



World University Service (UK)

**"QUEST FOR QUALITY EDUCATIONAL
GUIDANCE FOR REFUGEES" PROJECT**

was designed and carried out by

**REFUGEE EDUCATION & TRAINING ADVISORY SERVICE (RETAS)
A DIVISION OF THE WORLD UNIVERSITY SERVICE (UK)**

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Foreword

A period of “further” education¹ or training is often an essential prerequisite to refugees² successful resettlement within the host country. We strongly believe that helping refugees to choose the best possible learning opportunity suitable to their resettlement needs is only possible by offering high quality educational and careers advice and guidance³.

This framework, *The Quest for Quality Educational Guidance for Refugees*, is the end product of a two-year project, also it is a finalised version of the draft framework, which was produced and widely distributed for comments in the beginning of 2002. The project was designed and run by the Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service (RETAS), under the auspices of the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). Funding was provided by the European Refugee Fund.

RETAS, a division of the World University Service (WUS/UK), is one of the few refugee agencies in the Europe specialising on the issues of adult⁴ refugees' education, training, employment and professional re-qualification. For individual refugees, RETAS provides an Advice and Guidance Service and runs various educational grants programs since 1987. In the last five years RETAS has been involved in a number of European projects initiating debate around the quality issues related to guidance work provided for refugees, including educational and careers guidance.

“The Quest for Quality Educational Guidance for Refugees” document builds on the knowledge and experience accumulated through RETAS' long service to refugees and its earlier work mentioned above. It also brings together the main findings of the project, which included a two-year consultation process carried out with a number of refugee advice agencies operating in 15 countries of European Union (EU), including refugee community organisations (RCOs). During the consultation process we visited 17 organisations based in 6 different member states of the EU, two questionnaires were produced and distributed among a large number of organisations working with refugees, and two conferences were held in Stockholm in 2001 and in Vienna 2002. The final document has been re-written in the light of the views, suggestions and comments gathered through these activities.

The framework does also build on the earlier research carried out on various aspects of refugees' integration, and the quality standards developed by the mainstream “quality mark awarding bodies”, and literature on guidance.

Although the framework's main remit is educational and career guidance, it can be used for other areas of guidance work, as a variety of issues around the delivery of guidance, as well as general ethical and organisational issues are also covered.

The main aim of the framework has two prongs: To raise awareness, promote discussion and

¹ Education is used in a broad sense to cover all aspects of learning programmes, including academic and vocational courses of education, a variety forms of training, "hands on learning" etc.

² The term of refugee is used in a broad sense, to cover asylum seekers, people with complementary forms of protection and recognised refugees.

³ In the UK, especially in the Careers Services, "advice" and "guidance" are used to define differing support roles, although they overlap with each other in great deal. In this framework we have not used them in this strict sense.

⁴ The framework does not cover refugee children's education (-16).

debate around the quality issues regarding educational guidance work for refugees across Europe, also to bring in a refugee dimension to the quality standards developed for IAG sector. It is prepared to achieve these practical purposes. Although we have engaged in some theoretical discussions in order to reach a better understanding on the issues raised in the framework, it is far from being an academic work. In order to make it more accessible to a wider readership, we have tried to avoid unnecessary references, kept it as short as possible, and used plain English.

On the draft framework we have received feedback from a wide variety of organisations and individuals, ranging from Refugee Community Organisations (RCOs) to policy developers, from guidance practitioners to academics. We hope that this document will have an accelerating effect on the debate currently taking place in this field. We also hope that it will serve as an open invitation to all the other actors of the refugee field, educational institutions, service providers and policy makers to consider developing, or initiating such services, which will help refugees to make use of their skills, competences and aspirations in order to achieve a more successful resettlement, and therefore integration into the host society.

It should be remembered that this document has not been produced to serve only well established organisations or knowledgeable individuals in this field. It is written also for organisations recently moving into the field of educational guidance, RCOs providing advice and guidance to their members with limited resources, and informal advisers. The latter group of “advisers” are usually trusted, experienced and knowledgeable members of communities, who have already established good links with the host society. According to the RETAS client database, they are the first sources of advice and guidance for many refugees, the quality of which also needs to be addressed.

Finally, we would like to thank all our colleagues who, throughout the project, hosted us during the project study visits, attended our conferences and workshops, completed our two questionnaires, have given us their valuable time, information and motivating comments and useful suggestions. All of this enormously helped us in developing the framework, and made it representative of a wide spectrum of advice agencies and other interested parties in Europe.

Introduction

The framework covers issues related both to the “substance” as well as “the form” of advice and guidance work. It begins with a discussion on various aspects of refugee education, including educational/occupational background of refugees, the state of educational opportunities and an overview of educational advice, and guidance work for refugees currently carried out in the EU, in order to lay the ground for the discussion on quality issues. This first chapter is entitled **Background**.

Issues related to the “the substance” or content of the guidance are covered in the subsequent two chapters: **Review of some guidance concepts** and **Helping refugees to choose the best option**. In the former, we will look at the issues around client-focussed or centred approach and the importance of multiculturalism and refugee awareness for guidance. In the latter, we review the guidance process, again, from a refugee perspective, and try to tackle some of the career choice issues of refugees.

We then move on to the issues regarding “the form” under the title of the **Organisational aspects of educational guidance for refugees** covering some important features of a quality advice organisation.

It should, however, be noted that in life “the form” and “the substance” are in constant interaction with each other. Measures taken by the organisation to ensure the quality service have a crucial impact on the quality of actual delivery of guidance. Without organisational support even the best advisers cannot work effectively. On the other hand, guidance is an activity that takes place between human beings, therefore, the personal and professional qualities of the adviser play a crucial part in the guidance process. Without good advisers it is very difficult to envisage a good organisation.

The third dimension is “change”. Without “change” there can be no existence. Throughout the framework we make suggestions on how to change the current situation for the better, including how to raise the quality of our own. We hope that these suggestions will be taken on board by organisations working with refugees, starting with the ECRE member agencies.

At the beginning of some sections we have used various statements. They are made by refugees. They are quoted from an earlier framework⁵ produced for another European project under the leadership of RETAS in partnership with Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà (ICS) and Unio Pobles Solidaris (UPS). The statements were made during the client consultation group meetings held by the above mentioned organisations in Rome, Valencia and London. In order to keep the real flavour, we avoided “over-editing” them. They are given in italics.

At the end of the framework you will find the findings of the 1st Project Questionnaire, which was designed to map out what is available for refugees in terms of accessing learning opportunities across the EU. The findings of the 2nd Questionnaire have been embedded in the various parts of the framework. A second annexe gives the details of the colleagues who attended our two conferences and organisations who hosted us during the study visits.

⁵ A Basic Framework of Advice and Guidance for Refugees, Ayten Sinkil, 2000

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Putting refugees into the information, advice and guidance world

One of the most remarkable developments of the 1990s in Europe is, perhaps, the massive growth witnessed in the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sector. Although its intensity varies from one country to another, today it is possible to obtain advice and guidance related to almost any aspect of our lives.

Alongside this development a new agenda item has come forward: How to raise and maintain the quality of IAG services. In some European countries, e.g. United Kingdom, there are a number of organisations setting up minimum quality standards for the whole IAG sector, as well as creating measures to ensure ongoing quality. In some other European states, however, this work is either relatively new or non-existent. The need for an exchange of information and experience between European countries, as well as the creation of a set of minimum standards applying across Europe, is evident.

Raising the quality of mainstream IAG services is certainly beneficial for refugees in terms of receiving better guidance, but only indirectly. This is because all the quality standards fail to address the special needs of refugees. Refugees living in European countries are one of the disadvantaged groups of these societies, needing information, advice, guidance and support, and in many cases counselling and therapy, in order to overcome multiple layers of barriers that exist on the pathways to re-building their lives in exile. If we want to create an inclusive IAG sector across the EU, then the whole quality standards world has to bring in a multicultural and particularly a refugee dimension to their standards. One of the aims of this framework is to include refugees into the guidance world by re-examining its key concepts and the standards from a refugee point of view.

1.2 Refugees' educational/occupational backgrounds and their use in the EU

Refugees come from very diverse backgrounds. Familiarity with the host society's language, its social systems and culture, educational/occupational background and so on varies from one refugee to another, even if they come from the same country. Some refugees may have high professional backgrounds, some might be illiterate even in their own language. This diversity reflects itself in their differing learning needs.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of reliable data, it is not possible to draw an accurate picture about refugees' educational/occupational backgrounds. Currently none of the EU states collect data on the arrival of refugees regarding their existing skills, qualifications and competences they bring with them. Lack of comprehensive and authoritative research in this field across the EU is another exacerbating factor.

The existing research literature, however patchy it is, suggests that the majority of refugees bring a wealth of qualifications, skills and experience with them. In the UK some research findings show that the rate of educational attainment among refugees is higher than that of the native population.⁶ However, despite the significant skills gaps experienced by many EU countries refugees face enormous barriers in using their qualifications, skills and work

⁶ The Settlement of Refugees in Britain, Home Office, 1995

experience in the host countries.

Research literature also suggests that the vast majority of refugees experience “down ward mobility”, even if they are fortunate enough to find employment.⁷ According to a small scale research project carried out by RETAS and the Low Pay Unit, only 7 out of 37 highly qualified refugees were in employment, with examples of a doctor working as a “theatre orderly”, an engineer working as a TV channel tuner, a nurse as a nursing assistant, and a pharmacist as a laboratory assistant.⁸

Non-utilisation of refugees’ skills and competences is, of course, an ethical issue, as it brings demoralisation, unhappiness and poverty to refugees, but it is also an important economic mistake for the host society, as they are wasting valuable human capital gained without any cost to these societies.

Another research project carried out by the Africa Educational Trust (AET) in the UK found that educational qualifications from non-European countries were valued less than a UK qualification, even a UK qualification gained by refugees was valued less than a UK qualification attained by natives.⁹

Similar findings have also been mirrored in another research project carried out in Sweden on immigrants and refugees with academic backgrounds, whose previous qualifications were examined and formally recognised by the Swedish authorities. According to the findings, the employment situation within the sample varied significantly depending on the country/region of origin. For immigrants who were from Europe, North America and Oceania the employment rate was 60%. This rate was 30% for those from Asia and Africa. The lowest employment rate was for Iraqis: 27%. One of the key findings of the research states that “the recognition process play a relatively minor role for immigrant academics in securing work”¹⁰ If your recognised academic ability does not play a significant role in finding employment, we are wondering what kind of “other factors” play a major role?

It would be desirable to include a chapter in the framework on how refugees’ prior learning is assessed and accredited in different member states of the EU, but there is a lack of available data covering all countries of EU. A new RETAS publication, *Qualifications of Refugees and Employment in Europe*, however, provides useful information regarding this important issue, but, unfortunately, it only covers Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.¹¹ There is little doubt that there is a great need to extend this valuable survey to include the remaining countries of EU.

There is also a need for creating a harmonious system of recognition of refugees’ prior qualifications and experience operating across EU. One of the ECRE recommendations points out this need: “ECRE recommends that a system of recognition of previous experience and qualifications should be set up at EU level. This should establish EU-wide verification and assessment criteria and a set of recommended practice for bridging gaps between refugee qualifications’ levels and industry or education standards in countries of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Asylum Trap*, a research study carried out by the Low Pay Unit and RETAS, 1997

⁹ *Do Study Grants Help*, Africa Educational Trust, 1999

¹⁰ *Evaluation of Foreign Diplomas in Sweden*, Swedish Integration Office, 2002

¹¹ *Qualifications of Refugees and Employment in Europe*, by Hernan Rosenkranz, Anna Rebollar, Gertrud Muller and Ann Hayes, 2002

durable asylum”¹². This recommendation was made in 1999. Some EU member states have recently taken some positive steps towards a more sympathetic approach to recognition of prior qualifications of refugees, such as Sweden and Spain, but, as far as we know, since 1999 nothing has been done at European level.

1.3 Reasons for refugees’ need for “further” education

Refugees’ needs are multi-layered, from support with their asylum applications to housing, welfare, health, especially in the first years of their arrival. These overwhelming basic needs usually overshadow their education or training needs. People, including refugees themselves, often see education as a luxury. Refugees’ experiences, however, demonstrate that education and training are essential elements for their successful resettlement and integration, a point confirmed by a number of research reports.

As mentioned above, the reasons for refugees’ needs for “further” education or training vary from one refugee to another. The following are the most common ones:

- To gain language skills or improve their existing skills in the host country’s language.
- To socialise, mix with other people, break isolation.
- To learn about their new society, customs, social systems and culture.
- To continue with their interrupted education due to the upheaval faced in their country of origin.
- To gain new skills and competences which are essential for finding employment in the EU, eg. Information and Communication Technology.
- To update/upgrade their existing skills and competences to increase their chances of employability.
- To attend courses or training required by the professional bodies in order to requalify in their original profession.
- To transfer their existing competences and skills into a related area of work.
- To gain new and recognised qualifications, in cases where their original qualifications are not accepted in the host country.

The variation in the educational needs of refugees itself illustrates the complex nature of educational guidance work with refugees. This issue will be dealt later in the framework

1.4 Refugees’ access to education in the EU

¹² Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, ECRE, 1999

The situation varies from one country to another. There are some examples of good practice, in the Netherlands¹³ for example, but in many EU member states there are few learning opportunities available for refugees.

Looking at some of the findings of our 1st Questionnaire we found some interesting trends. Due to the small numbers of respondents (47) the findings of this questionnaire cannot be regarded as a scientific, true picture of the state of refugees' access to education in the EU, but as all the respondents were representing main refugee guidance organisations in the EU member states, we believe the findings can give reliable indications.

- Let us start with the provision of language courses: 63.8% of respondents found the provision “fairly good” according to the needs of refugees in terms of their availability, frequency and quality. 29.8% respondents said “poor”, and 6.4% “very good”. The “very good” rates came from Greece, Luxemburg and Austria.
- 51% of respondents said that asylum seekers were allowed to study in mainstream colleges and universities, 49% said they were not.
- 10.6% of respondents said that refugees' taking technical/vocational courses was “common”, 46.8% “fairly common”, 38.3% “rare” and “they do not attend”, 2 respondents did not know.
- If we come to the participation of refugees in university level education, 8.5% said “common”, 17% “fairly common”, 70.2% “rare” and “they do not attend”, 1 respondent did not answer the question and 1 did not know. Half of respondents who said “common” and “fairly common” were from the Netherlands and the UK.
- Finally, on the question of whether it was common for refugees to practise their own professions or not, 6.3% said it was “common”, 23.4% “fairly common”, and 70.3% “rare” and “they are not allowed to practise”. Respondents who said “common” were from Sweden and the UK. Almost two third of respondents who said “fairly common” were from the Netherlands and the UK.

From the findings and the comments made on the questionnaire, it can be said that with the exception of a few countries, the concept of “refugee education” is confined to short orientation and low level language courses, regardless of the refugees' educational/occupational background. In many countries even language courses are problematic. In the UK the situation is generally regarded to be fine, but even in this country there are long waiting lists for basic English language courses (around 2000 refugees in one borough of London!), and the quality is not always satisfactory. In some countries vocational education or hands-on training is on offer, and the rate of refugees' access to these courses is much higher than the courses at higher education level. In many countries refugees' entry into higher education is almost unheard of, as is their re-qualification in their own professions. The consequences of this practice are well known – the creation of long-term dependency on state benefit systems or the gross underemployment of refugees.

1.5 The state of educational guidance services in the EU

¹³ Qualification of Refugees and Employment in Europe, RETAS, 2002, chapter on the Netherlands by Ann Hayes

In 1988, when RETAS started its first European project, there were only few organisations specialising in refugees' education in the entire EU. Refugee organisations were occasionally providing some form of educational guidance, but refugees' education, and educational guidance in particular, were not on the agenda.

This situation is now changing. Responses to our 1st and 2nd Questionnaires show that a number of refugee agencies either have extended, or are in the process of extending their services to include educational advice and guidance. The quality of discussions and the comments we have received during our study visits, as well as through the Questionnaires, again illustrate that there is now a number experts in this field, and a lot of interest and enthusiasm. 26 out of 28 respondents of our 2nd Questionnaire confirmed that their organisation does provide educational guidance. For non-UK respondents this figure was 10 out of 11. This is a welcome development, but obviously there is still a long way to go in order to meet the refugees' educational guidance needs.

Another important aspect of the refugee guidance sector in the EU is that organisations operating in this field are usually small and often under-resourced, especially in terms of staffing levels. In addition, in the last ten years the funding available to support refugee agencies is increasingly "project-based", usually with a short duration rather than "institution-based long term funding". This situation creates discontinuity, and prevents the accumulation of organisational expertise.

Educational guidance work, especially with adult refugees is a complex and multi-dimensional field of guidance, often requiring additional skills and specialist knowledge on a large variety of issues. These skills, such as good cross-cultural communication and in-depth interviewing skills, expert knowledge such as assessment and recognition of refugees' prior learning, information on careers, changes in the labour market conditions, educational laws and regulations cannot be accumulated in a short period of time. Organisations and advisers should be given time and resources to develop and further develop these skills and knowledge, and pass them on to the new comers.

The lack of sufficient educational guidance services in many EU countries is a direct reflection of the lack of educational opportunities for refugees, as well as the undervaluation of refugees' skills, competences, qualifications and aspirations, as discussed before. It is evident that in many countries of the EU there is a great need to establish such services, and to enable the existing ones to expand. The need for collaboration between the new and more experienced services to promote mutual learning from each other, and the continuation of debate and discussions within the guidance sector should seriously be taken into account by the funding bodies.

1.6 The state of employment of refugees by refugee agencies

A key issue in the field of educational guidance services for refugees is the degree to which leading refugee agencies across Europe are themselves prepared to employ refugees as paid staff or volunteers. ECRE Executive Committee invited the British Refugee Council, the lead agency on employment for the Integration and Reception Project, to undertake a survey of the refugee employment policies within ECRE member agencies. British Refugee

Council carried out the survey, and presented the findings to the Biannual General Meeting of ECRE in June 2002.¹⁴

72 ECRE member agencies were sent a copy of a questionnaire designed for the survey, out of which 45 responses were received, 33 from EU member states and 12 from EU Accession countries. The average employment rate of refugees by the refugee organisations in EU countries was 12%, in Accession countries 10.5%. All responding agencies used volunteers. The rate of refugee volunteers was 11% in the Accession countries, and 3% in EU countries. 8% of responding organisations did not employ any refugees, paid or as volunteers. 8% of organisations said that the number of refugees they employed, paid or volunteer, was over 20%. Overall it was felt that with a few exceptions, the number of organisations employing a substantial number of refugees was surprisingly low.

The findings of the survey are striking, and the survey report outlines the reasons for carrying out such a survey very well:

“Refugee perceptions about and refugee participation in the activities designed to assist them are crucial. This is not only for political reasons (i.e. equality of opportunity) but also because the ability to empathise with the client group is immensely valuable in this line of work. For refugee workers a first hand knowledge and experience of exile will equip them well to address the needs of their clients. The embodiment of this principle in the recruitment policy and practices of refugee assisting organisations is essential both for the integrity of organisations and in order to set a good example to others. Therefore, it is imperative that we monitor this situation and discover whether we, the member agencies of ECRE and therefore supporters and practitioners working for refugee rights and freedoms, are implementing the practices that we ourselves advocate in our everyday work.”¹⁵ We will come back to this issue again when discussing recruitment policies.

¹⁴ Employing Refugees, David Hudson and Saoirse Kerrigan, BRC, 2002

¹⁵ Ibid

2. THE REVIEW OF SOME GUIDANCE CONCEPTS FROM THE REFUGEES PERCEPTIVE

Providing educational guidance for refugees is a complex issue, requiring additional values, skills, attitudes, knowledge and new approaches from the guidance workers and agencies. In this chapter we will review some important concepts related to guidance from the refugees' point of view.

2.1 A definition of guidance, "client centred" approach, and refugees

It is a good idea to begin with a definition of guidance in order to reach a common understanding of this concept. There are a number of different approaches to, and therefore, different definitions of guidance. The following, in our opinion, is one of the best definitions, although it has some weaknesses:

Guidance is an interactive process, through which individuals are helped to explore different options that might be open to them, to identify barriers and opportunities for each option, and reach an informed decision about the best possible course of action for themselves.

This definition sees guidance as an interactive process, that takes place between the client and adviser, where clients are informed about different options, and helped to choose the best possible option. It acknowledges the client as a sole decision maker. It also suggests a non-directive approach to guidance with respect given to the client as a human being, who is capable of choosing the best option for her/himself and making important decisions about her/his life, if informed properly.

The definition takes its roots from the Humanistic School of psychotherapy, which was founded by Carl Rogers in the 1940s. The Humanistic School has had many followers and supporters, as well as relentless critics, such as the Sociologist School. It has been criticised for being "too American and middle class". It presumed a society that surrounds the client as a stable and wealthy society offering plentiful options, therefore, the opportunity of choice to its members. The school also failed to pay attention to the social divisions which exist within societies, which prevents equal access to opportunities regardless of the social class, skin colour and gender and so on.

We, to some degree, agree with these criticisms and are aware of the weaknesses of the Humanistic School, but still defend the above given definition of guidance as the best definition of guidance. RETAS has no specialism in psychotherapy, and therefore it is outside our remit to make comments on the validity of the Humanistic School's views within this field. However, we feel that it is important to note that the key concepts and approaches of the Humanistic School have made a huge impact on guidance theory and practice.

From our experience we can recognise some important strengths of the Humanistic School: Rogers placed the client at the centre of the therapy, adopted a non-directive approach to the client, and believed that "people tend to move toward growth and healing", which was a massive departure from the traditional forms of therapy, such as Freudian or Behaviourist schools of therapy, both of which employed severe directive approaches to the "patient".

We think these qualities are much needed qualities by today's modern advice and guidance worker.

Another important point is that guidance workers, including careers counsellors, are not psychotherapists, or even counsellors, dealing with the problems in the inner world of the client. Instead they are focusing on more practical issues, such as identification of opportunities, elimination of external barriers and supporting clients to make positive decision about their futures. Placing clients at the centre of the guidance process, treating clients as equals with the advisers and employing a non-directive approach sit very well with the guidance profession, especially with guidance work for refugees.

In addition, the use of the “client centred model” by today’s advice and guidance world is quite different from its originators intentions and, somehow the concept has gained new connotations. When the IAG sector started to become a more structured, more institutionalised, more “business like” sector, it also opened up to the business worlds’ quality management, customer satisfaction and other approaches, bringing in new dimensions to guidance practice. Some quality organisations have even replaced the term of “client centred guidance” with “client focussed guidance”!

Today, “focussing on clients' needs” is placed at the heart of the whole guidance process. Guidance agencies are increasingly required to collect client feedback on their services through questionnaires, client comment books or client consultation group meetings, and overview their practices in the light of the findings of these activities. This is also becoming a standard requirement demanded by many funders and quality mark awarding bodies: “We will focus our accreditation process on how the client perceives the service, how the service satisfies the client’s needs, and how appropriate assessment methods and measures can be interpreted for the benefit of the client.”¹⁶

One of the respondents of the 2nd Questionnaire has agreed that the client is important, but has also shown some wariness about the client centred approach. He commented that this approach “has its shadow-side... The individual as a consumer who wants a goody and wants it now, thereby going for a very individualistic approach.” He added that this also may lead to a “blaming culture”, which “will not automatically create a happy society.” We, to some degree, do agree with the respondent, but client satisfaction should not mean “spoilt clients”. We will come back to this issue later, when discussing “realism” and “balancing client feedback”.

In addition to the above we believe that the client satisfaction approach has the potential to assist prevention of racist and exclusionary practices in the public domain. In the past few years RETAS and its partner organisations have held a number of “refugee client consultation group meetings”, as well as one-to-one interviews with refugee individuals, both in the UK and mainland Europe. These were held to collect refugees’ own views about the quality of the advice and guidance they had received. During the feedback activities, there were numerous positive comments from refugees, but also some extremely bitter experiences. Almost all participating refugees had experienced some form of belittlement, discrimination and ill treatment, especially from government organisations, both central and local.

¹⁶ Careers and Educational Guidance Accreditation Board, UK

Refugees are one of the main client groups of the users of the IAG sector. If IAG services are to satisfy clients' needs, then they will have to satisfy refugees' needs. If the clients' views are the most important data for evaluating the usefulness of services, then refugees' opinions about the services should also be counted.

These measurements should also go beyond the IAG sector. They should apply across the board to all organisations, including statutory bodies. We hope that all funders and quality awarding bodies will require all organisations dealing with the public to collect client feedback regularly by using appropriate methods, and the continuation of funding should be linked to the results of these activities.

If we come to the "options" or opportunities, we accept that the real world is not as beautiful as the Humanistic School saw, but today no one can deny that all member states of the EU, despite the disparity between them, are relatively stable, affluent societies, where opportunities exist, even if they are sometimes not plentiful. The problem is the inequality which prevents or restricts certain groups of people having access to certain opportunities. This situation takes us to the very reason for the establishment of refugee organisations. It is our duty to tackle this inequality, and many refugee organisations are successfully carrying out this duty. We will come back to this issue when discussing opportunity creation and policy development.

As stated above, this definition of guidance does have some weaknesses: Although it recognises guidance as a process, which may imply a relatively longer term relationship between adviser and client, this important point has not been made explicit by the definition. It also focuses on decision making, rather than on the process of helping the client to reach her/his goals. It gives an impression that when an informed decision is reached the guidance process ends. Organisations working with refugees, however, should employ a wider understanding of the role and the nature of guidance, linking it to refugees' integration process. Guidance organisations should be able to support refugees throughout this process, addressing their changing guidance needs at the different stages of their journeys towards integration.

2.2 Multiculturalism and refugee awareness

"Plenty of prejudice and discrimination in advice provision"
"Advisers should avoid prejudgements, stereotyping and clichés."
"An officer told me: 'You don't have any rights here, you are an asylum seeker.'"
"They feel that they are not wanted, because they are Latin Americans, because they come from Africa or Eastern Europe."

Multiculturalism is usually perceived as an ideology in favour of keeping minority cultures intact, therefore against the integration of minorities into the host society. This perception is shared by many politicians and a large number of natives who are in favour integration, but also by those who are against it and want to keep minorities outside "their" society. Ironically, the same perception is also shared by some minority groups, who see integration as a loss of "their" cultural identity. These forms of understandings of multiculturalism, in our opinion, derive from archaic forms of thought, and do not make a positive contribution to social cohesion.

Our understanding of multiculturalism is far away from the above approaches. As Bhikhu Parekh¹⁷ puts it, no culture is static and homogeneous, and cultures are subject to change from within and outside; no culture is perfect, it needs to learn from other cultures; no culture is worthless, there are always values to learn from one culture.¹⁸

Refugee agencies in Europe have been underlining that integration should be seen as a multi-dimensional process, not a one way, where all parties need to go through a process of modification, rather than asking only minorities to adapt themselves to the host society.

Bhikhu Parekh also makes a distinction between the concepts of “multicultural” and “multiculturalist” society. Today almost all parts of Europe have become or are becoming “multicultural societies”, whether we like it or not, where people from different cultures, from all corners of the world and from all walks of life live and work together. What does make a multicultural society a multiculturalist society? Let us read it from Bhikhu Parekh:

“Multicultural societies throw up problems that have no parallel in history. They need to find ways of reconciling the legitimate demands of unity and diversity, achieving political unity without cultural uniformity, being inclusive without being assimilationist, cultivating among their citizens a common sense of belonging while respecting their legitimate cultural differences, and cherishing plural cultural identities without weakening the shared and precious identity of shared citizenship. This is a formidable task and no multicultural society so far has succeeded in tackling it.”¹⁹

The task is indeed formidable, but the progression to a cohesive multicultural society has to run through this task.

In addition to multiculturalism, there is also a great need to raise refugee awareness across the EU. Learning the reasons which pushed them into exile and sharing their life experiences, which are usually quite different from other immigrants, can offer much to Western cultures. Multicultural and refugee awareness should be woven into every aspect of society like a golden thread, if we are to positively respond to the needs of this ever-increasing globalisation.

2.3 Multiculturalism, refugee awareness, and the guidance world

“Ignorant advisers concerning the historical and political situation of refugee-producing countries, which is the reason for not understanding clients’ situations.”

Multicultural awareness used to be regarded as an additional skill that should be developed and used by advisers who work with ethnic minorities, refugees and foreign nationals. However, since the consequences of globalisation are now relevant to us all,

¹⁷ Bhikhu Parekh is one of the most distinguished academics in Britain and a well-known political activist. He has been Professor of Political Theory in the University of Hull's Department of Politics and Asian Studies, and the author of a large number of highly acclaimed books in political philosophy.

¹⁸ Rethinking of Multiculturalism, Bhikhu Parekh, 2000

¹⁹ Ibid

“multiculturally-skilled guidance” has started to become a generic approach. Today in many EU countries there are training courses aiming to assist host societies, especially social workers and advisers, with developing multicultural awareness and gaining skills in cross-cultural communication.

Refugees and refugee agencies welcome these positive developments, but also draw attention to some dangers. Many of the courses we have come across may be well designed and are eye-openers for many trainees, but unfortunately some of them have the effect of reinforcing stereotypes, even though they are designed to teach cross-cultural communication skills. Some case studies they present paint an entire ethnic population with one colour, in the name of recognising cultural differences. Furthermore, as mentioned above, their perception of integration suggests a one way process, where the foreigners have to adapt themselves to the dominant culture, although many of them are generous enough to give foreigners freedom to keep their cultural habits alive within their “private sphere”! Again, we would like to emphasise that the intentions of these courses are good, but multiculturalism is such a sensitive issue that it should be handled very carefully. We invite organisations, agencies, institutions and individuals to critically review their understanding of multiculturalism on an ongoing basis, as stereotyping or other forms of misconception can easily filter through in “multiculturalist” approaches.

Adopting this critical practice is crucially important for the IAG sector. Paul Pedersen sees multiculturalism as a strategy for the survival of the counselling profession. The same applies to the IAG sector. “We are moving towards a multicultural future that requires us to understand persons who are different from ourselves, whatever our culture might be. Developing multi-cultural awareness is the strategy for our survival as a counselling profession and strategy for our growth in meeting the diverse needs of a multicultural global village.”²⁰

After putting such an emphasis on cultural differences, we now need to look at the other side of the coin. Cultural sensitivity and awareness is essential for guidance world, but cultural differences should not be overstated. It should be remembered that people from different cultures, no matter how widely their cultures differ from each other, share a common humanity. In addition, the history of communication between different cultures and communities goes back thousands of years. Human societies have been communicating with each other throughout history through travels, trade, migration, war and so on. The spread and speed of today's means of mass communication across the globe can put even the most geographically isolated communities in touch with other parts of the world, enabling them to become aware of other cultures, and of their ways of doing things. Multiculturalist approach to guidance is a must, but cultural differences should not be seen as impassable barriers.

In addition to multiculturalism, refugee awareness is also vital for the guidance sector. If the guidance world is to become more inclusive and non-discriminatory, then, training of guidance workers to enable them to gain awareness around refugee issues and to develop additional skills in order to be able to work with refugees effectively becomes essential.

Multicultural and refugee issues can easily slip peoples' minds, as all the systems and structures in the countries are primarily designed for the native population in mind. Quality setting bodies are good examples of this. Although their standards put substantial emphasis on the use of interpreters and the translation of publicity materials into different languages,

²⁰ A Handbook for Developing Multicultural Awareness by Paul Pedersen, 1984

but non of them mentions the importance of multiculturalism , cross-cultural communication or refugee awareness.

It is obvious that there is a lot of work to be done across the EU to insert multiculturalism and refugee awareness into the quality standards designed for the IAG sector. We invite all quality awarding/designing bodies to critically review their standard, and all the funders to review their requirements in the light of the above.

3. HELPING REFUGEES TO CHOOSE THE BEST POSSIBLE OPTION

“Advisers’ inability to understand the clients’ situation and needs.”

“Relationship is not always friendly, sometimes you feel that adviser does not have good motivation.”

“The usefulness seems to be related to the adviser: professionals or not.”

In this chapter we will discuss the guidance process itself from the refugees’ point of view in order to help them to choose the best possible option available for them. It is not our intention to cover all the related issues in great detail, but to explore some of the main points.

Guidance workers can play a crucial part in helping refugees to choose the right direction, and ironically sometimes the wrong direction. In addition to the legal restrictions and the lack of adequate educational and training opportunities, it can be said that the level of knowledge, the level of enthusiasm, the level of creative thinking, and the horizons of the guidance workers can make an important impact on the career choices of refugees. Having an open mind to explore all the possible options that might be open to clients is a prerequisite to being an effective guidance worker.

Obtaining and updating detailed knowledge on the available education and training provision, routes to requalification, awareness on financial sources and so on requires good research skills. Networking skills with other colleagues, as well as collaboration with other advice agencies and service providers are also important.

3.1 Effective communication

“Refugees need consideration, respect and human warmth. In contrast only few refugees feel that they had been well-attended.”

Advisers working with refugees have to develop multicultural communication (or cross cultural) skills, in order to communicate effectively. The way we communicate with others is largely shaped by our own culture, therefore “shared signals” we use in communication might be might not be shared when communicating with persons from other cultures. The body language we use to mean “no” may mean “yes” to them. It is, therefore, essential to check and re-check with the client that you understand each other. We also need to remind ourselves time and again that we are having a conversation with a non-native speaker.

Active listening skills are important for all guidance situations, but they become imperative when working with refugees:

- Attending, in other words tuning into the client or giving your undivided attention to the client.

- Sending positive voice and body messages to reflect empathy, as well as to show clients that you listen and understand them.
- Paraphrasing and summarising in order to prevent any misunderstanding, also to consolidate what has been discussed.
- Use of closed questions for clarification purposes, i.e. to understand exactly what the client has said.
- In some situations, drawing diagrams or shapes on a piece of paper can be useful.
- Use of open-ended questions to encourage the client to tell her/his story, also to focus on important points.
- Use of plain language, avoidance of jargon, clarity and moderately slow pace of speaking, supporting the oral communication with body language should be considered for effective communication with refugees.
- Avoidance of assumptions about client or situations is also important. If something is not crystal clear in your mind, do not presume, but check with the client.

Advisers should also be very careful not to fall prey to stereotyping, especially when attempting to show respect for cultural differences. Every client should be treated as an individual.

3.2 Healthy relationships between adviser and refugee clients

*"Refugees should not be treated like a second rate human beings."
 "Reform current system. Advisers without professional background, motivation and skills should not be employed to provide advice for refugees."*

It is not our intention to cover all the issues related to equal opportunities here. One aspect of equal opportunities, however, should be mentioned, which has an important role in promoting a "healthy" guidance process.

In adviser-client relationships, the power lies with advisers. Clients need your knowledge, your skills, your advocacy, and your support. You are the person who knows the system, the language, and has access to the networks. The guidance interview usually takes place between you and the client without any witnesses or observers. It is not surprising to read news about corrupt immigration advisers, housing officers etc. Corruption in this context is the gross misuse of the adviser's power. However, there are much "milder versions" of misconduct, such as showing signs of impatience or being patronising; or using your voice and body language to cut your clients off from telling their story and so on, which can easily go undetected. From time to time, even "good" advisers may find themselves in such situations, especially when they are under pressure.

Advisers, therefore, need to pay special attention to their power. Many refugees may lose

their self-confidence and assertiveness, at least at the early stages of exile, and may not be able to deal with or challenge your behaviour. It should be remembered that “healthy helping” can only work between equals, and guidance in its modern sense is a process that takes place between equals.

Establishing a relationship with the clients as equals requires a strong ethical standing from the advisers, but organisations cannot entirely rely on the “ethics” of their employees. Introducing a proper “complaints policy” and advertising it vigorously among the clients, as well as establishing regular “client feedback” channels, and sound supervision of advisers, can help enormously to remedy the possible misuse of power. These issues will again be addressed later in the framework under organisational aspects of guidance.

3.3 The basic framework of a guidance interview

Before going into details of the guidance process, it should be emphasised that, although guidance is a highly skilled profession, and an academic/vocational discipline in some Western countries, it is essentially all about “helping others”, a natural human activity that can be found in every form of society throughout history. At colleges or universities we may learn/teach “the micro skills of attending” or “stages of an interview”, but it is, **at its heart** a benevolent person’s attempt to help others.

Educational guidance for adult refugees differs from other areas of advice and guidance work for refugees, such as housing and state benefits. It normally involves in-depth interviews, which require sound counselling skills.

We would also like to underline that every piece of guidance activity with individuals should be seen as a unique activity. Because guidance is an interactive process and each client and each adviser has a different personality, different analytical and problem solving skills, different approaches to life, etc. every guidance process takes its own, perhaps, natural course.

Secondly, guidance should not be considered as a “linear” process. In the flow of the interview, clients and advisers may move between different stages in order to fill the gaps, explore new areas, and so on. The stages given below should, therefore, be taken as guidelines only.

Thirdly, the model we are giving here has adopted some forms and concepts from Gerard Egan’s²¹ model, designed for counselling situations, but it must be emphasised that our model is a much-simplified and modified version of it.

Starting an interview

Attentively introduce yourself. Explain your role and the boundaries of the service, in order not to raise false expectations. Inform the client of the possible length of the interview. If you are using forms and going to take notes, inform the client first, why you need to keep records, and explain how they will be stored. It is important to emphasise the confidentiality of the interview, and to clarify what happens after the interview, i.e. whether the client can make follow up contact in person or by telephone. This helps putting the client’s mind at

²¹ The Skilled Helper, Gerard Egan, 2000

ease. This stage of interview is called “introduction” or “contracting”, as the adviser and client agree on the ground rules.

It is important to note that introductions should be short otherwise it may impede the “free flow” of the interview. On many occasions, refugee clients immediately start telling their stories, without letting you even introduce yourself. It is not a good idea to stop them for the sake of carrying out a “proper introduction”. Listening to the client is of paramount importance in guidance situations, not the “proper introduction”. Information to be given during the introduction can be given later in the interview, whenever the conversation permits. It should be added that many experienced advisers usually begin with introducing themselves only, and the rest can be embedded in the other stages of the interview.

If the length of time allocated to an interview is fairly short (many guidance agencies put a limit for an interview in order to serve more clients), it could be a good idea to produce a simple and short handout giving the above-mentioned information about the interview. Translated versions of this in different languages used by your client group can also be very useful. If using such a handout, at the beginning of the interview advisers should check with the client that the handout is read and understood.

Exploring the “current situation”

This stage involves listening to the client’s “story”. It is useful to begin with an open ended question to encourage the client to tell her/his story. A plain “what can I do for you” could be sufficient in many cases. From what the client tells you, you begin to draw a “picture” about the client, problem s/he faces. It is in this stage that information about the client's educational/occupational background, life/work experience, hobbies/dislikes etc. is gathered. As we stated before, working with adult refugees is quite different from giving a guidance interview to young members of your society. Adult refugees usually have long, often complex, work and life experiences, during which they may have developed a variety of different skills and competences and gained qualifications. Proper exploration of refugees’ background may have an important impact on the design of their progression routes.

Exploring the “preferred situation”

After obtaining a clear picture of the client’s current situation the interview should move on to exploring the client’s “preferred situation”, in other words what kind of progression from the current situation is required. After listening to client’s intentions, and before the exploration of possible options, the equivalency and transferability of client’s past qualifications, skills and competences should be established.

Many of RETAS' clients come with a more or less clear progression route in their minds. Refugees with higher educational background and with sound English may have already carried out some research about the learning opportunity they wish to pursue.

In some cases, however, refugee clients might be confused about what they wish to do, or may be wanting more than one, even contrasting “preferred situations”. Unrealistic progression routes are also common. These kinds of cases should be handled with a great degree of patience. It is necessary to clarify the client’s feelings for each option. If possible suggest other possible directions not mentioned by the client, examine the pros and cons of each possibility together with the client, and encourage them to choose the best possible

option for themselves. Advisers should not be shy to use “mild challenging” or “polite challenging” skills if they do not feel comfortable with client’s choice. As we mentioned earlier, the client is the centre of the guidance, but this does not mean advisers need to agree with clients all the time. Sometimes being even critical about client’s views might become necessary.

Reaching a decision may require more than one interview. Between the interviews the client and/or adviser may collect more information or carry out research in order to create room for a more informed decision.

In some cases “dual” progression routes can be chosen: One for the short term, one for the long term. For example, the client might be desperate to get a job not compatible with her/his background and prepare her/himself for the long-term career choice while working. This situation arises in many guidance interviews, and many refugees work through their lives in this fashion.

Action planning

At this stage adviser and client agree on actions to be taken by the client and/or adviser in order to implement the decisions reached at the previous stage. Each refugee client needs different levels of support from the adviser, depending on their language skills, confidence, familiarity with the host country etc. Advisers need to be sensitive to the clients’ needs for support, but they should also encourage clients to conduct their own affairs as much as they can. This kind of approach minimises the development of dependency on advisers, which can be the case for some clients. It may also accelerate their integration process.

Written action plans kept by both sides are useful in order to refer to in future, prevent any misunderstandings between client and adviser, as well as to measure the progress at the later stages of guidance. If necessary, referrals can be made at this stage. We will explore the quality issues related to making referrals later.

Concluding an interview

At the end of the interview it is good practice to inform the client on what to do if/when s/he needs further assistance from you (to telephone, to drop in, or make an appointment etc). Finally, after each interview the adviser should check with the client whether s/he has any further questions. If there are none, then the interview can be concluded.

3.4 Integration begins from day one

ECRE considers integration as a long term “process of change”. “From psychological perspective it often starts at the time of arrival in the country of final destination and is concluded when a refugee becomes an active member of that society from a legal, social, economic, educational and cultural perspective”.²² ECRE recommends that “**considerable investment** needs to be made in services **during the reception phase** in order to enable people to develop necessary skills and knowledge which facilitate integration in the host country in the case of a positive asylum decision.”²³

²² Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, ECRE, 1999

²³ Ibid (bolds are ours)

A research study carried out in the USA in 1980 suggests that refugees go through a series of stages in exile. During the early years of exile refugees "display an impressive drive to recover what has been lost, to rebuild their lives. They will work hard, try to learn the language and search for better jobs... after four or five years, disillusion often sets in."²⁴

This pattern may not apply to all refugees, but “disillusion” and “disappointment” are well known facts by many practitioners working with refugees. In almost all countries of the EU the determination process of asylum applications is exceptionally long, in many cases with no or inadequate learning and orientation opportunities for asylum seekers. This period of uncertainty and idleness usually leaves profound scars on refugees' future lives, sometimes beyond repair.

For refugees, as human beings, the integration process begins from day one of exile, not from the date of being granted refugee status or leave to remain. Asylum seekers should, **at least** be given the chance to have access to language classes and vocational training, as well as good quality guidance and support, while awaiting decisions on their asylum applications. This period of learning will make it easier for them to resettle in the host countries if they are allowed to stay, or will constitute a contribution to the other parts of the world if their application for asylum is rejected and they have to go elsewhere.

3.5 Refugees' health and education

Most refugees, unlike immigrants, do not come to the EU because of their own wish or desire. They are forced to leave their countries due to oppression and persecution, sometimes with very short notice. Research studies carried out in a number of different countries including Australia have consistently shown that at least 10% and up to 35% of refugees reaching a developed country had previously endured torture in their homelands.²⁵ According to the Amnesty International torture is practised in over 150 countries today²⁶, many of which are refugee producing countries. As a result, physical illnesses, disability and psychological trauma are common among refugees.

The experience following the arrival in the country of resettlement has also important effects on refugees' psychological state of mind. Detention, the long and painful asylum process, poverty, racist treatment or assaults, isolation, feeling of loss of community and social status are some of the examples of “post-migratory stressors” for refugees.

Many refugees overcome these psychological problems with their own defences and inner-strength. For some refugees, however, even after receiving counselling and psychotherapy for a period of time, their state of psychological health may hinder a successful learning process. On the other hand, the learning process itself can have “healing properties”. The Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture confirms that attending a course of education or training can be very beneficial to refugees' mental health. A recent research study carried out across Europe as a part of the ECRE Project has also confirmed this point. It found that “for traumatised refugees education is most beneficial” for their well being “as it has a

²⁴ Refugee Resettlement Programmes and Techniques, B.N. Stein, 1980, USA, Source: Resettling Refugees: The Lessons of Research by Simon Field, the Home Office research study, 1987, UK

²⁵ Begley, M G, Asylum in Ireland: An Overview, In: T. Whelan, ed. The Stranger in Our Midst, Ireland, 2001

²⁶ Amnesty International, Take a Step to Stamp Out Torture, 2000

healing quality itself”, especially for those “traumatised children and adolescents, as it meets their normal development tasks”.²⁷

Advisers, therefore, should not discourage refugees from taking up a course of education or training even if they are suffering from trauma, but provide an ongoing guidance service during the learning process.

3.6 Guidance as an ongoing process

Most of action plans include tasks to be carried out by advisers and/or clients, therefore follow-up work usually becomes a natural extension of the guidance interview.

For guidance agencies working with refugees, however, follow-up work has other important meanings. As mentioned earlier, guidance work with refugees should be closely linked to their integration process, during which refugees' learning needs may change. Refugee guidance agencies should be able to support refugees throughout this process.

Employing "tracking exercises" to measure the clients' progression is an example of good practice. These exercises should not only focus on the "hard outcomes" (such as finding employment) but also on the "soft outcomes" (such as progression in the level of language learning) to demonstrate the positive outcomes of guidance, as well as refugees' learning. It should be remembered that "success breeds success", therefore it is important to share success stories of refugees with the wider audience to promote a more sympathetic environment for refugees' learning.

3.7 Difficulties in recognising the best possible option

As witnessed by guidance workers, refugees may not always be in a position to see the right direction for themselves for a number of reasons. The main ones are as follows:

- Refugees may not be aware of the job market conditions in the host country. Some marketable skills in refugee producing countries may not be in use or of use in the EU, for example "water drilling engineering" in the Low Countries.
- In the EU, the extent of the division of work, in other words the variety of jobs and professions, may be more developed and quite different from many refugee-producing countries. Advisers, therefore, should check the clients' awareness of other "preferred situations". Clients may need to go through a process of exploration about different careers that are not fully developed in their countries of origin.
- Many refugees with higher educational backgrounds consider that gaining a post-graduate qualification in the EU will enhance their chances of finding meaningful employment. This may be true in many cases, but it can also lead to over-qualification, which is, itself, an important factor in continuing unemployment for many refugees.

²⁷ Refugee Children in Europe: Good Practice Guidelines for the Psychological Context, Diagnosis and Intervention of Traumatised Children and Adolescents, The Therapy Centre for Torture Victims, Caritas Cologne Refugee Counselling Association

- Regulated professions have strict progression routes for practising these professions. Many professional refugees, mistakenly, see postgraduate study as a key to practising their professions in the EU. They embark upon post-graduate studies rather than following the requalification processes required by the professional bodies, consequently ending up with post-graduate qualifications that do not lead to employment in their original profession. Secondly attaining a postgraduate qualification in the EU does not necessarily enhance refugees' employment prospects. Sometimes "over-qualification" itself may become a barrier for refugees.

It is important, therefore, for an adviser to make sure that the client will benefit from a course of study, and not become even more disadvantaged.

- Refugees' career aspirations may swing from one extreme to another, from **unrealistic optimism** to **unreasonable pessimism**. Because of this, demoralised, but highly qualified and experienced refugees may end up in low-skilled jobs. EU countries are full of refugees working as mini-cab drivers, cleaners and painters and decorators. It is not our intention to denigrate those occupations, and we recognise their convenience for many refugees, especially for those who do not wish to face the rigours of further education and training, but it is obvious that it is a gross waste of human resources. Provision of a period of further education or training specially designed for refugees can reverse this. Guidance workers should question these pessimistic career choices, and make sure that the client reaches an informed decision.
- "Dual" progression plans mentioned above may look attractive for refugees for financial reasons. As long as the short-term choice is not blocking the progress to the long-term goal it can be considered as a good choice. Unfortunately, many refugees with similar action plans find themselves in physically demanding jobs entailing long or unsociable working hours, and the long-term goal becomes forgotten. Clients should be made aware of this situation.
- On the other hand, the career aspirations of some refugees', especially of those with higher status backgrounds, might be unrealistically high. Haunted by the feeling of "loss of status", enraged by the non-recognition of their expertise by the host society, they may refuse to see the barriers and obstacles in the way of continuing with their occupations. Sometimes they may divert their anger on to the advisers. Guidance workers may play a positive role in helping refugees to reach an **optimistic but also realistic** direction. This can only be done by examining together with the client each possible option available, with its pros and cons, using **mild challenging skills** when / if necessary.
- Many refugees may suffer from psychological problems due to past experiences as well as a result of being in exile, preventing them to make healthy decisions on their career path. Advisers should be able to spot these problems, and refer clients to an appropriate institution/body for specialist help. It should be emphasised that this is a very sensitive issue, therefore, it should only be carried out by a properly trained adviser.

On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the learning process itself can have "healing

properties”. Advisers, therefore, should encourage refugees to take up an appropriate course of education or training even if they are suffering from trauma.

Finally, it should be remembered that the final decision lies with the client. The advisers’ role is to provide clients with information as much as possible, and help them to see different perspectives, not to impose their own “agenda” on to the clients.

3.8 Opportunity creation and policy development work

“Extend good relations with schools and colleges for more opportunities for refugees.”

“Advice agencies need to lobby and campaign on behalf of refugees.”

“...make strong request from institutions, local and national governments.”

“Lack of suitable provision for refugees, e.g. courses, training...”

The worst enemies of educational guidance work with refugees are primarily the lack of educational opportunities for refugees and the restrictive laws, regulations and rules preventing refugees, especially asylum seekers, benefiting from mainstream provision. These circumstances put guidance workers in an agonising professional situation, where they often cannot offer much choice to their clients.

In some member states, however, the rate of refugees’ access to education and training is considerably higher than many of the other member states. The reasons for this disparity are unknown, and they should be brought into the light by research.

On the other hand, our study visits and some findings of the 1st Questionnaire have shown that in the countries where the situation is relatively better, there are long standing independent organisations, the services of which are entirely devoted to refugees’ education and training. These organisations are also known for their opportunity creation and policy development work, which are also long standing. It is not our intention to explain the above mentioned disparity by this factor only, but we believe it has at least some influence on this.

In the UK, for example, many universities offer fees at the lower home student rate to asylum seekers; at Further Education level the majority of courses are free of charge for refugees, including asylum seekers; and there are a considerable number of educational charities giving study grants to refugees. In the Netherlands, for example, the University Assistance Fund provides educational advice and guidance, as well as around 250 study grants for refugees and asylum seekers to study at the Higher Education level.

These positive developments are the products of long, forceful and difficult campaigning and advocacy work carried out by progressive individuals and organisations, including educational guidance agencies. Policy and opportunity development work at local and national level through networking, advocacy and campaign activities, should therefore be considered as a core activity by guidance agencies working with refugees. The contrast between refugees’ needs for education and training and low levels of provision of learning invites us to carry out vigorous advocacy and campaign work to change the current situation for the better. This work should include central and local government departments,

education and training providers, employers, professional bodies, benefit agencies, trade unions, and so on.

In addition, “anti-refugeeism” has become the new name of racism in Europe. Those, who are too cowardly to speak their racist views openly, feel free to speak against refugees, without facing much criticism. In many countries governments have recently brought in anti-refugee laws and regulations to curb their already limited rights and entitlements. Fighting against all forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination at any level of the society should also be considered a key activity for refugee assisting organisations.

4. ORGANISATIONAL ASPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE FOR REFUGEES

Advisers working with refugees are usually highly committed, hardworking and knowledgeable individuals. This fact alone, however, does not ensure the quality of the service they provide. It is a well-known fact that environmental factors play an important part in the quality of service delivered. Working in a badly “organised” organisation may make an excellent adviser worn out in a short period of time.

Organisational support with sound policies and procedures can increase the effectiveness of the guidance work. It should be remembered that policies and procedures should be designed in accordance with the size and actual work of the organisation, and they should not lead to create a military-like atmosphere, which is the first enemy of creativity and enthusiasm, the qualities that are much more needed in a guidance organisation working with refugees.

It is not our intention to cover all the measures and procedures that enable organisations offer quality guidance services within this limited framework. Most of the topics included below have already been addressed by the quality awarding organisations, and therefore a number of readers of this framework should already be familiar with them. We think this chapter will be most appropriate for new or emerging organisations, also organisations and individuals who are not much familiar with these topics. We will also try to re-examine some of them from refugees' point of view.

Some of the topics below are purely "organisational", covering structural and operational aspects of the guidance organisations. Some topics, however, deals with more ethical issues, such as confidentiality. In this chapter we will look at these ethical issues only from organisational point of view.

4.1 Statement of service

“It is not always clear from the beginning what kind of advice the agency does provide. This is the reason for clients’ movement to too many offices trying to understand who can give the specific information to solve their specific problem.”

Refugees often become confused about the services offered by guidance organisations, such as what kind of help they can give, when they are open, whether there is an interpreter, if they deal with employment issues, and so on. In order to give a clear picture about the services offered to clients a Statement of Service should be produced. It should be written in plain language and is kept as short as possible. Statement of Service or at least a summary of it should be used in marketing material of the organisation. Statement of Service should contain the following:

- A detailed description of services offered by the organisation

- A clear description of the client group, i.e. who is eligible for the service offered by the organisation
- Information about when, where and how these services can be accessed (opening times, address, public transport routes, a map of the area, etc)
- An outline of mutual expectations (what is expected from the clients, and what they can expect from the organisation)
- A statement that welcomes client feedback, positive or negative, and explains how the client feedback will be utilised. It should also explain how the client could lodge a complaint.

The Statement of Service must be accessible for all clients. For this purpose it should be displayed in the premises. If it is too long to display, a summary of it will suffice. It should also be available in printed form to be handed out to clients. When providing service on an outreach basis, copies of the Statement of Service should be taken with the adviser, as every client should have access to it.

Producing a Statement of Service also helps organisations to clarify and define their roles and responsibilities for themselves.

4.2 Holistic service

“There should be a variety of support under one roof, different services.”
“Create a systematic procedure to avoid going around the territory for different problems.”
“A good advice should be centralised in a concrete place.” (Spain)

The concept of a "holistic approach to guidance" is about the creation of a service where clients' different needs are met without much inconvenience. Establishment of "one stop shops", where a variety of different services are offered under one roof, often by different organisations or by different departments of one organisation, is an example of good practice in this field.

For smaller organisations, one stop shops can also be achieved by employing specialist advisers from different fields of advice, such as housing, education, employment etc.

The need for holistic advice is more intense for refugees, as their needs are multiple, especially at the early stages of resettlement. They may need support with their asylum applications, housing needs and state benefits. As refugees are less familiar with the environment, rules and systems, they benefit greatly from the creation of a holistic service. Such services also cut travelling costs, which constitutes a significant barrier to refugees' access to services.

4.3 Making the service accessible

“In the big cities it takes a long time to know which is the right agency to have information, where it is.”

Access to service is about taking organisational measures in order to remove barriers that might exist between the service and the client group, in other words making the service easily accessible for clients. If a guidance organisation fails to address accessibility issues effectively, the service it offers becomes meaningless, even if all the other quality standards are met. The following are some issues of importance:

4.3.1 Publicising the service

“Prepare a flier to be distributed everywhere, with all the information about advice agencies.”

“The quality of service I received was perfect. I wish I knew the existence of this service three years ago, when I first arrived. Don’t you advertise your services?”

Publicising service means making refugees aware of the existence of the service. Organisations should publicise their services as widely as possible by producing leaflets, posters etc, which should be distributed among other service providers used by refugees, as well as refugee community organisations to encourage referrals. It is also a good idea to negotiate with the Immigration Offices or organisations dealing with the reception of refugees to provide refugees with information about your service on their arrival.

4.3.2 Translation and interpreting

“Without an interpretation service to accompany advice sessions provision of advice can become meaningless.”

“At the ... office there is a notice: ‘bring your own interpreter!’”

For most refugees, language is the single most important barrier to accessing services. This is especially true at the early stages of their lives in exile. To eliminate this barrier, organisations working with refugees should:

- Provide interpreters / translators whenever necessary.
- Train and employ refugees, as most refugees are bilingual if not multilingual.
- Make publicity materials available in different languages, which are used by the client group. From time to time the languages chosen for translation should be checked, as

with the arrival of new groups of refugees demand for other languages might emerge.

4.3.3 Reaching disadvantaged groups

"Most asylum-seekers with low educational title, especially women, are excluded."

Refugees are regarded to be a disadvantaged group. Among them, however, there are even more disadvantaged groups finding additional barriers to benefiting from services. These include house-bound women refugees, refugees with poorer educational/occupational backgrounds, those from cultures differing greatly from the culture of the host society, single parents, persons with disabilities, victims of torture, those suffering from additional discrimination owing to sexual orientation and so on. Organisations should take positive action to attract these groups of people to their services.

Producing publicity material particularly targeting such groups is one way forward.

Reaching out is another effective method. Organising outreach services at community centres, refugees' homes etc. is good practice to improve accessibility. If this is the case, an "Outreach Policy" should be produced. It should cover health and safety issues for both advisers and clients, and procedures about how outreach work should be carried out.

4.3.4 Location of guidance

*Offices should be clean and pleasant, not degrading human dignity."
"It is not a priority to have a too nice place."*

Location of the guidance activity should be accessible to the client group/s. This means offices should either be located centrally for easy access, or close to areas where the main client groups live.

Access for persons with physical disability should also be taken into account. If it is impossible to have wheel chair access in the premises, the organisation should consider alternative ways of serving them, such as home visits, telephone advice services. Information regarding disability access should also be stated in the Statement of Service and marketing materials.

Premises should be safe, clean and pleasant, compatible with human dignity, where clients can feel comfortable having a conversation with an adviser about their problems. They should also be well signposted for easy visibility.

It should be remembered that grandiose places could be intimidating for, at least, some refugees.

4.4 Confidentiality

“Confidential advice environment is a must for refugees.”

Confidentiality is a core quality standard, which should be met under all circumstances. For obvious reasons this issue becomes even more crucial for agencies or institutions working with refugees. They should employ the strictest confidentiality policy and procedures regardless of the form of the guidance activity and the financial status of the organisations.

If the existing guidance location does not comply with refugees’ needs for confidentiality, the organisation should take immediate measures to remedy the situation. Sometimes re-organising the office space can solve the problem. If this is not possible, then, the organisation should engage in serious fundraising activity or negotiate with the current funding body for immediate improvements.

Interviews should take place in separate interview room(s) without the interference of other parties. If the presence of other person(s) is necessary, such as consultants and observers, the client’s permission should be sought before the interview.

Producing a written Confidentiality Policy for the organisation is advisable, which should contain the following elements:

- Client details (files) should be kept in locked cabinets.
- If computers are in use, access to them should be protected by passwords.
- Details of clients should not be revealed to any third party without the clients’ prior consent. If the organisation need to pass some or all of the details of the client onto a third party, this needs to be stated in the Statement of the Service, as well as other publicity material. Before any guidance activity this also needs to be explained to the client.
- Advisers should also be cautious even with their casual and private conversations, especially when in public places.

4.5 Referring refugees to other services

“A good advice agency is where you can get all the information about all the services you need.”

“Take care... the information on other agencies is correct and complete, addresses, public transport, hours, and kind of advice provision.”

“A good, clear referral system to different services.”

Advice organisations working with refugees are all familiar with the fact that refugees usually feel like a “table tennis ball” thrown “back and forth” between different service providers as well as government offices. They are often sent to inappropriate bodies, or given wrong or incomplete information about the institutions they are referred to, causing unnecessary confusion and exhaustion. In order to avoid this situation, sound referral systems should be created and implemented.

A good referral system requires establishment of extensive networks between all organisations working with refugees, NGOs, as well as statutory bodies. The following are some useful hints for making effective referrals:

- It is useful to create a pack to keep comprehensive information about other organisations that can be of use to refugees, such as their location, address, nature of service, opening times etc. This can be handed out to clients. The information also needs to be updated on a regular basis.
- A sound referral should be made in writing. Creating a simple referral form on the organisation’s headed paper can be useful. It should contain a contact name, the address and telephone number, the reason for referral, the date and time of the appointment or accurate information about office hours of the other organisation. The referring adviser should also write down her/his own name. The client should be informed about what needs to be done if anything goes wrong. In some cases it may become necessary to accompany the client to the other organisation.
- Making an appointment for the client with the third party over the telephone is usually necessary. This should be done, if possible, in the presence of the client.

4.6 Networking

“Create a network of local NGOs, associations and public offices to discuss a common workplan, to compare methodologies...”
“Co-operation between agencies on information exchange.”

Networking with other organisations is the key to an effective referral system, but it has other important purposes as well. As mentioned before, in Europe, there is a great need for co-operation and exchange of good practice among the advice organisations working with refugees. The creation of local, national and transnational networks helps organisations to learn from each other and develop common policies and procedures.

Establishing regular meetings with networks also increases the flow of information between organisations on various aspects of refugees’ lives, enables organisations to spot new “emerging issues” or “crisis situations”.

Duplication of services is a common occurrence in many EU countries. Networks can play an important part in avoiding this situation. They may also help to promote co-operation rather than competition between guidance agencies.

Networks are also very useful for opportunity creation and policy development for the benefit of refugees, as service providers and policy makers are more inclined to consider opinions from consortia, rather than listen to individual organisations.

4.7 Service management

“No systematic registration of interviews.”, “Flexible advice service sometimes means not to find an adviser, because they involved in other work.”

“It is good not to have an appointment system. Without an appointment, you can just drop-in.”

“I don’t like drop-in services. You arrive, but a lot of people already came before you. You need to wait for hours.”

The essence of effective service management can be described as “ensuring that pledges made in the Statement of Service are being realised”. Sound service management requires “good house-keeping skills”, from rules on keeping client files to deciding on office opening hours, all of which cannot be covered here. We will mention a couple of important ones below.

4.7.1 Managing client and interview details

Using a simple form to record client and interview details with clients’ consent is good practice. If the client comes back for another interview this form acts as a reminder of the case details for the adviser. For subsequent interviews or visits, a “Follow up Form” can be created. Keeping client details is also good for evaluation and auditing purposes. These forms should be kept in files, which should be securely stored in a systematic way for easy retrieval.

Retrieving client files may become problematic, if a sound retrieval system is not in place. This is especially true for larger organisations. Case workers may need to keep some client files at their desk while dealing with follow up work, or managers may use them to supervise their staff members. Not knowing the location of a file may create problems for other staff members, if they need to have access to the same file/s.

The essence of creating a retrieval system is to enable relevant staff members to find out the location of each client file. This can be done in various ways, from using databases on computers to creating a simple card system, which should be decided according to the needs of the organisation.

4.7.2 Information management

Updating existing knowledge, being aware of the new developments, and having access to adequate sources of information are essential for the sound delivery of guidance.

For this purpose, organisations should build up good resource libraries containing essential reference books and materials, periodicals etc. It is also important to keep the information material up to date. Many resource libraries are full of out of date information material, which makes the guidance process very difficult, if not impossible.

“Healthy” circulation of information within the organisation should be managed carefully. In some organisations circulation of information is very limited, even important information materials stay with the receiving staff member. Some organisations, however, circulate everything without checking whether it is useful or not for other colleagues, creating “information jams”. This is also true for forwarding emails.

Methods of establishing and maintaining a resource library and the circulation of information should be decided according to the size, structure and the needs of the organisation.

4.8 Managing human resources

“Lack of honesty about opportunities and options from adviser to client.”
“Brief advice is not good.”

Guidance is an interactive process that takes place between human beings. Even the “coldest” electronic advice/information programmes are the creations of human advisers.

Advisers, like all other human beings, can be kind or cruel, knowledgeable or ignorant. Even a “golden” adviser may become worn out under pressure. Employing advisers with high qualifications in this field cannot guarantee the quality of advice on its own. Advice agencies, therefore, should introduce objective measures to guarantee the high quality of advice provision and to prevent any misuse.

In addition, human resource management cannot be reduced to merely “dealing with staffing issues”. It has a much wider scope. It can be summarised as ensuring that staff members of an advice agency possess, and/or are encouraged to develop qualities, skills and knowledge that are essential or useful in meeting the needs of clients effectively.

This is a huge area of work, and evidently, covering even the key aspects of human resource management in detail is beyond the capacity of this document. Some issues of importance will be mentioned briefly.

4.8.1 Organisational policies and procedures

- A transparent and effective Recruitment Policy and Process should be in place to ensure the best possible candidates are recruited with appropriate skills, knowledge and experience that are necessary to carry out the duties of an adviser.
- Guidance organisations should create Equal Opportunities Policies to preclude discrimination in recruitment and treatment of staff members, as well as clients.
- The Recruitment Policy should include positive action measures to ensure a balance in representation of refugees, among the staff membership. As the British Refugee Council’s survey mentioned earlier suggests, the recruitment policies of the refugee assisting organisations do not normally encourage refugees to apply for posts. They

should review all their policies, procedures, practices to remove artificially created barriers, such as person specification criteria, composition of interview panels. "However, the first step to be taken is the making of a political decision to change the culture of an organisation and commit it to the principle of equal opportunity and the belief that the work of refugee assisting NGO's can be greatly enhanced by the involvement of refugees themselves."²⁸

- Creating a clear Complaints Policy and Procedure document, which should be advertised among the clients, is another core standard, which helps to ensure the fair treatment of clients, as well as of staff members in the case of a conflict between adviser and client.
- A Staff Development Policy should be created to ensure that staff members possess and update/upgrade the necessary values, skills and knowledge for delivery of an effective service. This can be achieved through induction programmes, in-house/on-line training, or by taking courses of education or training, attending conferences, workshops and so on.

The staff training should essentially include the following two topics:

- Equal opportunities
- Multiculturalism and refugee awareness
- Cross-cultural communication skills

- Special aspects of providing guidance for refugees suffering from trauma, especially torture related trauma.

The Staff Development Policy should also allow training for personal development, not necessarily work related, where possible. In today's world the investment in human resources is considered to be the most rewarding one for any organisation.

- Effective and supportive supervision channels should also be created through regular staff, casework and supervision meetings. Staff members should be given an opportunity to receive formal feedback from the management on their work through yearly appraisal meetings.

4.9 Continuous quality improvement

Organisations should employ appropriate evaluation methods to measure the quality and effectiveness of the service, and ensure ongoing quality by taking actions according to the findings of the evaluation activities. The following two measures are considered to be essential.

4.9.1 Refugees' participation

"Make refugees participate in discussions and decision making process concerning advice."

²⁸ David Hudson and Saoirse Kerrigan, *Employing Refugees*, BRC, 2002

“Feedback authorities with the findings gathered by advisers from working closely with refugees.”

A “client-focussed service” has to ensure a regular client feedback mechanism is in place to collect clients’ views on the effectiveness and the quality of the service. Client feedback is one of the most effective tools in creating a "reflective practice".

Client feedback can be collected in various ways, e.g. by holding client consultation group meetings, evaluation interviews, distribution of questionnaires among the clients. Keeping a “comments book” or cards on the premises is also a good idea. Clients should be encouraged to comment on the service they received, positive or negative. Clients should also be asked to comment on the measures that can be taken for improvement. Some refugees may not be familiar with concept of collecting feedback from clients, therefore, an explanatory not should be used for this purpose. Advisers should also encourage refugees to give their comments.

Clients’ comments, suggestions and complaints can sometimes be subjective and unfair. In particular, grant making organisations may generate more “unhappy” clients due to the limitation of funds. It is, therefore, imperative that sound systems of analysing and tackling comments, suggestions and complaints, and how the findings will be used for improvement should be established.

Refugees should also be given platforms to have a say in the management and the decision-making process of the organisation. Refugees with appropriate skills and knowledge can make enormous contributions to advice agencies, especially with their own refugee experience. Ensuring the adequate representation of refugees in management committees, as well as establishing consultation committees bringing together representatives from various refugee communities could be very useful.

Along with its “corrective properties”, the participation of refugees also enables guidance organisations to identify the key problems faced by them, as well as to spot new, emerging issues, which can then be tackled in time. These “properties” are invaluable sources of information for setting organisational priorities, and establishing a healthy opportunity creation and policy development work.

4.9.2 Staff members’ participation

Staff members’ views on policies, practices and the way of the services run can be very valuable, as they have the first hand knowledge and experience on these issues. The way of collecting staff feedback heavily depends on the size, structure and more importantly culture of the organisation. Regular staff or section meetings and supervision meetings are important in order to get staff feedback. Organising “away day” meetings where staff members come together with managers to discuss issues of importance is also a good practice. In large or more hierarchical organisations a comments and suggestions box could be useful, as this enables staff members to put anonymous notes in, if they wish to.

On the other hand, this issue can be sensitive. Staff members may not like to sound critical, or staff feedback can be used to manipulate certain situations. Like client feedback, feedback

from staff members requires carefully designed assessment systems.

5. EPILOGUE

Moving towards an integrated and harmonious Europe is only possible by embracing positive change.

In the framework we looked at the state of refugees' learning opportunities in the EU, also the state of educational advice and guidance for refugees. We found some examples of good practice, some new positive developments, but also identified examples of bad practice and gaps leading to unnecessary waste of human resources. This situation brings massive challenges in front of all organisations, institutions and individuals working with refugees.

Throughout the framework we embedded directions and suggestions on how to change the existing environment in order to open doors for refugees to benefit from learning opportunities, also on how to change our organisations in order to be able to change the environment and ensure the quality of service.

We also looked at some principles, without which a healthy guidance environment is unimaginable. Among them, multicultural and refugee awareness should be given paramount importance. These qualities should be woven into every aspect of advice and guidance like a golden thread if we are to positively respond to the needs of ever-increasing globalisation.

We hope that this framework will not gather dust on the shelves, but be read, discussed, used, and more importantly further developed by organisations and individuals, who have a passionate belief in the empowering qualities of education on refugees' successful integration.

ANNEX I

FINDINGS OF THE 1st QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

The questionnaire, as mentioned before, was designed to map out the state of refugees' access to education/training opportunities in each EU member state. Over 100 copies were sent out to organisations working with refugees, especially to those providing advice and guidance, but not necessarily on education. We received 47 completed questionnaires.

Before beginning to analyse the findings, we would like to draw your attention to some issues. The first issue arises from the number of the responses we received, which brings us to the question of how **representative is the sample**.

Number of responses according to countries:

Country	Number of questionnaires received
Austria	6
Belgium	1
Denmark	1
Finland	3
France	4
Germany	2
Greece	4
Ireland	2
Italy	3
Luxemburg	2
Netherlands	6
Portugal	1
Spain	3
Sweden	4
UK	5
Total	47

If the area of coverage (which is the entire EU) is taken into account, 47 responses may not be considered as representative. On the other hand, if the number of organisations dealing with issues of refugee education or providing educational advice and guidance across the EU is taken into account, and the degree of interest in these issues, the number of responses cannot be regarded as poor. Interestingly, the British Refugee Council's survey, *Employing Refugees*, has received a similar number of responses despite the fact that the level of interest around employment issues is much higher than education. We would certainly prefer to receive more completed questionnaires, at least from some countries, where a large number of refugees live, but having taken into account the work load of refugee agencies, and the number of questionnaires currently circulated in the refugee sector, it is understandable.

We are also pleased that responses covered all 15 Member States of the EU.

The second issue is that **whether the responses reflect the true reality** within the member states. Almost all the respondents of this questionnaire were from main refugee assisting organisations operating in the EU. All respondents had, at least, an interest in educational guidance work for refugees. These colleagues are, obviously, among the first group of people who know the state of refugees' education in their countries. On the other hand, we received some contradictory answers from different respondents residing in the same country. The contradictions can be divided into two groups:

An example of the first group: From Britain refugees' attendance to higher education was rated as "common" by 3 respondents, "fairly common" by 1, and "rare" by 1. This disparity is understandable, because the respondents were not asked to give us the actual facts, but their perceptions. For the second group: From Sweden 2 respondents said that recognised refugees were eligible for statutory funding to finance education, whereas the other 2 said no. To conclude, the number of responses may not be fully representative, and responses may not reflect the entire reality and may include respondents views and perceptions, but the findings of the questionnaire can give us healthy indications.

The third issue is the **imbalance in the number of responses received from different countries**. From some countries we received only one response, from some 4 or more. This made it impossible to reach a balanced representation between the countries. For the majority of the questions, we therefore were forced to list all the countries against the responses, in order to give a clearer picture for each country, rather than giving a percentage for each question for the entire EU.

Analysis of the Questionnaire

Question 1: Are the language courses offered in your country adequate according to the needs of refugees, in terms of their availability, frequency and quality? (Language=host country's language).

Country	Rate			No of respondents
	Very good	Fairly good	Poor	
Austria	1	3	2	6
Belgium		1		1
Denmark		1		1
Finland		3		3
France		2	2	4
Germany		2		2
Greece	1	1	2	4
Ireland		1	1	2
Italy		2	1	3
Luxemburg	1	1		2
Netherlands	6			6
Portugal		1		1
Spain		2	1	3
Sweden		2	2	4
UK		2	3	5
Total	3	30	14	47
%	6.4	63.8	29.8	100

There were some comments, such as "big cities only", "long waiting lists".

Question 2: Are the language courses available at different levels?

Country	Yes	No	No of respondents
Austria	4	2	6
Belgium	1		1
Denmark		1	1
Finland	3		3
France	3	1	4
Germany	2		2
Greece	3	1	4
Ireland	1	1	2
Italy	3		3
Luxemburg	2		2
Netherlands	6		6
Portugal	1		1
Spain	3		3
Sweden	3	1	4
UK	5		5
Total	40	7	47
%	85	15	100

Answers with “yes” contained comments, such as “but very few”, “in some places”, “very low levels”.

Question 3: Are there specially designed language courses for refugees with professional backgrounds (ie. for health professionals) or for preparing refugees for academic education?

Country	Yes	No	No of respondents
Austria	3	3	6
Belgium		1	1
Denmark	1		1
Finland	3		3
France		4	4
Germany	1	1	2
Greece	2	2	4
Ireland		2	2
Italy		3	3
Luxemburg		2	2
Netherlands	6		6
Portugal		1	1
Spain	2	1	3
Sweden	1	3	4
UK	5		5
Total	24	23	47
%	51	49	100

Almost half of the respondents said “no” to this question. 70.8% of respondents who said “yes” were from The Netherlands and the UK.

Question 4: Where are the language courses run? (More than one option was tickable)

Location	Number of responses
Mainstream colleges, educational institutions	34
NGOs	29
Special institutions	28
RCOs	21
Hostels	4

The table indicates that a large part of language provision is taking place at the mainstream institutions, which should be welcomed, as in such institutions refugees can mix with the immigrants and native population. It also shows the rate of the contribution made and responsibility taken by NGOs and RCOs.

Question 5: Are asylum seekers allowed to study in mainstream colleges/universities?

Country	Yes	No	Number of respondents
Austria	4	2	6
Belgium	1		1
Denmark		1	1
Finland		3	3
France	1	3	4
Germany	1	1	2
Greece	2	2	4
Ireland		2	2
Italy	1	2	3
Luxemburg		2	2
Netherlands	6		6
Portugal		1	1
Spain	3		3
Sweden		4	4
UK	5		5
Total	24	23	47
%	51	49	100

The table speaks for itself. It is interesting to see the discrepancies between responses coming from the same country.

Question 6: Are recognised refugees eligible for statutory financial assistance to finance their education? (If such system does not exist even for the native population, please tick "not applicable")

Country	Yes	No	N/A	Number of respondents T
Austria	6			6
Belgium	1			1
Denmark	1			1
Finland	3			3
France	4			4
Germany	1		1	2
Greece	2		2	4
Ireland	2			2
Italy	2		1	3
Luxemburg	2			2
Netherlands	6			6
Portugal			1	1
Spain	1	2		3
Sweden	2	2		4
UK	5			5
Total	38	4	5	47
%	80.8	8.5	10.7	100

There are again discrepancies. There were also comments with the “yes” votes regarding residency requirements and age limits.

Question 7: Are humanitarian refugees eligible for statutory financial assistance to finance their education? (If such a system does not exist even for the native population, please tick “not applicable”)

Country	Yes	No	N/A	No reply	Number of respondents
Austria	2	2	1	1	6
Belgium			1		1
Denmark		1			1
Finland	2	1			3
France	1	2	1		4
Germany	1	1			2
Greece	1		3		
Ireland	2				2
Italy		1	1	1	3
Luxemburg				2	2
Netherlands	6				6
Portugal			1		1
Spain	1	2			3
Sweden	3	1			4
UK	5				5
Total	24	11	8	4	47
%	51	23.4	17	8.6	100

Comments: “There are not much humanitarian refugees”, “only few reach that stage”. Some lengths of “residency requirements” were also mentioned. The rate of “yes” votes should be compared with the previous question's results.

Question 8: Who assesses and decides on the equivalency of refugees’ prior academic and technical/vocational qualifications or learning? (More than one option was tickable.)

Responsible body	Number of respondents
Educational institutions	29
Specialist institutions	20
Government departments	20
There is not such a system	5

This table suggests that between the member states there is a long way to go in order to achieve a consistent system of assessment and accreditation of refugees’ prior qualifications.

Question 9: Which of the following best describes the state of recognised refugees’ (including humanitarian refugees’) attendance of technical/vocational courses in your country?

Country	Common	Fairly common	Rare	They don't attend	Don't know	Number of respondents
Austria			5		1	6
Belgium		1				1
Denmark		1				1
Finland		2	1			3
France		4				4
Germany			2			2
Greece		2	2			4
Ireland		2				2
Italy		1	2			3
Luxemburg			2			2
Netherlands	1	5				6
Portugal			1			1
Spain		2	1			3
Sweden	1	1	1	1		4
UK	3		1		1	5
Total	5	22	17	1	2	47
%	10.6	46.8	36.2	2.1	4.3	100

Comments: “Not much courses available”, “computer courses yes, but others no”, “hard to tell”.

Question 10: Which of the following best describes the state of recognised refugees' (including humanitarian refugees') attendance of university level education in your country?

Country	Common	Fairly common	Rare	They don't attend	Don't know	Number of respondents
Austria			5		1	6
Belgium			1			
Denmark			1			
Finland		1	2			3
France			4			4
Germany			1		1	2
Greece			4			4
Ireland			2			2
Italy			3			3
Luxemburg			1	1		
Netherlands		3	3			6
Portugal			1			1
Spain		2	1			3
Sweden	1		1	2		4
UK	3	1	1			5
Total	4	8	30	3	2	47
%	8.5	17	63.8	6.4	4.3	100

50% of respondents who said "common" and "fairly common" were from the Netherlands and the UK. The negative responses totalled to 74.5% of all respondents.

Question 11: Are there practising professionals (such as doctors, teachers, nurses, engineers) with refugee background in your country? Would you say that the existence of such people is:

Country	Common	Fairly common	Rare	Not allowed to practice	Number of respondents
Austria			6		6
Belgium			1		1
Denmark			1		1
Finland			3		3
France			4		4
Germany			2		2
Greece		1	3		4
Ireland			2		2
Italy			3		3
Luxemburg			2		2
Netherlands		6			6
Portugal				1	1
Spain		1	2		3
Sweden	1	1	1	1	4
UK	2	2	1		5
Total	3	11	31	2	47
%	6.3	23.4	65.9	4.4	100

UK and the Netherlands, again, pushing the "common" and "fairly common" votes up. 70.3% of respondents said "rare" and "not allowed to practice".

Question 12: Are there specialist agencies or government institutions set up to provide educational advice and guidance for refugees?

Country	Yes	No	No reply	Number of respondents
Austria	4	1	1	6
Belgium		1		1
Denmark	1			1
Finland	2	1		3
France	3	1		4
Germany		2		4
Greece	1	3		4
Ireland		2		2
Italy		3		3
Luxemburg		2		2
Netherlands	6			6
Portugal		1		1
Spain	3			3
Sweden	2	2		4
UK	5			5
Total	27	19	1	47
%	57.5	40.4	2.1	100

This table indicates a welcome development, as mentioned before, although there is still a very long way to go to meet the needs of refugees. Once again 40.7 of “yes” votes came from the Netherlands and the UK.

Question 13: If your answer is “no” to the above question, could you briefly describe how this need is met in your country. (More than one option was tickable)

Rate	No reply	Government Departments	NGOs	Educational Institutions
Number of respondents	31	9	8	1

The vast majority of respondents who said "yes" to the question 12 did not answer this question for obvious reasons. 1 respondent from Austria mentioned a private company, and 1 from Ireland mentioned “word of mouth”.

Question 14: In your opinion, what are the most common or pressing guidance needs of refugees in your country?

A large number of different issues of importance were raised by the respondents. The most common ones are as follows:

- Coordination and cooperation between advisers, organisations and local and central government departments dealing with refugees.
- Changes in policy towards asylum seekers and refugees, and their integration.

- Special, tailor made integration programmes for refugees to prepare them for the job market
- Cross-cultural training for advisers
- Well trained advisers, on various aspects of integration, including assessment and accreditation of prior qualifications, and requalification of refugees.
- Involvement of refugees in the services provided for them.
- Long term work placements to give refugees necessary skills in particular jobs and professions.
- Long asylum process.
- Provision of counselling.
- Improvement in living and work conditions.

Question 15: Finally, are there any statistics about refugees' educational or occupational background in their country of origin? If yes, could you please tell us how we could obtain them.

Response to this question was very poor, only a few respondents were able to name some statistics or research reports containing information on refugees' backgrounds.

ANNEX 2

CONTRIBUTING ORGANISATIONS

1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE STOCKHOLM CONFERENCE, 2-3 NOVEMBER 2001

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