job interviews and information about the labour market.

Asylum seekers in a pending asylum procedure and without work permit are helped to find traineeships or volunteer opportunities.



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For more information about LINK IT, please visit:
www.unitedkingdom.iom.int/labour-market-integration and www.resettlement.eu

IOM UK, ICMC Europe

tel: +44 (0) 20 7811 6000

email: link-it@iom.int

web: unitedkingdom.iom.int



This brochure was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

