



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency



# TAPPING POTENTIAL

A TOOLKIT TO HELP BUSINESSES EMPLOY  
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS



**BUSINESS  
IN THE  
COMMUNITY  
IRELAND**

This publication is based on original guidance for employers produced in the United Kingdom (UK) by UNHCR, Business in the Community (BITC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with support from the UK Government Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions.

# TAPPING POTENTIAL

## Guidelines to Help British Businesses Employ Refugees



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



The UK guide is available here: *Tapping Potential: Guidelines to Help British Businesses Employ Refugees*

<http://www.unhcr.org/publications/brochures/5cc9c7ed4/tapping-potential-guidelines-to-help-british-businesses-employ-rufugees.html>

## CONTACT US

### UNHCR Ireland

102 Pemrboke Road  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4

Tel: +353 1 6314614

Email: [iredu@unhcr.org](mailto:iredu@unhcr.org)

### COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Pelagie Siete-Mimauzet was a successful businesswoman in Ukraine, where she lived for 21 years. She now works with Accenture in Dublin

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## **About UNHCR**

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, internally displaced persons, refugee returnees and stateless people. We work to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, having fled violence, persecution, war or disaster at home. This includes enhancing pathways to protection and solutions for refugees and assessing and supporting their economic and social integration.

## **Thank you to the businesses and organisations that provided input and examples for this guide:**

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Business in the Community Ireland

# BUSINESS BENEFITS OF HIRING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

## Recruitment and retention

Job vacancies are at a record high, with skill shortages in almost every sector, from sales and customer services to Information Communication Technology (ICT).<sup>1</sup> By adopting refugee-friendly employment practices your business can access a pipeline of diverse talent for roles at every skill level. Although some initial investment may be required by businesses, many actions in this toolkit are relatively low cost or cost neutral and there are a number of organisations already providing support and training to asylum-seekers and refugees in Ireland.

A recent survey of German employers found that 80% of those that had hired refugees were broadly or fully satisfied with their work.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, 73% of employers surveyed reported a higher retention rate for refugees than for other employees.<sup>3</sup>

## Diversity

Diversity is good for business. Ethnically and culturally diverse teams are 33% more likely to outperform competitors on profitability.<sup>4</sup>

Refugees and asylum-seekers are not a homogenous group; they come from a wide range of nationalities and cultural backgrounds that could help to diversify thinking and attract new talent within any business.

Creating opportunities for employees to interact with refugees and asylum-seekers can also be beneficial both for reducing racial bias that can hamper workplace diversity, and can help to improve integration for a cohesive workforce.<sup>5</sup>

## Addressing skills gaps

Refugees have a range of skills and experience, including proficiency in different languages. Deloitte surveyed 305 Syrian refugees in Europe and found 38% have university education and one third were previously employed in either skilled work or the professional services industry.<sup>6</sup> In addition to these professional skills, many refugees have overcome significant adversity and developed an adaptability beneficial for a range of roles.

## Business example:

Code Institute, a digital skills training centre and Zartis, a software development recruitment agency, started the 'Level Up' programme to fill the large ICT skills gap in the Irish market. The programme trains 10 asylum-seekers and refugees in coding and software development.

Jim Cassidy, CEO of Code Institute, said, "There is a huge skills gap in this country, and this is a worthy and novel way to solve it. Therefore, our aim is to make these candidates tech-industry-ready. We can do that. Above all, we hope that recruiters and HR managers will see the huge opportunity here to close this skills gap."

John Dennehy, Executive Chairman of Zartis, said: "Almost every tech company in Ireland is struggling to find software developers. We have many incredibly bright and highly motivated asylum-seekers in the country. With the right training and guidance, they can fill some of the vacant roles".

## DID YOU KNOW?

60% of Millennials want to join companies with a 'purpose' that is embedded in the business (The Deloitte Millennial survey, 2015)

## Employee engagement

Targeted initiatives to support refugees into employment can offer staff development opportunities, for example through workplace 'buddy' schemes. These kinds of opportunity can allow employees to develop soft skills such as communication and empathy and have been shown to increase engagement as employees learn from those they are supporting.

## Purpose

More and more businesses are moving away from traditional philanthropy towards developing a core purpose that addresses societal challenges. This is influenced by consumer and customer behaviour, as well as changing attitudes about the role of business in society. In an era of mistrust, citizens are looking to business to not only 'do less harm' but actively be a force for good in their communities.

Responding to the challenges faced by refugees worldwide is unlikely to be the core purpose of your business. However the global displacement of people is widely considered to be one of the biggest social challenges of our time. It is in businesses' interest to be part of the solution - adopting principles of refugee-friendly employment is one way every business can take action.

# THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN REFUGEE INTEGRATION

## Global displacement

The number of people worldwide who have been forcibly displaced is at an all time high of over 82 million. Among them are 26 million refugees. 73 per cent of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad lived in countries neighbouring their countries of origin. Developing countries hosted 86 per cent of the world's refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad. Turkey hosted the largest number of refugees worldwide, with 3.7 million people.

## A whole of society response

On 10 December 2018, 181 UN Member states, including Ireland, adopted the Global Compact on Refugees which establishes an international framework for stronger responses to global displacement and the integration of refugees. The Compact highlights the need for cross-society partnerships, and crucially the role of the private sector. This could include: investment in areas that host refugees; infrastructure strengthening and job creation; helping humanitarian agencies innovate to better deliver assistance; or simply providing employment and making refugees part of their value chains.

## Integration through employment

One of the best pathways to integration is meaningful employment. Employment enables self-sufficiency and provides refugees and asylum-seekers with social connections as they are able to use their skills and experience in a new context. Yet, many refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland struggle to gain employment or find themselves in jobs that do not match their skills and experience.<sup>7</sup>

Irish businesses are beginning to respond to this, adopting refugee-friendly employment practices to address core business challenges including:

- Recruitment and retention
- Diversity
- Skills gaps
- Employee engagement
- Purpose

This guide will help your business understand why refugee-friendly employment makes good business sense and equip your business with guidance, suggested actions and practical examples so you can get started.

### DID YOU KNOW?

86% of refugees and Venezuelans displaced abroad live in developing nations. Lebanon hosts the greatest number of refugees relative to its population size (1 in 8 people in Lebanon is a refugee)

## GETTING THE WORDS RIGHT:

### **Asylum-seeker**

An asylum-seeker is a person who is seeking international protection, but whose status has not yet been determined.

### **Refugee**

A refugee is a person who cannot return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

### **International protection**

There are two forms of international protection: refugee status and subsidiary protection. Subsidiary protection is given to people who do not qualify for refugee status but who may be at risk of suffering 'serious harm' if returned to their home country.

The right to work is the same for those with refugee status and subsidiary protection. They are granted a "Stamp 4" permission, as are their family members, which means they are entitled to access the labour market without the need to apply for an Employment Permit.<sup>8</sup>

### **Permission to remain**

People who do not qualify for either refugee status or subsidiary protection may receive 'permission to remain' from the Minister for Justice and Equality. The conditions on which a person is granted permission to remain is decided on a case by case basis. Those granted permission to remain are also commonly, but not always, granted "Stamp 4" permissions.

### **Did you know?**

Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee. If a final negative decision issues on an application, the asylum-seeker will have his/her permission to work revoked (unless he/she is permitted to work under an alternative immigration permission).

## GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT: REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN IRELAND

At the end of 2020, there were an estimated 9,000 refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries living in Ireland. Some refugees are recognised in Ireland after applying for asylum here while others are resettled to Ireland after being recognised as refugees in another country. Refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries who came to Ireland initially as asylum-seekers come from a diverse range of countries. In 2020, the top 5 nationalities with refugees status including resettled refugees, or subsidiary protection were: Syrian, Zimbabwean, Congolese (DRC), Iraqi and Afghan.



Resettled refugees in recent years have all come from either Lebanon or Jordan, the vast majority of whom are Syrian nationals.

Refugees can apply for Irish citizenship after three years of residence while persons with other forms of status, including subsidiary protection beneficiaries, can apply after five.

As of 24 January 2021, there were 6,986 people<sup>9</sup> living in asylum-seeker accommodation centres, often termed Direct Provision centres, of which there are 45 dotted around Ireland. Most of these people are waiting for a final decision on their asylum application however as of the end of March 2021, there are 730 adults and 309 children who have been granted status but continue to reside there while they search for suitable accommodation elsewhere. The median processing time for all cases processed to completion in the IPO in Q1 2021 was 22.2 months.<sup>10</sup> As of May 2019, the average length of stay in accommodation centres was 25 months.<sup>11</sup> Since September 2018, the accommodation available has been insufficient to meet demand. As a result there were 1,204 people being provided with emergency accommodation, such as hotels, as of 4th October 2020.<sup>12</sup>

### Can refugees and asylum-seekers work?

Anyone with refugee status or subsidiary protection has the legal right to work in Ireland without restriction in any sector.

Since 2 July 2018, asylum-seekers also have access to the labour market but with some limitations. Currently, applicants must have been waiting for 6 months or longer for an initial decision on their application before they can work. Currently, the majority of asylum-seekers are waiting over a year to get a decision, which means that large numbers of asylum-seekers currently hold a permission to work.<sup>13</sup>

Working permissions for asylum-seekers are valid for a period of 12 months, after which time the permission must be renewed.

Practical guidance for HR teams is also available with this guide.

#### Did you know?

Three months after the law was changed to give asylum-seekers labour market access, 2,150 international protection applicants had applied to the Minister for Justice and Equality for permission to work. 1,521 were granted permission of which 330 had secured employment by October 2018.

## EMPLOYING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Refugees and asylum-seekers come from a diverse range of backgrounds. Some are highly educated, having worked in skilled professions before fleeing their home country, while others may have had long gaps in their education or left school early. Some will have professional experience, others experience in manual work, and most will have a range of transferable skills – meaning

businesses from all sectors can benefit from employing refugees and asylum-seekers.

## So, what's the problem?

Despite having skills, experience and qualifications, refugees and asylum-seekers often struggle to gain employment. Research shows that refugees and asylum-seekers face greater challenges in accessing the job market when compared to other immigrant groups.<sup>14</sup>

A study conducted by UNHCR<sup>15</sup> identified some of the top barriers refugees and asylum-seekers face in seeking employment in Ireland, including:

1. English language deficiencies
2. Long gaps in CVs as a result of long time spent without the right to work
3. Employers' recognition of skills and experience
4. Public and employer perceptions of refugees
5. Racial discrimination
6. A lack of support due to no employment support infrastructure

Other barriers may include: loss of confidence/institutionalisation as a result of long periods of time spent living in asylum-seeker accommodation; socio/cultural barriers due to deficiencies in information and knowledge of how the Irish labour market and recruitment process works; lack of transport to and from work, particularly if living in asylum-seeker accommodation, lack of affordable childcare and alternative options; experiences of homelessness, poverty or social exclusion; health problems, including mental health; unfamiliarity with immigration rules and permissions to work on the part of employers; and difficulties in opening a bank account.<sup>16</sup>

As the Global Compact on Refugees sets out, a cross-society approach is needed to help refugees overcome these barriers in order to access employment and make a contribution to the Irish economy. Employers can play a key role by proactively adopting refugee-friendly employment practices.

## WHOLE OF SOCIETY ACTION PLAN

Through a series of regional dialogues on “Employing Refugees”, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and UNHCR brought together more than 150 employers and employer organisations to inform the development in 2018 of a cross-society action plan for addressing refugee employment.

This 10-point Action Plan aims to inspire focused policy action and increase co-ordination among employers, governments, civil society actors and refugees to

help society make the most of refugees' skills and experience. It can help your business understand the wider policy framework and the importance of cross-sector collaboration.

The Action Plan is composed of 10 "action areas" identified as key to supporting the successful labour market integration of refugees, including to:

1. Navigate the administrative framework
2. Provide employers with sufficient legal certainty
3. Identify and verify refugees' skills
4. Skills for job-readiness
5. Match refugee talent with employers' needs
6. Provide equal opportunities in recruitment and combat stereotypes
7. Prepare the working environment
8. Enable long-term employability
9. Make the business case for hiring refugees
10. Coordinate actions between all stakeholders

*The action plan can be found at <https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>.*

## A GOOD PLACE TO START

As your business sets out to become a refugee-friendly employer, there is some important groundwork to be done which will help to enable change in your business.

### 1. Understand the issue

Raise awareness amongst colleagues about refugees and asylum-seekers and the opportunity for businesses to respond. Start with this guide and consider organising a training workshop for colleagues to bust some myths and drive engagement.

### 2. Align your focus to your business needs and purpose

Factors such as your business size, sector and location will all help to determine where you should focus your efforts. You should also review any existing employability or employment programmes that your business offers and consider where adaptations may be needed to open these up to refugees and asylum-seekers.

### 3. Find a partner that can support you to achieve your aims

Organisations supporting refugees have a great deal of expertise and offer a range of programmes to support refugees to gain employment. Once you have identified the focus areas for your business, you will then be better placed to identify the right organisation(s) for your business to work with.

### 4. Engage your leaders to champion the work

Securing the support of a leader within your business early on – through events, training and impact reports – will be beneficial as you take action.



*Photo: Belinda Kassab, a graduate of Diageo's Learning for Life Programme, pulls a pint of Ireland's famous stout in the Guinness Storehouse.*

## A FRAMEWORK FOR REFUGEE-FRIENDLY EMPLOYMENT

### **INSPIRE**

Inspire and prepare refugees and asylum-seekers for employment in Ireland

### **HIRE**

Create a refugee-friendly recruitment process

### **GROW**

Enable refugees and asylum-seekers to thrive in the workplace

## **INSPIRE:** INSPIRE AND PREPARE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS FOR EMPLOYMENT IN IRELAND

Refugees and asylum-seekers have a range of skills and experience, however they will usually be unfamiliar with Irish culture and the labour market. Employers can provide stepping stones for refugees and asylum-seekers to move closer to employment.

- **Deliver work preparation activities**

Refugees and asylum-seekers who are living in Ireland may have been out of work for some time. This is despite, in many cases, having qualifications and experience in their home countries.

Remember that until June 2018, asylum-seekers were not allowed to work and the process to obtain refugee status could take several years.

Activities can be delivered in partnership with organisations supporting refugees, including:

- Confidence building
- Interview preparation
- Workplace visits
- Training on workplace culture in Ireland
- Developing specific skills training for asylum-seekers and refugees

### **Business benefits of taking action:**

- Develop employee skills such as communication, empathy and coaching
- Develop a talent pipeline to fill vacancies
- Increase employee awareness of different cultures, helping to reduce unconscious bias
- Provide corporate volunteering opportunities

### **Business example: The Employment for People from Immigrant Communities (EPIC) Programme**

Business in the Community Ireland works in partnership with businesses to support immigrants and refugees looking for employment. So far the programme served 3,000 people from 101 nationalities. 68% of them have found jobs or entered training or are volunteering.

The programme covers different aspects:

- CV and interview preparation
- Advice on how to look for a job
- IT skills training
- Training on the Irish work system

### **TOP TIP:**

It is important to recognise cultural differences for many refugees entering the Irish workplace. Allow time to discuss these expectations focusing on communication style, punctuality, workers' rights and entitlements.



## CASE STUDY: PELAGIE SIÈTE-MIMAUZET FROM CONGO TO ACCENTURE

Pelagie is a successful businesswoman from the Republic of Congo with excellent language skills. Apart from being fluent in Russian and French she began learning English when she first applied for asylum in Ireland in 2011. Six years later she was granted refugee status.

Looking for a job was difficult at first because of the long gap in her CV. With the support of Business in the Community Ireland, Pelagie joined the EPIC Programme.

“Explaining that gap was not easy. But Business in the Community Ireland really helped me to build my CV and prepare for interview.”

Pelagie secured a job with Accenture, where she uses her language skills as a Content Review Associate.

- **English language training**

Research amongst refugees across Europe has shown that language ability is closely linked with employment outcomes.<sup>17</sup>

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) language courses may be available to refugees or asylum-seekers in their localities through their local Education and Training Boards (ETB). Courses can vary significantly and may not include the language skills needed for the workplace.

Integrating formal ESOL training within work-preparation activities has been found to be very effective, but activities which allow for the development of conversational English can also help to build confidence.

- Develop work-preparation activities for refugees which embed sector-based terminology and language
- Ensure existing work-preparation activities are accessible by embedding or adding an element of English language training
- Engage business volunteers in mentoring to improve language skills through conversation and/or written correspondence

**DID YOU KNOW?** The majority of refugees interviewed by UNHCR Ireland cited language ability as a barrier to employment. (UNHCR, 2014, Towards a new Beginning)

- **Provide good quality work placements**

A lack of Irish work experience is often cited as a barrier to gaining employment. Work placements, internships and training programmes can provide refugees and asylum-seekers who may be disadvantaged by a standard application process the opportunity to demonstrate the aptitude and attitude needed for a role.

**TOP TIP:** Your business could develop a work placement programme targeting refugees and asylum-seekers or adjust existing programmes to ensure they are accessible for refugees and asylum-seekers.

- Partner with organisations supporting refugees to create a referral pipeline for your work placements (see Appendix: Organisations that provide employment support to asylum-seekers and refugees)
- Organise induction training or appoint a buddy to help participants settle in quickly, making sure that important instructions are understood
- Ensure participants are given a variety of work to do, rather than simply shadowing
- De-brief participants once the placement has ended and support them to develop an employment action plan

## Case Study: Sonia, from Rwanda to Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

A refugee from Rwanda, Sonia came to the EPIC programme looking for support to find a job or a work placement as she had struggled to find one due to the large gap in her work history.

Following pre-employment training and one-to-one advice, EPIC secured a work placement with Enterprise Rent-A-Car where she took up a work placement position in the Accounts Department which ran from March 2014 for 6 months and finished in August 2014. During that time, a mentor within the business and an advisor from EPIC were available to support and help Sonia throughout the work placement.

Enterprise Rent-A-Car gave a high level of commitment to provide the necessary training and support so that Sonia could achieve the learning and development goals they had set. This resulted in Sonia achieving more than anticipated.

“The experience was a great success and we would encourage companies to consider placements as a way of fostering an inclusive and diverse workforce.”

Leslee O’Loughlin, Group Human Resources Manager, Enterprise Rent-A-Car

## HIRE: CREATE A REFUGEE-FRIENDLY RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Standard recruitment processes can create barriers for many jobseekers. This section outlines principles of refugee-friendly recruitment that will help your business break down some of these barriers for refugees.

### Business benefits of adopting these principles:

- Access to a more diverse talent pipeline
- Access to skilled and qualified candidates
- Greater cultural awareness amongst hiring managers

### • *Review the level of English language required for all roles*

Job descriptions which specify a ‘good level’ of English can be off-putting for refugees still developing their language skills. For some roles an ability to understand and communicate in English will be essential, but others may allow for a degree of flexibility.

- Review the level of English needed for a role and be specific about this in the job description and advert
- Consider whether key instructions (such as health and safety) could be translated
- Partner with organisations supporting asylum-seekers and refugees to provide targeted training on workplace communication



- **Make use of traineeships and apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships and traineeships which provide training on the job can also enable refugees to learn new skills and qualifications, or adapt their experience for a new sector.

- Offer traineeships and apprenticeships and review entry requirements to ensure they are accessible to refugees.

### **Business example: Learning for life with Diageo**

In 2014, Diageo set up the 'Learning for life' programme, a training scheme designed to prepare refugees and asylum-seekers to the hospitality industry. Students are equipped with the training and skills needed for future jobs (pull pints, work cash registers and do interviews). This is followed by four weeks placement working in hotels, retail or in the Guinness Storehouse.

#### **Impact**

- Since the programme started last summer, nearly 30 refugees and asylum seekers have taken part. Nearly all have found employment. New blended programmes have been introduced, with participants from migrant, disadvantaged and disability backgrounds in groups included.

**Experiences:** Madeeha Kanwal never made a coffee before coming to Ireland. *"I was amazed at the quantity of coffee Irish people drink. Now I'm making it all the time."*

Madeeha secured a job with Marquette in Dublin Airport after training on the Learning for Life Programme. "I knew I had the skills, I just needed a chance to put them in to practice. Asylum-seekers and refugees want to use our skills and work." At Marquette, she brings in her passion to meet people from all over the world, including from Pakistan – her native country. "I choose a job in the airport because it's the least boring place you could ever be. I meet lots of different people and can use all my languages, English, Urdu and Punjabi."



Photo: Madeeha Kanwal in Dublin Airport Arrivals Lounge

- **Remove unnecessary jargon**

Refugees applying for jobs can be put off by jargon or abbreviations which make it difficult to understand the requirements of the role.

- Make sure your job titles clearly express what the role is, and your job descriptions do not use jargon or abbreviations
- Ensure you include all relevant information in the job description including location, working patterns, salary, benefits and opportunities for advancement

### DID YOU KNOW?

Obtaining references, documentation, or proof of employment from a refugees' country of origin can often be problematic due to political instability, war, persecution or other factors associated with their asylum claim.

- **Develop an inclusive assessment process**

Standard recruitment processes can create hurdles for people from a range of different backgrounds. The following principles will help refugees and asylum-seekers to be assessed fairly and help your business to recruit the best person for the role:

- Develop a competency-based recruitment process that focusses on positive behaviors, attitudes and aspirations rather than previous experience
  - Where previous experience needs to be a requirement for a role, ensure experience outside Ireland is valued
- Offer alternatives to online applications that may disadvantage refugees and asylum-seekers who cannot access the internet or have poor IT skills
  - Avoid using telephone interviews which can be challenging for a refugee and asylum-seeker who struggles with English language
  - Give guidance and provide training to interviewers explaining different cultural expectations which might affect interview technique
  - Accept testimonials or character references e.g. from social workers, sponsors or mentors
  - Be open to proposals from refugees and asylum-seekers to bring an interpreter or facilitator to the job interview
  - Provide a dress code for interview and information about the interview format

- **Support refugees and asylum-seekers to transfer qualifications gained in their home country**

A survey of Syrian refugees conducted by Deloitte found that a third of respondents had been employed in either skilled work or the professional service industry in Syria.<sup>18</sup> Though wanting to find work that fits their existing skills, the majority of those in employment were working in manual or

### TOP TIP:

QQI (Quality & Qualification Ireland) grades qualification from other countries against the Irish framework, and then provides a certificate of comparability which is free of charge.

<https://www.qqi.ie/>

unskilled work. Through the development of suitable qualification and skills validation, full potential can be facilitated in the workplace.

- Provide assistance to refugee and asylum-seeker applicants to verify their qualifications
- Work with your regulatory or industry body to identify and address the blockages for refugees and asylum-seekers seeking to translate their qualifications

### **Employment Programme for Refugee Women:**

As part of its integration work, the Irish Refugee Council (IRC) launched a pilot programme in 2018 aimed at addressing barriers to employment for refugee women. The IRC Employment Programme aims to assist people by providing pre-employment training in a peer-supported environment.

Having completed this training, women receive one-to-one support with the Employment Officer to support them in their individual progression towards employment or further education. Some are assigned a mentor, English language volunteer, supported work placement or voluntary post. It is envisaged that after receiving this support, participants will be in a better position to retain stable employment in an area reflective of their skills, education and interests. As of September 2018, the programme supports 25 women around employment progression or access to further education. To date, five women have progressed to full-time employment, three to part-time employment and six have continued on to further education.

## **GROW: ENABLE REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS TO THRIVE IN THE WORKPLACE**

The barriers refugees and asylum-seekers face gaining employment can continue to make it difficult to progress. In Europe refugees are more likely to be in work below their formal education level.<sup>19</sup> They may also face workplace discrimination.<sup>20</sup> Building a working environment which enables refugees and asylum-seekers to thrive will help your business capitalise on the skills and experience refugees and asylum-seekers can offer.

### **Business benefits of adopting these principles:**

- Reduce recruitment costs by providing progression pathways to retain staff
- Improve employee engagement through mentoring opportunities
- Upskill existing workforce to learn other languages
- Develop a more inclusive and diverse workforce

- **Provide progression pathways**

It is important for your business to understand the career ambitions of any refugees and asylum-seekers you employ and provide any additional support they may need to achieve them.

- Define and communicate progression pathways for all roles, with incremental progression steps where possible
- Develop an internal mentoring scheme for refugees and asylum-seeker your business recruits to help strengthen and expand their educational and employment-related networks and opportunities
- Ensure progression opportunities are equally accessible for part-time and flexible workers
- Ensure that training is accessible for all employees regardless of shift patterns, travel and location
- Deliver a range of training, from bite-size sessions to softer skills
- Help refugees to improve their English language skills within the workplace
- Create a clear reporting/appraisal process

**TOP TIP:**

Conversational language can work both ways and could enable your staff to learn language skills.

- Low levels of English language can prevent refugees from progressing within the workplace, increasing the likelihood of becoming stuck in low-paid or low-skilled work.

- An experienced ESOL trainer, can help you devise a workplace needs assessment
- Provide English language training for staff. Your business could arrange for an ESOL tutor to come into the workplace, provide sector specific classes or facilitate access to English language training online
- Run language-exchange lunch clubs for refugees to improve language skills through conversation and help other staff members to learn new languages

- **Promote inclusion at all levels, emphasising the value of different cultural and religious backgrounds**

Refugees and asylum-seekers represent a wide range of nationalities, cultures and religions. Ensuring everyone in your business values diversity and feels comfortable to bring their whole self to work will benefit everyone in your business and help refugees and asylum-seekers grow within the workplace and integrate in society.

The following pointers may be particularly helpful for assisting refugees and asylum-seekers to integrate within your business:

- Ensure internal communications are appropriate to the language abilities of all employees

- Make accommodation for religious holidays or customs
- Offer training courses on intercultural communication
- Set up an internal Cultural Awareness Network to celebrate and raise awareness of different cultures and faith backgrounds
- Deliver unconscious bias training for all employees not only for hiring managers
- Engage senior management to ensure the rationale behind hiring refugees and asylum-seekers is understood and communicated
- Offer training to both supervisors and staff on how they can support refugees and asylum-seekers
- Provide incoming refugees and asylum-seekers with clear information on company policies and work habits

## FOOTNOTES:

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## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

### **UNHCR's annual global trends report**

<https://www.unhcr.org/flagship-reports/globaltrends/>

### **UNHCR and OECD cross-society action plan on employing refugees:**

<https://www.unhcr.org/5adde9904>

### **Private sector partnership for refugees and asylum-seekers**

<https://www.opendoorsinitiative.ie/>

If you have any questions which are not answered in this toolkit you can contact Business in the Community. Members of Business in the Community can access bespoke advice and training on employing refugees.

<https://www.bitc.ie/> | +353 1 874 7232 | [info@bitc.ie](mailto:info@bitc.ie)



## **CONTACT US**

### **UNHCR Ireland**

102 Pemrboke Road  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4

Tel: +353 1 6314614

Email: [iredu@unhcr.org](mailto:iredu@unhcr.org)

### **COVER PHOTOGRAPH:**

Pelagie Siete-Mimauzet was a successful businesswoman in Ukraine, where she lived for 21 years. She now works with Accenture in Dublin