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**INTRA-EU SKILLS-BASED
MOBILITY OF ADULT REFUGEES**
Findings of a Cedefop pilot project
between Greece and Portugal

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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

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Executive summary

The pilot project

In the framework of its project *Complementary pathways for adult refugees: the role of VET, skills and qualifications*, launched on 18 January 2018 as a direct response to the arrival of high numbers of refugees and migrants in 2015 and 2016, Cedefop conducted a pilot project between 18 January 2020 and 31 August 2021, which tested if and how a skills-based intra-EU mobility solution to protection for adult refugees would work. The International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) implemented the project, which encompassed phases of research and consultations before culminating in the pilot itself. Portugal, as the receiving country, and Greece, as the sending country, provided their political support for the pilot.

The skills-based intra-EU mobility pilot project was anchored on a bilateral relocation agreement between Greece and Portugal. The pilot targeted beneficiaries of international protection (IP) in Greece who were unemployed and willing to take up employment in, and ultimately move to, Portugal.

The political support of the Portuguese and Greek authorities and the bilateral agreement on relocation between the two countries were of crucial importance. Such an agreement proved key as it provided the legal path for people to move together legally, with their families where necessary, and allowed beneficiaries of IP to keep their status, preventing them from falling back to a status with lesser rights (e.g. a residence-based employment permit instead of refugee or subsidiary protection status).

The impact of COVID-19

The pilot project was heavily affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in two ways: first, some employers (e.g. in the food and tourism sector) could not participate, despite their great interest, as COVID-19 seriously affected their business. Second, the pandemic caused delays and restrictions in mobility, which ultimately was one of the reasons why no actual relocation could be carried out.

Considering these challenges, the participation of around 15 candidates in job interviews is evidence of the interest of employers to engage and of beneficiaries of IP to participate in such a programme. As a synergy of the project, the skills of refugees already living in Portugal also became visible and known to Portuguese employers. Some of them have been invited for job interviews.

The importance of networks

Above all, the pilot project revealed the importance of networks. Neither the Greek Asylum Service (as the sending country), nor the integration authority or the Public Employment Service in Portugal (as the receiving country) have the time and resources to identify and build trust with refugees as well as regularly communicate and link with employers.

Funding is crucial in both contexts. It allows for the identification and counselling of refugees in sending countries and for the establishment of employers' networks in receiving countries. Such networks could be placed with the migration authority responsible for refugee integration, as engagement with employers naturally leads to synergies in identifying employment opportunities for new arrivals, as well as for refugees already residing in the country.

Awareness raising, information sharing and mentoring: the work with employers in Portugal

Most of the employers had no prior experience in hiring refugees and lacked basic information on migration, such as knowing that recognised beneficiaries of IP are allowed to work. The work with employers in Portugal clearly revealed the necessity to further engage them in national migration and integration strategies.

Language proficiency, the duration of the relocation process and recognition of skills are the most common points of concern for employers. Language skills evidently can be fundamental for some positions but the length of the relocation transfer process – which could take up to 2 months once a work contract was offered – also concerned employers. The lack of documentation (particularly for high-skilled workers) and the difficulty in anticipating demand for low-skilled positions were two additional problems raised by employers. While the challenge of recognition of skills was rarely raised, the lack of documentation could be a challenge, particularly for high-skilled workers. Some companies would only hire candidates who could provide documentation or references proving experience or training in a mandatory requirement, e.g. a bachelor degree in computer science.

Supporting beneficiaries of international protection to make their skills visible and accessible for the labour market

As well as employers, beneficiaries of IP also need proper information and support on how and where they can make their skills visible and attractive for the labour market, especially when it comes to potential employment opportunities in another EU country. Once beneficiaries agree on the potential for relocation for the purpose of work, they need support throughout the process (e.g. preparation of a CV, information about the recruiting company provision of space and infrastructure during the interviews) and to be kept informed. The process needs to be transparent about the timeline and the steps necessary to prevent the relocation candidate from falling into a limbo situation for too long, putting her/his own life on hold. It is necessary to be transparent and upfront in answering questions about, for example, their legal status following relocation, the duration of the expected residence permit and the possibilities of prolonging their legal status.

Ultimately, beneficiaries of IP also require support upon arrival in the new country. A contact organisation is needed to lead him/her through administrative, legal, employment or other concerns. Finally, allowing the relocation of immediate family and including them in relocation considerations is also necessary.

A database to make skills and jobs visible and accessible

Different organisations support refugees' integration and, *inter alia*, carry out skills identification, but there is no unique repository of the refugees' skills at the national or EU level. Access to the skills profiles of refugees has thus proved difficult and the role of an intermediary organisation, such as NGOs active in the integration of refugees, was crucial. The intermediary organisation provided access to refugees' skills and represented a trusted counterpart for the participants of the pilot.

Conclusion

The pilot project documented in various ways the potential of a purposeful relocation, based on labour market supply, for beneficiaries of international protection and for the labour market demand in an EU Member State. It evidenced the potential of closely working with employers and the need to develop networks in sending countries like Greece and receiving countries like Portugal. Ultimately,

the pilot showed ways to succeed if the political will to engage in relocation exists; allowing intra-EU labour mobility to beneficiaries of international protection has the potential to provide beneficiaries with access to a livelihood, to ease migratory pressures for countries at the EU's external borders and to satisfy labour market demands in participating EU countries.

Well-designed, skill-based mobility solutions to protection could find political agreement, and could actually boost relocation, as they would:

- (a) satisfy national labour demands in relocation countries;
- (b) limit integration costs and efforts as candidates would directly enter employment in the country of relocation;
- (c) provide a show of solidarity at limited cost;
- (d) help the beneficiaries to make best use of their human and social capital.

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

Cedefop launched the project *Complementary pathways for adult refugees: the role of VET, skills and qualifications* on 18 January 2018 as a direct response to the arrival of high numbers of refugees and migrants in 2015 and 2016. These movements challenged EU migration and asylum policy and laid bare some fundamental flaws. In the absence of legal pathways, displaced persons needed to rely on dangerous routes, with numerous deadly accidents along the journey. In addition, those who arrived within the EU found themselves in Member States along the external borders without any possibility of moving on and unable to capitalise on their human capital at the place where they were stranded.

Against this backdrop, the project sought to investigate the options and potential for displaced persons to make use of their human capital by facilitating:

- (a) their entry to the EU from third countries based on safe legal pathways (complementary pathways);
- (b) their movement from EU external border countries to other Member States (intra-EU relocation).

The project explored the theoretical potential of skills-based (labour) mobility for refugees through complementary pathways and relocation. Essentially, the work sought not to constitute new legal migration pathways but to anchor the mobility on existing legal channels. It encompassed a theoretical examination of the legal and practical challenges of complementary pathways, which were summarised in the framework *Creating lawful opportunities for adult refugee labour market mobility: a conceptual framework for a VET, skills and qualifications-based complementary pathway to protection* (Cedefop, 2019). It combines skills and labour market considerations and outlines different migration options that would underscore skills-based mobility.

Through its pilot phase, the project also explored the practical implications of an intra-EU skills-based mobility scheme by testing it through a bilateral relocation agreement between Greece and Portugal.

Displaced persons, including refugees, have very limited legal options for moving to the EU. But even within the EU, neither applicants nor beneficiaries of IP are free to move. With very limited exceptions (as seen currently in the context of people fleeing the war in Ukraine and also the earlier displacement of Venezuelans), refugees come from countries that need visas to enter the EU. They need a variety of legal documents to satisfy the immigration procedures.

Documents that refugees mostly do not possess. However, Member States do have some discretion. Some countries open humanitarian or non-humanitarian channels or link them with special employment permits, thus creating skills-based complementary pathways.

However, the labour market side of such complementary pathways is not straightforward either. Effective skills-based solutions to protection need the strong involvement of the private sector. Employers need to establish the skills in demand and make concrete job offers before opening the doors for matching those with the skills profiles and interests of potential beneficiaries. This means that reaching out to employers and local economic communities is crucial for identifying potential job offers, or at least employers willing to participate. The labour market side and engaging employers were thus the entry point for testing in practice the skills-based solutions in the frame of the pilot project.

This paper is based on the findings of the pilot project and complements Cedefop's policy brief *Relocation 2.0: tying adult refugee skills to labour market demand* (Cedefop, 2022).

CHAPTER 2.

EU context

Under the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), the basic assumption is that those in need of international protection are, in principle, able to obtain it effectively in any EU Member State once they have reached its territory and applied for international protection. Mobility from one Member State to another to obtain effective protection is thus – by definition and default – a non-issue ⁽¹⁾. The key question in relation to applicants has been how they should be distributed between countries. Applicants for international protection are mobile and do not necessarily apply for, or wish to obtain, international protection in the EU country where they first arrive. The distribution of applicants has been framed primarily in terms of responsibility sharing and solidarity (Wagner et al., 2018), although also closely linked to broader questions of migration management (European Settlement Network and van Selm, 2018).

In this context, the Dublin Regulation ⁽²⁾ is a core instrument. By establishing rules for determining the responsibility for examining applications for international protection and – by implication – providing protection for those granted status in the country responsible for status determination, it provides a distribution mechanism with geographical location as its basic principle (Wagner and Kraler, 2015). This territorial concept underlying the Dublin rules, and the Dublin system itself, has been subject to heavy criticism virtually from its inception and was held responsible for, or at least found incapable of addressing, the imbalances in the distribution of applicants for international protection in Europe (Wagner and Kraler, 2016, p. 8).

An alternative model for distribution had already been proposed in the context of the Yugoslav refugee crisis in the early 1990s but did not gather sufficient

⁽¹⁾ In practice, however, the suspension of Dublin returns to Greece ordered both by national and supranational courts in response to unsatisfactory reception conditions has shown that effective protection is not a done deal in EU Member States, see for example: [Court of Justice of the European Union \(2013\). *Judgment in the case C-4/11, Puid*, 14 November 2013.](#)

⁽²⁾ [Regulation \(EU\) No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person \(recast\). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 180, 29.6.2013, pp. 31-59.](#)

support (Wagner et al., 2018). The Temporary Protection Directive ⁽³⁾, adopted after the Kosovo crisis, reflected earlier discussions following the Bosnian crisis and similarly failed to provide any rules on how applicants for international protection falling under the directive would be distributed. The EU emergency relocation mechanism, adopted in 2015 in response to the perceived overburdening of Greece and Italy as the main countries of first arrival, and which expired in September 2017, was the first time that a different distribution principle – based on the capacity of countries ⁽⁴⁾ – was applied in the EU context.

The EC proposal for an amendment of the Dublin Regulation (Dublin IV proposal) similarly foresees a corrective allocation mechanism ⁽⁵⁾. It also proposes enhanced procedural and material consequences for secondary movements of applicants for international protection. The proposal generally reinforces the top-down approach to regulating mobility of applicants already underlying the Dublin convention, although it also does not rule out matching mechanisms that do take applicant preferences into account ⁽⁶⁾. This managerial approach to the distribution of applicants for international protection (and, by implication, those already granted refugee status, given their limited opportunities for mobility within Europe), based on individual countries' capacities, has been called into question. Economists have argued for more flexible ways of distributing applicants for international protection that take the preferences of all parties concerned into account (Rapoport and Huertas Moraga, 2016) and that could also be linked to matching the skills and qualifications of applicants to labour demand in the receiving countries (Lundborg, 2018).

Compared to the discussion around the distribution of applicants for international protection, the mobility of beneficiaries of international protection in

⁽³⁾ [Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof.](#) *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 212, 7.8.2001, pp. 12-23.

⁽⁴⁾ The capacity of a country has been determined by the Council Decision based on a quota composed of a distribution key, taking into account GDP and population size (40% weighting for each) as the primary determinants, whereas the unemployment rate and number of asylum applications received in the past are weighted at 10% each.

⁽⁵⁾ The corrective allocation mechanism is built on a reference key, which is based on two criteria with equal 50% weighting, the size of the population and the total GDP of a Member State. The application of the corrective allocation for the benefit of a Member State is triggered automatically where the number of applications for international protection, for which a Member State is responsible, exceeds 150% of the figure identified in the reference key. See [COM 2016/0270 final](#).

⁽⁶⁾ See Rapoport and Huertas Moraga (2016) for a proposal.

Europe has received much less attention. A paper by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) argued for the mutual recognition of decisions granting international protection and related rights to free movement once status had been granted (ECRE, 2016). According to the ECRE, this could reduce the importance of the particular Member State in which an application for international protection is determined. Empirically, the scale of such movements is likely to be fairly small (Lassen et al., 2004). Currently, beneficiaries of international protection enjoy the principle of the right to obtain long-term residence status, with (limited) mobility rights, after 5 years of legal residence ⁽⁷⁾. Intra-EU mobility for beneficiaries of international protection arguably may create opportunities for both the beneficiaries of international protection and the receiving country. It can potentially ease already tight labour market situations in the countries of (first) asylum by, at the same time, satisfying labour market demands in another EU Member State. According to economists, enabling the mobility of beneficiaries of international protection, on the basis of matching their skills and qualifications with labour demand, will also increase overall labour market efficiency (MEDAM, 2018, p. 41). In the specific case of beneficiaries of international protection, this could also imply diversification of destinations based on demand.

The whole question of intra-EU mobility took a new twist with the war in Ukraine, which forced millions to leave the country and ultimately led to the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive. This Directive provides beneficiaries, *inter alia*, with the immediate right to education, training and employment as well as leeway to decide on their preferred Member State for asylum. While the Ukrainian context is significantly different compared to the one for which the pilot project was carried out, it also provides a new impetus to intra-EU mobility based on peoples' skills. Member States have shown flexibility in addressing this humanitarian crisis, and in finding solutions leading to integration. In addition, two recent Communications by the Commission touch upon the labour market integration of beneficiaries of TP ⁽⁸⁾. These Communications refer, in a special section, to access to jobs for beneficiaries and propose making use of the EU skills profiling tool. It also emphasised that the Commission will launch an EU talent pool pilot initiative. To this end, the Commission proposed a pilot use of the EU talent pool, which shall be a web-based matching tool adapted from the EU

⁽⁷⁾ See the Recast long-term residence Directive: [Directive 2011/51/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 May 2011 amending Council Directive 2003/109/EC to extend its scope to beneficiaries of international protection](#).

⁽⁸⁾ See European Commission (2022). [Welcoming those fleeing war in Ukraine: readying Europe to meet the needs](#). COM (2022) 113 final and European Commission (2022). [Attracting skills and talent to the EU](#). COM (2022) 657 final.

skills profile tool for third country nationals. Skills-based mobility of Ukrainian refugees may find its way into countries' responses to the crisis, which could set the basis for more sustainable approaches to protection and integration in the medium to long term.

CHAPTER 3.

The pilot project between Greece and Portugal

While refugee skills-based intra-EU mobility receives increasing interest in various forums, little practical experience existed at the time of the research on the opportunities and challenges of such solutions. As a second step of the project *Complementary pathways for adult refugees: the role of VET, skills and qualifications*, and based on the strategic considerations outlined in the framework, the pilot project aimed at testing the ideas in practice in an intra-EU (labour) mobility context, anchoring it into existing legal admission channels. The final aim was to help refugees move legally from one EU Member State to another upon a concrete job offer from an employer in the country of destination, while allowing the beneficiaries to keep their protection status.

The pilot project took place between 18 January 2020 and 31 August 2021 and was built in two phases: first, a political/strategic phase that sought support from an EU Member State to pilot intra-EU mobility based on the skills of refugees and on its existing legal frameworks. Second, an implementation phase aimed at analysing the interest and potential of the labour market in employing refugees living in another EU Member State. Crucially, this phase sought to identify employers' needs and expectations and the interest of refugees in moving to another Member State based on their skills.

3.1. The planning phase

ICMPD held several exploratory interviews in Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland and Sweden to test the waters among governmental, non-governmental and international organisations to engage in complementary pathways or relocation based on refugees' skills. Despite the general interest to look into this newly emerging tool, Portugal showed the highest practical interest in applying intra-EU relocation based on the skills of beneficiaries of international protection and the labour market demands in Portugal.

As beneficiaries of IP in the EU do not have the right to intra-EU labour mobility, it was necessary to:

- (a) analyse the Portuguese migration laws that could build the legal foundation for intra-EU mobility of refugees from one EU country (as the sending country) to Portugal (as the receiving country);

- (b) define the target group for the pilot (people with refugee status, people with subsidiary protection status, applicants for international protection or all of these categories);
- (c) identify an EU Member State on the EU's external borders (sending country) that hosts high numbers of the target group and would benefit from intra-EU relocation;
- (d) identify the necessary supporting structures in the sending country and Portugal as the receiving country to pilot skills-based intra-EU relocation in practice.

3.1.1. The legal basis

During preparatory discussions, the Portuguese authorities, comprising the State Secretariat for Migration, the High Commission for Migration (ACM) and the Immigration and Border Service (SEF), suggested making use of the bilateral relocation agreement between Greece and Portugal to test and pilot skills-based mobility. This bilateral agreement foresees the relocation of applicants and beneficiaries of international protection from Greece to Portugal. There are no specific selection criteria set in this bilateral agreement.

In cooperation with the Greek and Portuguese authorities, and after approval from both sides to make use of the bilateral agreement, a limited number of places was reserved to test a skills-based mobility solution targeting unemployed beneficiaries of international protection residing in Greece (unemployed people with refugee status or subsidiary protection in Greece). Under the agreement, once in Portugal, a new Portuguese status corresponding to the one they had in Greece would be granted (i.e. the status of an applicant for international protection, refugee status (valid for 5 years in Portugal) or subsidiary protection status (valid for 3 years)). The agreement also foresaw financial means for the transfer of the beneficiaries through the support of IOM, the United Nations Migration Agency.

In summary, the bilateral agreement satisfied all the preconditions to test the skills-based mobility of refugees and proved broad enough to allow for a selection (of a few cases) based on skills. It provided the legal basis and the legal channel for the physical transfer of potential beneficiaries to take place, the financial means to cover the costs of travel, the maintenance of their status in Portugal and the rights associated with it. If offered a job in Portugal and beneficiaries would have the possibility of moving to Portugal together with their families.

3.1.2. Define the target group

The definition of the target group for the skills-based relocation pilot was guided by three key considerations.

- (a) The pilot targeted people to whom Greece had granted international protection status since beneficiaries of international protection are covered by the bilateral agreement. According to the bilateral agreement, their status remained the same after relocation, which provided the necessary legal security and predictability for the beneficiaries of international protection, employers and Portugal.
- (b) Greece suffers from a high unemployment rate and scarcity of jobs. Even if beneficiaries of international protection have access to the Greek labour market, their chances of finding employment are, in practice, low and so are their prospects of rebuilding their lives in Greece ⁽⁹⁾. Thus, the second selection criterion was based on the understanding that a majority of beneficiaries of international protection in Greece are unemployed and, therefore, an intra-EU relocation project would also offer relief for the Greek labour market.
- (c) Any inclusion to the pilot required the consent of the beneficiary.

3.1.3. Create the networks

Despite the political endorsement of the pilot project by both Portugal and Greece, they do not have the resources to build and maintain a network of interested employers in Portugal, nor to counsel, raise awareness and support beneficiaries of international protection in Greece ⁽¹⁰⁾ to take part in this pilot. As employers and beneficiaries of international protection need guidance to make informed decisions, a network structure was set up in both countries.

In Portugal, ICMPD seconded an expert to the ACM to liaise with the main government partners in the country, particularly the ACM and the SEF. The central role of the expert, however, was to establish and facilitate a network among

⁽⁹⁾ The poor employment and social inclusion prospect for beneficiaries of international protection was also recently recognised by a [German court in January 2021](#), which had to decide whether a Syrian applicant in Germany who was granted IP before in Greece, should be sent back to Greece or not. The Higher Administrative Court for North Rhine-Westphalia ruled that the asylum authority could not reject his asylum claim because the senate [was] convinced that ‘the applicant [was] very likely, regardless of his will and his personal decisions, to find himself in a situation of extreme material need in Greece and to be unable to satisfy his most elementary needs (‘bed, bread, soap’) for a long period of time’.

⁽¹⁰⁾ This has also been recognised by the European Court of Auditors as one reason for low relocation numbers in earlier campaigns. First, the auditors found that the information provided to potential beneficiaries of relocation was not effective enough to gain their trust and convince them that the schemes were attractive. Second, the authorities in relocating countries lacked sufficient capacity to identify and reach out to all potentially eligible candidates on their territory (European Court of Auditors, 2019, p. 23-24).

employers interested in the pilot project, aiming to identify the skills in demand in Portugal for the purpose of employing refugees. Such a network was not readily available.

In Greece, ICMPD commissioned the Greek NGO, Solidarity Now (SN), which provides employment and career advice services to migrant and refugee populations in the country. SN conducts skills assessments of applicants and beneficiaries of IP to increase the employability of this population in the Greek labour market. In the pilot project, SN extended its counselling to include the employability of its clients to employers in Portugal and provided access to the skills profiles of its clients. SN further ensured the engagement of the refugees based on a previously established relationship of trust.

In addition, ICMPD and Cedefop provided further coordination and support structures to liaise at various levels in Greece and Portugal.

3.2. Implementation

The pilot was put into practice once agreements at the political level in the two countries were concluded and the necessary network structures had been set up. The implementation was then carried out step by step (Table 1) and entailed the exclusive use of field work, such as: regular consultation with immigration authorities; cooperation with NGOs working with refugees; direct work with refugees (reaching out, profiling, drafting CVs, support for job interviews), direct work with employers (reaching out, identifying needs and expectations, selection of profiles, provision of CVs and facilitating interviews with refugees).

Table 1. **Sequence of the steps during the implementation phase**

Step	Description	Result/outcome
Step 1	Create the pool of interested employers	Database with information on the companies interested in recruiting refugees
Step 2	Reach out to refugees and create the pool of interested refugees	Short list of interested refugees with their contact details
Step 3	Create an anonymised database with some basic profiling information, such as skills, languages and work experience of the interested potential beneficiaries	Talent pool with the skills profiles of the refugees
Step 4	Share the anonymised database with employers and invite them to express interest in certain profiles and ask for CVs of specific candidates	Skills demand is expressed from the employers and specific refugees are chosen as candidates

Step	Description	Result/outcome
Step 5	Send the CVs to employers who invite potential candidates directly to a number of interviews for specific job openings	Selection Interviews are held: usually two or three interviews are held as part of the selection procedure before a job offer is made

Source: Cedefop.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, significantly influenced the implementation phase of the project. It prevented in-person meetings and travel of project staff to mobilise capacities in both Greece and Portugal, the core project countries. The labour market also suffered from the closure of businesses in some sectors, particularly tourism, which had repercussions on potential employers participating in the pilot.

The following two chapters summarise the processes and the main findings in the two countries, while the third and final chapter presents concluding remarks and reflections on the way forward.

CHAPTER 4.

The process and main findings in Portugal

From September 2020 to May 2021, the Portuguese national expert contacted 93 employers in Portugal. They were mainly selected from the index of the largest companies in Portugal or the list of the best companies to work for in the country. From this list, companies with dedicated departments or staff for corporate social responsibility (CSR), or those emphasising diversity and inclusion policies, were prioritised.

In total, 32 employers (including large companies such as Siemens, Nestlé, L'Oréal and Microsoft) agreed to virtual meetings to have a better understanding of the project. The meetings were important not only to explain the project but also to raise awareness of the skills and talents of refugees in general (including those already in Portugal) and to clarify basic information regarding the legal status of beneficiaries of international protection and their rights. Most of the employers had no prior experience of hiring refugees and lacked basic information on migration, such as knowing that recognised beneficiaries of IP are allowed to work.

Box 1. **Why companies declined further engagement: COVID-19 and lack of proficiency in the Portuguese language**

Some companies, such as Starbucks and Grupo Portugalia, declined to cooperate, mainly because their sector was hit hard by COVID-19 and, therefore, they had to stop recruitment. However, all of the companies met were supportive of hiring refugees whenever/if they had job openings, and were also willing to accommodate any specific needs refugees might have when being recruited, such as waiting for a lengthy transfer process (most of the employers said it would be possible to wait for around 2 months between the job offer and the arrival of the new employee).

Some companies had accepted an initial meeting but were reluctant to fully commit to the project by hiring refugees residing in Greece. The main reasons mentioned were: not being able to speak Portuguese, which can be fundamental for some positions, especially for low-skilled ones; the length of the transfer process, which as previously mentioned, could take up to 2 months and some companies would need candidates to be available immediately; the need to recruit candidates with a very specific set of skills and fluency in both English and Portuguese, such as AbbVie, a pharmaceutical company.

Source: Authors.

Large Portuguese employers such as BNP Paribas, CUF (a leading healthcare provider), Siemens and Teleperformance agreed to cooperate. No specific positions (duties, tasks or a specific job) were shared upfront by these

employers. As a starting point, they determined broad ‘filter’ criteria for beneficiaries of international protection as their overarching requirement:

- (a) higher education;
- (b) soft skills such as high motivation;
- (c) language (English or Portuguese).

These criteria were communicated to SN to ensure that the right people were pre-selected from their client database. A pool of 70 beneficiaries of IP residing in Greece was selected by SN based on these criteria and people’s interest in possibly being relocated from Greece to Portugal for employment. The 70 profiles were shared, in an anonymised format, with the employers. Of the companies contacted, the following showed an increased interest and asked for the CVs based on the profiles in the database.

- (a) Teleperformance requested and received four CVs.
- (b) BNP Paribas requested 19 CVs and received 13 (four people were unable to be contacted and two had decided to withdraw their application for relocation and wished to stay in Greece).
- (c) Siemens requested nine CVs and received six (two people were unreachable and another one had decided to withdraw his/her application for relocation).
- (d) CUF requested 17 CVs and received 14 (three people were unreachable).

Teleperformance, BNP Paribas and Siemens selected some of the candidates to participate in the recruitment process. They called 14 people for a first interview: 11 were interviewed, and eight were invited for a second interview. At the time the project closed, seven beneficiaries of international protection in Greece remained in the recruitment process to be hired by Portuguese employers, with the prospect of taking up a work contract in Portugal after relocation. However, none of them has been offered a job.

4.1. The needs of the employers

A main initial question to employers was to learn more about the kind of profiles and/or skills most in demand. Most companies found it difficult to determine clear needs. Thus, having a profile database with key information on refugees’ skills (the supply side) and sharing it with employers turned out to be crucial to advance on the demand side. Based on the general information about the refugees’ education background, language proficiency, experience and other skills, the profile database gave employers an initial idea of the types of skills available and allowed them to ask for those CVs that could fit the employers’ demands. However, some companies did give information about skills in demand such as the following:

- (a) low-skilled workers: workers for civil construction (such as bricklayers' labourers), the textiles and clothing industry, agriculture (general farm workers);
- (b) medium-skilled workers: operators of agricultural machinery and equipment, technicians for sterilising surgical instruments, manual skills (such as sewing repairs), call centre operators and customer service support and logistic sector workers;
- (c) high-skilled workers: mostly engineers and information technology specialists. There is a very high demand for IT professionals, either with specific training or practical experience. For these positions, advanced knowledge of English is mandatory.

Box 2. Further challenges in recruiting refugees in a cross-country mobility context

In addition to the lack of proficiency in the Portuguese language (Box 1), the following challenges came to the surface during the process:

Lack of documentation

While the challenge of recognition of skills was rarely raised, the lack of documentation could be a problem for high-skilled workers in particular. Most companies would only hire candidates who could provide documentation or references proving experience or training in a mandatory requirement e.g. Bachelor's degree in computer science.

Anticipate demand

For low-skilled positions, it can be hard to anticipate labour force demand well in advance (considering that the refugee mobility process can take a while).

Source: Authors.

The lack of qualification or experience is considered less of a problem for lower or mid-level jobs whenever in-house training could be provided. Some employers, such as CUF and CAP, can provide vocational training for skills in high demand, such as courses on operating agricultural machinery or sterilisation of surgical instruments. Employers showed higher interest in social competences and soft skills, such as motivation, diligence, resilience and reliability.

4.2. Role of intermediary organisations in relation to the employers

Initially, all the communication between the candidate and the company was made through the intermediation of the liaison expert in Portugal and Solidarity Now in Greece. In that way, it was possible to assure that both (employer and candidate) would be well informed about each other. Siemens, Teleperformance and BNP Paribas have interviewed candidates and, in all cases, even when the communication was made directly with the candidate, the liaison expert was copied into email correspondence. Considering the different levels of proficiency in English among employers and candidates as well as the cultural differences that could lead to miscommunication – and the fact that an internet connection might not be easily and regularly available for refugees – having the liaison expert and SN involved in all steps of the recruitment process has been fundamental.

The role of intermediary organisations proved crucial and a *conditio sine qua non* for the success of the whole process. This applies when employers and refugees are in the same country, and it is even more important if refugees are not yet in the destination country. Intermediary organisations in receiving countries of relocation are crucial for collecting and filtering the demands and needs of employers, for providing full information on legal issues related to the employability of refugees and for giving a sense of security and support to employers (especially for companies that have no experience in hiring nationals from third countries).

Once contact has been established and interest has grown among employers, an intermediary organisation is still fundamental to accompany the communication between employers and candidates and to assure that possible cultural differences or different levels of language knowledge do not lead to serious miscommunication that could jeopardise the interest of both parties in participating in the project. Additionally, and as requested by many companies, an intermediary organisation is also appreciated as a mediator of the relationship between employer and employee for any related questions that may arise, in particular during the first months of employment (Box 3).

Box 3. **Concerns expressed by employers**

Time

Employers need to know how long it takes for a selected beneficiary to arrive in Portugal and take up the job. Employers who engaged in the selection process during the pilot project were willing to wait for a period of up to 2 months. Other employers who declined participation did not have this flexibility, as they needed to employ people right away.

Mentoring

All employers met would be open to hiring refugees as long as they have support from a specific organisation to follow up the new working relationship and mediate any sort of issues that may arise.

Integration

The main concern of employers is to know what sort of integration activities would be provided to refugees once they arrive in Portugal, such as Portuguese classes, cultural orientation and psychosocial support.

Employers expressed concern about the first few months and the initial needs that the new worker/refugee will have, such as: finding an apartment and learning Portuguese.

Source: Authors.

Such an intermediary role could be filled by a public administrative body or a non-governmental organisation. However, it is fundamental that such organisations have good communications and relationships with public bodies in the country that will be involved in the relocation and integration processes, especially immigration agencies, social security, ministries of home affairs and employment agencies.

4.3. **Lessons learned**

- (a) Make employers part of national labour market integration strategies.
Employers have limited knowledge of migration and asylum. Therefore, an engagement with the private sector for relocation/labour market integration of refugees requires awareness raising of legal issues in an easy and approachable way. It is equally important for employers that any relocation programme is backed and supported by the State/immigration agency.
- (b) A database that makes the skills of beneficiaries of IP visible to employers.
Employers may not seek a very specific profile and the potential skills that refugees could bring are often difficult to understand. A database that provides

basic information on refugees is an important entry point and may help employers to specify further demands.

- (c) Basic information on employers participating in relocation/labour market integration.

Beneficiaries of international protection also need basic information about the company before taking part in the job interviews. Information about the employer could be provided in the form of short summaries with further internet links for more information. It might be worth asking employers for a brief summary about the company to be sent to candidates.

- (d) Language and timeliness of the relocation process.

Language is one of the main obstacles for employers to get engaged in employing refugees from abroad, in particular for low and medium-skilled jobs. Sometimes, time is also an issue when employers need manpower right away, while the actual physical transfer of a beneficiary from Greece to Portugal from the moment of selection may take up to 2 months.

CHAPTER 5.

The process and main findings in Greece

SN was established in 2013 and provides humanitarian support to Greek, migrant and refugee populations (Annex 1). The organisation was responsible for the identification of potential candidates for the pilot project among the beneficiaries of IP who reside in Greece and are without employment.

For the pilot project, SN selected up to 67 profiles of beneficiaries of IP in Greece who matched the filter criteria defined by the Portuguese employers (see Chapter 5). To identify the 67 profiles that would be suitable for the pilot project, the employability service, based on principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, searched their database to identify prior or current beneficiaries with the profile and skills that matched prerequisites, including language (English or Portuguese).

Box 4. **Soft skills in the pre-selection phase**

While employers showed interest in soft skills along with hard skills and relevant experience, the filter or eliminating criteria that they set focused on education attainment and language skills. This limited the opportunities for the supply of profiles of candidates who had the enthusiasm, determination, willingness and adaptability that would be fitting for a pilot relocation scheme. At the same time, some highly skilled profiles lacked the required language knowledge, which eliminated their chances of being selected for the pilot.

It may be interesting to revisit this issue and give more leeway to the intermediary organisation to also propose candidates whose talents may not necessarily be captured on paper. The identification of skills through first assessment methods, such as the ones applied by SN, and a set of counselling sessions, would allow the staff to assess aspects that may not be captured on paper, such as soft skills, the motivation to work and to find opportunities, the spoken level of English, as well as concerns or vulnerabilities. To tackle the language issue, these candidates, if selected, could attend intensive language courses 2/3 months before departure or during their employment period.

Source: Authors.

To finalise the selection of profiles to be forwarded to the employers, SN contacted potential candidates and requested their consent for their participation before the respective profiles were uploaded to the database set up for the Portuguese employers. The candidates' interest in the pilot, as well as their potential concerns, were discussed and assessed through a phone call or face-to-

face meeting. Any other information of potential interest to the employer that may not have been documented was also noted. The case files/profiles kept by employability officers additionally documented other relevant factors that play a role in the suitability of the profile, such as family status (dependents/single-headed family). The discussions also revealed why beneficiaries who fit the selection criteria rejected an offer (Box 5).

Box 5. Reasons why refugees declined participation or withdrew

Mistrust and fear

Many of the decision-making factors cannot be seen on paper (or in the skills database). A social file may, however, reveal certain vulnerabilities: a woman declined the offer upfront out of fear and lack of familiarity with these types of opportunities. In her experience, opportunities that sound too good to be true, and involve moving location, are often associated with exploitative schemes and are met with fear and hostility.

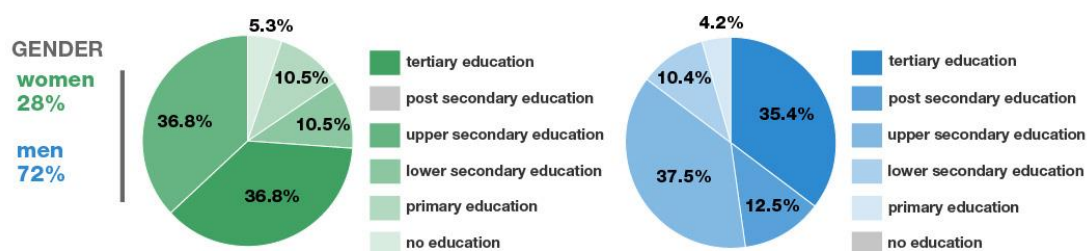
Family situation (mother with two children)

After discussions, and even after taking initial steps into the procedure, some of the candidates decided against taking part in the scheme. Due in part to her family status, a single mother with two children explained: 'If I were alone maybe I would go, to see a new country and to have new experiences'. After experiencing the situation in Greece, she feared going to what she called a 'similar economy' or equally 'poor country', where she expected the same lack of opportunities for her and her family would be equally dire in the long run.

Source: Authors.

The pre-selection of 67 beneficiaries of international protection residing in Greece without access to employment and open for relocation to Portugal was conducted based on the filter criteria developed by the Portuguese employers. The pre-selection covered 48 males and 19 females from 20 different countries of origin, such as Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran. Roughly one-third (35% of men and 37% of women) had tertiary education. About 50% of men and 37% of women had upper secondary or post-secondary education. The remaining 15% of men and 26% of women had lower secondary or primary education. Most had some knowledge of English, although with different levels of proficiency.

Figure 1. **Overview of education of the pre-selected 67 profiles of beneficiaries of international protection**



Source: Cedefop, 2022.

5.1. The role of the intermediary organisations in relation to refugees

Besides the identification of the profiles against the filter criteria in their client database, and reaching out to the refugees to seek their consent to taking part in the pilot, SN continued to support the potential beneficiaries when employers showed interest (some were asked to send their CV), as well as in the cases when potential beneficiaries were invited to interviews. SN needed to re-establish contact with the refugees which, in some cases, was no longer possible (see Box 6). It helped refugees to format their CVs according to the requirements, supported them in preparing for the interview, and provided space, devices or connectivity when needed (e.g. to work on their CV and to prepare or conduct their online interview). SN remained heavily involved in all the procedures ensuring that the communication was smooth and that interactions occurred in a timely and appropriate manner. These factors proved crucial as they affected the overall process.

Box 6. Difficulty in keeping contact with the refugees

During the selection process, many of the candidates included in the database, and for whom employers requested CVs, could no longer be reached. The internal mobility of refugees within Greece is high as candidates are moved from site to site and region to region through different humanitarian programmes or for work. Additionally, mobile phone contracts and pay as you go phones are very costly in Greece, which may cause difficulties in locating beneficiaries and contact is often lost. Phone numbers are changed very frequently to benefit from the free credit when acquiring a new card/number and old numbers cease to operate. Reaching beneficiaries for any reason, from protection to education, is an issue that has been identified in programmes throughout Greece.

In addition, many refugees face poor connectivity as they live at remote sites or in places where Wi-Fi or even a network connection is not available. Answering an email or phone call promptly thus becomes challenging.

In addition, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, beneficiaries who were used to showing up to the walk-in centre could no longer do so. This, therefore, affected the communication and contact with the selected candidates throughout the process (support with CV, emails from employer, interview).

Source: Authors.

Intermediary organisations like SN are necessary for the different steps and components of the process. In a skills-based mobility solution for refugees, NGOs like SN have the advantage of knowing the needs and skills of potential beneficiaries. Through the walk-in centres and the diversity of large-scale and small-scale programmes, there is an understanding of their profiles, needs and skills. The relationship that is built between the clients and the organisation, especially in programmes like employability support, which take place through one-to-one counselling sessions, means that a rapport is often established, one of familiarity and trust.

Trust and familiarity with the clients' skills are key to identifying the right profiles to be matched for a scheme based on employment. It is also key to knowing what extra support is needed in a skills-matching based scheme. Beyond skills identification, NGOs like SN form an important safety net and referral point for beneficiaries of IP. NGOs in turn understand the needs of their clients. In a process like relocation (be it skills-based or not), support is needed at every stage: to inform candidates about the procedures, answer questions and concerns, prepare them (CV, interview, pre-departure) and help with documentation and practical aspects like access to connectivity, computers and spaces.

NGOs offer the capacity, flexibility and proximity in working with applicants and beneficiaries of IP that cannot be provided easily by public authorities or other actors. Intermediary organisations like SN also operate within a network of non-governmental, private and governmental actors that can further support the

process. In addition, as actors working according to humanitarian principles, they are also designed to work towards the protection of vulnerable people with specific guidelines incorporated in all areas of implementation. Intermediary actors with a humanitarian mandate will ensure the protection of their clients, while also assisting in making their skills visible and accessible for the labour market – both within Greece as well as for employers in other EU Member States.

5.2. Lessons learned

Relocation is an opportunity for applicants and beneficiaries of IP and when related to employment, it is even more attractive as it offers both an opportunity and security. As a participating beneficiary of IP said:

‘This would be my dream, to be relocated and find a good job! I will also not be relocated until I find the job!’

One of the participants who got through to the second round of interviews with employers on the receiving side exclaimed with enthusiasm:

‘When I heard about the opportunity there was no hesitation! I will get a job and have the same status that I enjoy here!’

The opportunity for employment and security in terms of maintaining status is a definite incentive. When asked if the thought of a new unfamiliar country may be a barrier, the participant answered:

‘All the other countries I passed through were new, Greece was new, you always find a way to adapt. (...) If you are in a camp, hearing about any opportunity to get out (referring to relocation or other opportunities/initiatives) is a dream, an opportunity that you want to take.’

Any skills-based mobility solution, via relocation or otherwise, is feasible as long as the application process and its requirements are clear and communicated clearly to the potential candidates. It requires full-time staff to support candidates throughout the process, to act as a point of contact, to inform and prepare them, to document their skills and make them accessible via a database, to keep track of the matching process and to support in the relocation process if it happens.

It is thus important that the process is transparent in its timeline and steps to avoid candidates staying in a limbo situation for too long, putting their life on hold. Further, specific information about their legal status must be made clear and communicated properly to candidates, so they are able to make a well-informed decision. It is necessary to be transparent and upfront when answering questions on such matters as their legal status following relocation, the duration of the expected residence permit and the possibility of prolonging their status. It is also fundamental to provide support both before departure and upon arrival in the new

country. It is especially helpful to have a focal point that the candidate can contact and rely on for any administrative, protection, employment or other concerns. Allowing the candidate to relocate immediate family and offering support to that end would also be necessary.

CHAPTER 6.

Concluding remarks

The pilot, relocating beneficiaries of international protection based on their skills and the demand in Portugal, not only revealed the potential of such solutions but also showed a number of obstacles. However, it also pointed to the way forward.

6.1. On the employers' side

While the pilot did not lead to the physical transfer of a candidate, the fact that around 15 candidates were invited to and participated in job interviews clearly showed the interest of employers to engage, and of beneficiaries of IP to participate in such a programme. An additional benefit of the project was the capacity for enhancing the visibility and employability of refugees already living in Portugal and who were, therefore, immediately available and had knowledge of the local language, which could be a mandatory requirement for some positions. As a result, some refugees residing in Portugal have been invited for job interviews.

The work with employers in Portugal clearly revealed the necessity to further engage employers in national migration and integration strategies. Most of the employers had no prior experience of hiring refugees and lacked basic information on migration, such as knowing that recognised beneficiaries of IP are allowed to work. To this end, national migration and integration authorities need to create a strategy to regularly and proactively reach out to employers and to build and maintain a network of employers interested in hiring refugees. In the long run, this will not only facilitate better awareness about job openings but it will also facilitate mutual trust and understanding and may ultimately lead to more companies engaging in hiring refugees, be they within the country or through skills-based relocation programmes.

The biggest obstacle for employers in recruiting refugees from abroad is often the lack of language skills (particularly for low and medium-skilled jobs). Language courses as part of pre-departure orientation, as well as upon arrival, could be envisaged as a solution.

6.2. On the refugees' side

The sample of 67 candidates gave the project just a glimpse of the skills available among beneficiaries of IP in Greece. Information on the human capital of refugees

is fragmentary and scattered. There are different organisations supporting refugees' integration and, *inter alia*, carrying out skills identification but there is no unique repository of the refugees' skills at national or regional level. Pooling information together into a centralised repository, ideally at the national level, would definitely help to open up further opportunities among refugees and employers as it would broaden the information base and provide easier and quicker access to employers and intermediary organisations.

In addition to the difficulty of accessing the skills profiles of refugees, it is also difficult to keep in contact with them due to high internal mobility, temporary phone numbers and intermittent access to the internet.

Refugees (particularly women with children) may be often reluctant to embark on such opportunities because of mistrust of the opportunities themselves and/or uncertainty in relation to a better future in the country of relocation. The role of intermediary organisations, which have already established a relationship of trust with the refugees, is crucial in guiding and supporting refugees to get engaged and go through the process and to keep them informed.

6.3. Governance and funding

Both the work with refugees and with employers proved to depend on networks facilitated by an intermediary organisation. Neither the authority in relocation countries such as the Greek Asylum Service nor the integration authority or the public employment services in countries of relocation have the time and resources to identify and build trust with refugees, nor to regularly communicate and link with employers in countries of relocation. However, this specific task must be undertaken. In relocation countries such as Greece, NGOs working on the employability of applicants and beneficiaries of IP are well situated to fulfil this role. In countries of relocation a dedicated person/team within the structure of the migration authority revealed important synergies for the labour market integration of refugees who are also already in the country. Funding is crucial in both contexts. Providing funds for identifying and counselling refugees in relocating countries, along with funds to establish networks of employers, are critical areas for investment. The employer network could be placed within the migration authority responsible for refugee integration, as engagement with employers naturally leads to synergies in also identifying employment opportunities for refugees already residing in the country.

6.4. Legal admission channels and status

In the absence of a legal framework supporting intra-EU labour mobility of refugees, the bilateral agreement proved key as it provided a legal path for people to move, together with their families where necessary, and allowed beneficiaries of IP to keep their status and to avoid falling back to a status with lesser rights (e.g. a residence permit for employment instead of refugee or subsidiary protection status). Guarantees to protect legal status are evidently a fundamental precondition for candidates to be involved.

6.5. Possible ways forward

Skills-based mobility solutions to protection may be approached in two different but not mutually exclusive ways.

- (a) Bottom-up demand driven (such as the one tested in the framework of the relocation agreement between Greece and Portugal): beneficiaries would be people with IP status who would relocate when they have a job offer at hand.
- (b) Top-down policy driven: beneficiaries would be applicants for IP and people with IP status, who would relocate based on criteria formulated at governmental level, and which would be primarily driven by prompt easing of pressure from the EU countries at the external borders.

The former approach is not a solution for crisis situations, as it requires time to engage employers and refugees, run the selection process and organise the physical transfer of the beneficiaries and their families (where applicable). It would also exclude applicants for IP. During the pilot, the work with beneficiaries of IP proved advantageous because candidates already had a valid residence permit, which they were able to keep while relocating to Portugal based on the bilateral agreement. While there is no evident obstacle to also including applicants for international protection, employers may be reluctant to engage in a recruitment process if the legal status of the candidate is not (yet) determined. The latter approach may also run without the involvement of employers on the front line, as criteria may be developed by authorities based on existing skills intelligence work. It may also include applicants for IP in the pool of potential beneficiaries.

Both approaches, however, would not work in the absence of a database that provides access to the skills of potential beneficiaries (applicants and/or beneficiaries of IP) and in the absence of governance structures and funding to put things into motion and make them happen. Since lack of proficiency in the local language remains an important barrier to employment, language courses need to be provided prior to departure as soon as the country of relocation is known.

Relocation arrangements proved to be the legal channel allowing for skills-based mobility solutions to happen. However, at the time of the implementation of the pilot project, the political situation in most EU countries was not generally in favour of relocation. There were, however, ad hoc or temporary relocation programmes, particularly due to tragic events in EU countries at the external border, such as the fire in the Greek refugee camp of Moria or during the disembarkation of people rescued in the Mediterranean. Bilateral agreements such as the one between Greece and Portugal are rather an exception and are often concluded without public awareness.

With the Ukrainian humanitarian crisis, all Member States alike are showing solidarity with Ukraine, with Ukrainian refugees, as well as intra-EU solidarity. This may give rise to a fresh approach to the relocation of refugees.

Acronyms

ACM	High Commissioner for Migration
CAP	Confederação dos Agricultores de Portugal (The Confederation of Portuguese Farmers)
CEAS	Common European Asylum
CSR	corporate social responsibility
CUF	Companhia União Fabril
CV	curriculum vitae
EC	European Commission
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
EMN	European Migration Network
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	International protection
MS	Member State
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PT	Portugal
TP	temporary protection
TPD	Temporary Protection Directive
SEF	Immigration and Border Police Service
SN	Solidarity Now
VET	vocational education and training

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Annex 1.

Solidarity Now (SN)

SN works in a holistic manner offering several services in conjunction with employment support, such as legal and psychosocial assistance. All of SN's beneficiaries have to go through social services before being referred to other services. While at social services, the beneficiary's needs, including their vulnerabilities, will be documented following data protection guidance; anything that needs to be known between services can be flagged if deemed necessary.

Skills identification is an important part of SN's employability and integration programmes overall. The identification of suitable candidates for the pilot relied on the same approach and tools that SN regularly uses in its programmes. As an organisation that provides assistance to vulnerable people, including asylum seekers and refugees, an important focus is on employment support, as SN believes labour integration is key to overall integration and social cohesion.

SN has walk-in centres in Athens and Thessaloniki where candidates can ask for support for any step of their employment trajectory, such as assistance with CV drafting, career orientation and help with job searching and job matching. Refugees and asylum seekers are particularly likely to request help from employment services as they struggle to find work in Greece, mostly due to their lack of knowledge about the local labour market and the tools needed to access opportunities; this includes where or when to look for employment, and which tools or format to use as these may differ from their previous experiences (CVs, LinkedIn, job search engines).

Each person who requests the service goes through a standardised process, or first assessment, in the form of one-to-one counselling, where a set of questions are asked to allow SN to better understand their needs, prior experience (employment, education, other), skills, evidence of qualifications (certification) and whether they possess a CV or other documentation recording their skills. The individual counselling sessions attempt to cover information that may not be found in certificates, CVs or other documents, fill in chronological gaps and make an assessment of the person's experience and skills through (probing/investigative) questions. In-depth questions allow the counsellor to understand whether the education, experience or certification acquired is equivalent to a similar experience, education or qualification in Greece or Europe. The depth of detail acquired allows the drafting of a descriptive and chronological profile. Depending on the gaps in the profile and the beneficiary's requests and priorities, a personal action plan is set and subsequent counselling sessions are scheduled to follow up

on the action plan. Support can be provided until work is found and during and beyond the employment of beneficiaries. It is important to mention that cultural mediators/interpreters are a fundamental part of the process as few beneficiaries speak fluent English or Greek.

The beneficiary's details are documented, including prior experience, skills, certification and legal status (and thus their right to work or start a business). The documentation is used to track their progress and to ensure that if an opportunity appears (for work, training, education) that could match the beneficiaries' profile, they could be easily identified and contacted. The information is recorded both in hard copy files and in an online database, through which specific candidates and skills can be found. Clients usually use the service several times; they may have been called to be matched with an employment opportunity and have received interview preparation and support with the follow-up. In addition, they may have been called up to join a training or education opportunity to improve certain skills. Any additional information will be added to the beneficiary's case file every time.

Privacy and data protection were followed throughout the entire process. The consent of the persons involved was required throughout and at different stages. GDPR guidelines were followed throughout the communication with Portuguese partners and ICMPD, names and personal details were removed and replaced with safe codes, applying the protection protocol for working with vulnerable persons such as refugees. This is an important step to follow when the programme scales up to ensure data are always safeguarded.

INTRA-EU SKILLS-BASED MOBILITY OF ADULT REFUGEES

Findings of a Cedefop pilot project between Greece and Portugal

Creating labour mobility opportunities, allowing refugees to move legally from first asylum countries to receiving countries based on their skills/qualifications and recipient labour market needs, have the potential to provide beneficiaries with access to a livelihood, ease migratory pressures for countries at the EU external borders and satisfy labour market demands in participating EU countries. Cedefop's pilot project showed ways to succeed if the political will to engage in relocation exists. Above all, the project revealed the importance of networks and the necessity to further engage employers in national migration and integration strategies.

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