

Guidance for Employers in Recruiting, Onboarding and Integrating  
Refugees into the Workforce

# Refugee Talents



**WU**  
WIRTSCHAFTS  
UNIVERSITÄT  
WIEN VIENNA  
UNIVERSITY OF  
ECONOMICS  
AND BUSINESS

In cooperation with

**iv** INDUSTRIELLEN  
VEREINIGUNG

**WKO**   
WIRTSCHAFTSKAMMER ÖSTERREICH

# Refugees got Talent

## How unleashing it can add value to businesses and boost the economy

Some guidance for employers

In the coming years, demographic changes will further exacerbate existing labour shortages. That makes it all the more important for employers to draw on the widest possible pool of potential talent, including that of groups currently underrepresented on the labour market. One of these groups is made up of refugees from a range of countries with differing skills levels, and employing them can bring numerous advantages, both for individual firms in the form of innovative ideas, business growth and employee loyalty, and for the economy as a whole through, for example, increased tax income.

This booklet is designed for existing and potential employers of refugees. It has been compiled by researchers at Vienna University of Economic and Business on the basis of international scholarly studies. It sets out some highly relevant facts that are often overlooked, reasons why it makes sense to employ refugees and a host of practical tips, all intended to support employers in recruiting, onboarding and integrating refugee workers into the day-to-day work of their businesses.



## Contents

Studies carried out in many countries demonstrate that employers who recruit refugees: are generally satisfied with their performance; would if necessary again recruit from the pool of refugees; and would recommend refugees seeking work to other firms in their sector.

- 4 What refugees can contribute
- 6 Combating labour shortages
- 8 Adding value to businesses
- 15 Refugees' skills levels
- 18 Integrating refugees into the workplace
- 32 Why employers' motivation matters
- 34 Workplace integration: Examples of best practice
- 36 Networks and Partnerships
- 38 Appendix

# What refugees can contribute

## Research findings

Studies carried out in many countries demonstrate that employers who recruit refugees: are generally satisfied with their performance; would if necessary again recruit from the pool of refugees; and would recommend refugees seeking work to other firms in their sector.



*„Refugees present opportunities, not problems for businesses. Businesses can reap benefits by viewing them as a new skilled labor pool.“*

*Prof. Grace Chun Guo, Sacred Heart University*

### THAT'S A FACT

- ✓ The advantages of recruiting refugees include: increased employee loyalty, greater diversity, an improved business image and a stronger brand.
- ✓ According to the European Values Study, most Austrians favour integrating refugees through the labour market. Fears that refugee recruitment could cause dissatisfaction among other workers are largely unfounded.
- ✓ Viewed from the perspective of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), giving refugees fair opportunities for employment should be seen as contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, Agenda 2030), in particular: SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals).
- ✓ In the long term, refugees contribute more than their share to economic growth. Studies in the US have shown that over the first 20 years in their new homeland, working-age refugees pay \$20,000 more in taxes than they receive in financial support.
- ✓ If the worldwide gender gap among refugees in terms of activity rates and earnings could be closed in the 30 most important receiver countries, female refugees alone would add at least five billion euros to global GDP.

# Combating labour shortages

## An obvious solution

Across a wide variety of industries, labour shortages have been worsening for some time now. More recently, the problems have been further aggravated by the Covid pandemic, by the war in Ukraine and by the conflict's wider geopolitical effects. As a result, Austrian businesses are urgently seeking not only specialist workers but also those with lower skills levels.

What is more, their needs are bound to increase, not least for demographic reasons. In Austria, as in Western Europe as a whole, the elderly population is rising while the proportion of working age is steadily shrinking. If Austria is to remain competitive, merely strengthening its existing efforts will not suffice. It will also have to tap new sources of talent, such as the one made up of refugees and other migrants.

### THAT'S A FACT

- ✓ **A readily available pool of talent.** For industries faced with shortages of highly skilled and/or less skilled labour, there is an easier and faster way of recruiting than attempting to attract workers from abroad. It is to draw on the pool of talent made up of refugees with at least some minimal German-language skills who are already in Austria.
- ✓ **Lower recruitment cost.** By comparison with the costs of recruiting new staff from abroad (removal expenses, housing arrangements, upkeep of partners and children), any initial additional costs incurred in screening and onboarding refugees are low and much more rapidly paid off.
- ✓ **Legal security.** Unlike work permits and other forms of residence permit, which require regular renewal, asylum status has unlimited validity and provides both employers and employees with legal security.
- ✓ **Residency rights.** Recognised refugees are initially granted the right to reside in Austria for three years. Unless they are informed to the contrary, this right is automatically extended indefinitely.

*„As labor shortages continue to hinder so many sectors of our economy, companies will benefit by including traditionally overlooked job candidates – like refugees – in their workforce. We call on more businesses to seize this opportunity to diversify and expand their talent pool, while helping refugees better integrate in their communities.“*

Jonas Prising, CEO of ManpowerGroup, cited by Tent.org

# Adding value to businesses

## 1. Productivity

The levels of education levels acquired by refugees before their arrival in Western Europe vary widely. Nevertheless, research has shown that, relative to the average in their respective homelands, refugees display not only higher educational attainment but also greater employment experience and a higher degree of motivation. For fleeing a country requires the sort of financial resources that tend to be the preserve of the better educated with good jobs. As a result, once in the destination country, refugees are generally more productive than the population in general. Unable to return to their mainly war-stricken homelands, they stand out thanks to their high levels of motivation and commitment. They simply have too much at stake.

*"What all these people have in common is their motivation: To do better. To do better for themselves, their loved ones, their home countries and - all too often overlooked - their adopted countries. By making themselves and their futures stronger, they make all of us and all of our futures stronger."*

Hikmet Ersek, former CEO of Western Union

## 2. Loyalty

After all they have experienced on the journey to their new home, many refugees desperately want stability, not least in their job. They therefore tend to take on positions with longterm prospects and often display greater loyalty to their employers than non-refugees. For businesses right across sectors and locations, that means higher retention rates and generally lower rates of labour turnover among the refugee workforce.



*"A further point that speaks in favour of recruiting refugees is employee loyalty. Businesses have confirmed to us that refugees' attitudes have a positive impact on the levels of staff retention, which rise as a result."*

Andreas Wolter, Associate Director for Global Partnerships,  
Tent Partnership for Refugees



### 3. Diversity

There is more than enough evidence confirming the benefits that firms derive from diversity and a wide range of different prior experience among their employees. Indeed, in a constantly changing global marketplace, diversity is increasingly seen as a prerequisite for success. Companies whose workforce includes employees with a range of ethnic backgrounds have a 35% greater probability of achieving top results than their competitors.



*"Employing refugees provides the chance of gaining access to people with lots of experience and with knowledge of how things work in other countries."*

Herbert Langthaler, Spokesperson for Asylkoordination Austria

Refugee workers are frequently cultural mediators, or bridge builders, because they have become familiar with different cultures and have the ability to navigate between them. That means they can establish links between organisational units in culturally diverse environments. In addition they have often developed 'culture-independent' competences which can be of use in a wide range of contexts: in solving complex problems, in leading multicultural teams, and in all those activities where cross-cultural experience is of benefit.



*"Anyone who comes from a different country or a different culture brings with them a valuable new perspective on challenges. In my experience, people who have overcome the hardships involved in fleeing their homeland also have above-average levels of motivation and resilience. Qualities that every entrepreneur and every enterprise is looking for."*

Stefan Steinberger, Founder of Everyone Codes

### 4. Innovation

Many refugees can think in two or more languages, an ability that is associated with so-called 'divergent thinking'. That too favours the development of creative ideas, as well as flexibility in designing and implementing creative processes. So refugee workers bring perspectives and ideas different from those of their non-migrant colleagues - and, in doing so, they boost firms' capacity for innovation.



*"Resilience, willingness to persist in the pursuit of goals, and the ability to adapt quickly to changing circumstances: refugees' experiences make many of them very strong and creative."*

Peter Wesely, Spokesperson for the Initiative Menschen.Würde.Österreich

THAT'S  
A FACT

Companies can significantly increase their creative potential and their capacity to innovate by recruiting workers from refugee backgrounds, as these figures clearly demonstrate.

- 44% of Fortune 500 companies and over half of IT start-ups in Silicon Valley were founded by entrepreneurs with a refugee or migrant background.
- Of the top 5% of inventors and innovators worldwide identified by the World Intellectual Property Organization, five out of every six have migrant backgrounds.

### Further sources of added value

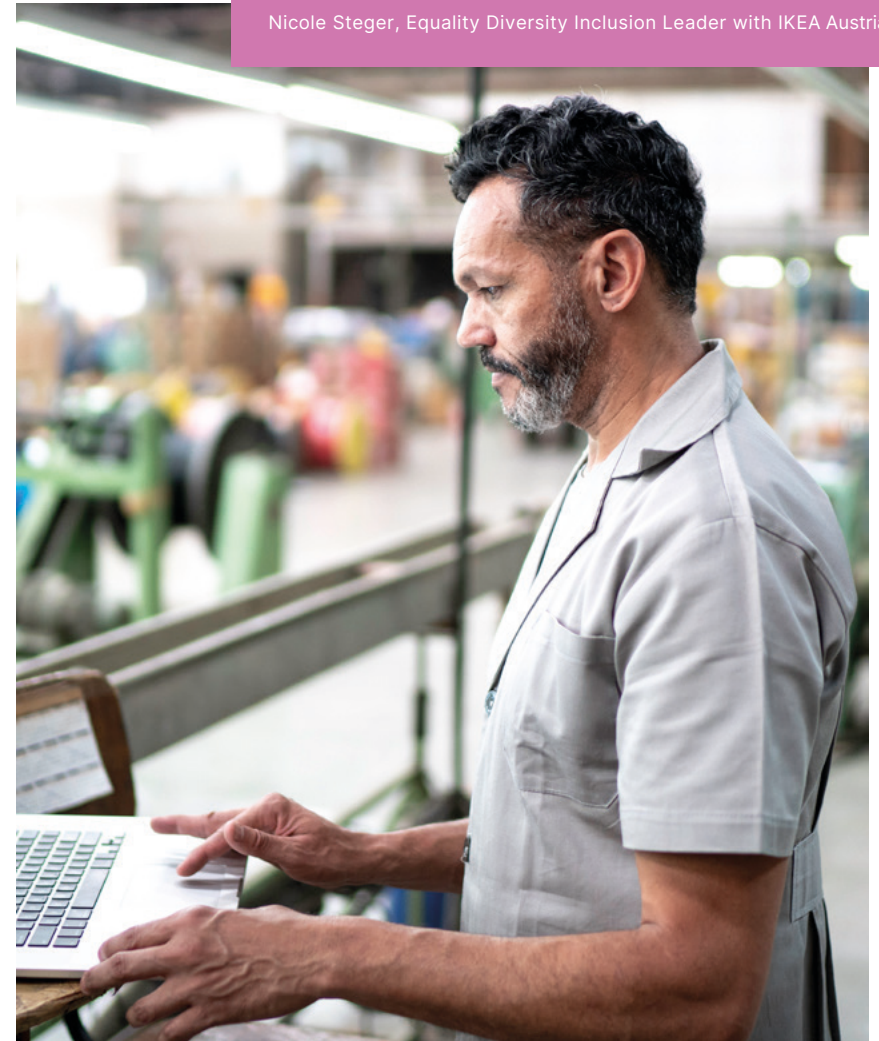
**Expanded customer base and new markets.** By recruiting refugees, employers can broaden their existing customer base and gain access to new markets, both locally and internationally.

**Improved external and internal reputation.** Playing an active, constructive role in the solution of global problems can give a significant boost to firms' public image. And Corporate Social Responsibility programmes aimed at refugees can improve their reputation with their own workforce, thus raising employee identification.



*"The world is changing and so must businesses. If you look at the figures, around half of Vienna's population have a non-Austrian passport. If customers know that they can do their shopping in a store where they can speak their own language or simply talk to someone from their own country or their own culture, then that's where they will go to shop."*

Nicole Steger, Equality Diversity Inclusion Leader with IKEA Austria





## Some important definitions

### Refugees

According to the UN's Refugee Convention, adopted in Geneva in 1951, a refugee is a person with good reason to fear conflict or persecution in their homeland on the basis of their ethnicity, nationality, political convictions or membership of a particular social group. Refugees are protected under international law and must not be deported or sent back to a country in which their life or freedom could be in danger.

### Asylum-seekers

An asylum-seeker is a person who, since arriving in a country other than their own (e.g., Austria), has applied for protected status under the Geneva Refugee Convention. The status of asylum-seekers remains unclear until a decision is reached on their application. In general, they are barred from taking up employment, but there

are some exceptions to this rule (e.g., seasonal work, apprenticeships in professions with skills shortages, charitable work).

### Persons entitled to asylum

A person becomes entitled to asylum when their application for asylum is granted. They then have unrestricted access to the labour market.

### Subsidiary protection

Sometimes, although an application process finds no good grounds for a person to fear persecution purely for personal reasons, it establishes that they face more general threats, such as danger to life due to domestic or international conflicts. In this case, they are granted subsidiary protection. That gives them temporary residence rights, with the possibility of extension, and unrestricted labour market access.

# Refugees' skills levels

## High- and low-skilled refugees

A distinction often made in Austria is that between 'high-skilled' and 'low-skilled' workers. The first category comprises workers who have a tertiary level qualification (university or FH degree) or have attained high status in their profession thanks to their artistic, handicraft or sporting abilities. The concept also covers 'self-made' entrepreneurs, who figure prominently among refugees from the Middle East. On the other hand, low- or semi-skilled workers have no formal qualifications beyond the completion of compulsory schooling. Even so, many refugees who fall into this category are experts with decades of experience in their own particular field.

### THAT'S A FACT

When assessing potential employees with a refugee background, employers should avoid basing recruitment decisions purely on the distinction between 'high-' and 'low-' levels of skills. It is often hard to assess the competences and experience of such workers when they lack any Austrian work experience. As a result, it often happens that refugees with high-level qualifications end up in low-skill, poorly paid jobs, but it can also happen that others with no formal qualifications at all build successful careers for themselves.

Far from being a homogeneous category, refugees come from a range of educational backgrounds and have differing competences, skills, and personal and professional experiences. Any particular group of refugees may display just as much variety and differences as there are between refugees in general and their Austrian co-workers.

This applies especially to female refugees. On the one hand, migration of women with (high-level) professional qualifications has increased two-and-a-half times since 1990, so that such women now make up over half of all high-skilled refugees. On the other, the proportion of refugees without any formal educational qualifications is higher among female refugees than males.



*"Refugees need individual support in making their skills and qualifications visible, and thus giving themselves the chance to make use of their opportunities and rights to access the Austrian labour market, and to find jobs that match their skills and provide them with security."*

Manuela Vollmann, Director of ABZ\*AUSTRIA



*"We all have our own stories, and you might not see all of mine at the first glance. The same applies to refugees. It matters how we see them! We see hope, courage, and cohesion. We see people and their potential."*

Alpaslan Deliloglu, CEO & CSO of IKEA Austria



# Integrating refugees into the workplace

## Challenges and opportunities

### Recruiting

Many refugees will have had to flee in haste without the chance to prepare for their flight. When they come to look for work, they may well lack documental evidence of their qualifications, as well as recommendations or certificates of employment from previous employers. So potential employers can find one or more of the following issues impacting on their recruitment processes.

- Significant gaps in applicants' CVs owing to the time taken to process their asylum applications, during which most refugees are barred from working
- A lack of work experience in Austria
- A lack of references or certificates of employment
- A lack of degree certificates and proof of educational experience
- A lack of access to networks that would improve employment prospects and of knowledge about the workings of the job application process
- Unrecognised educational and professional qualifications
- A partial mismatch between applicants' skills and experience, on the one hand, and the job specification on the other: candidates may appear over-qualified for the position because refugees often apply for lower-skilled jobs in order to gain rapid access to earnings and the chance to improve their German skills

→ In the case of female applicants, the negative effects of flight, wars and poor health, as well as a lack of opportunities to prepare themselves for the Austrian labour market, for instance by improving their German, or to bring the necessary documents, or even to arrange for child care may exist; as a result, female refugees have less chance of finding a job, and their unemployment rate is markedly higher than that among native Austrian women

→ No or inadequate German-language skills

→ Regional imbalances in the availability of refugees, around two-thirds of whom live in Vienna, and many of the remainder in Lower and Upper Austria, and in Styria

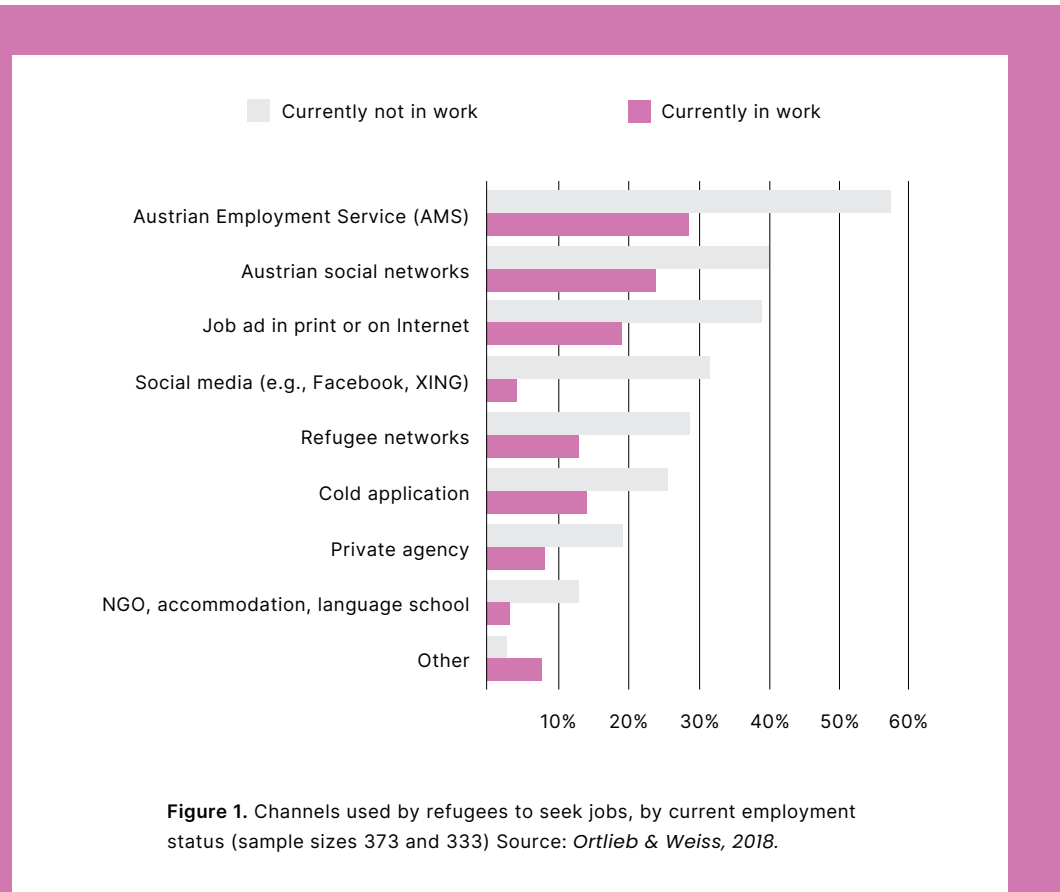
If they have the right tools and enough advance knowledge, employers can respond to these challenges in a targeted manner, turning them into opportunities for refugees and for their business as a whole.

### How can you recruit refugee workers?

As an employer, you need to be aware of the communication channels refugees use in looking for jobs. Some guidance is provided by a University of Graz study. It found that, as well as the Austrian Employment Service (AMS), social networks play an important role as a first port of call for refugees seeking work.

Apart from those within refugees' own communities, such networks are often promoted by non-government organisations, associations of various sorts and language cafes, and they provide the opportunity for contact and the exchange of ideas.

If you are thinking of employing refugees enjoying full or subsidiary protection, it makes good sense to cooperate with such initiatives and platforms, as they can often provide support in recruitment and onboarding. You can find a list of relevant associations on pages 36 and 37 of this brochure.



## Onboarding

Targeted and well-organised onboarding can make good any gaps in refugees' CVs and ensure that they are optimally and individually supported in integrating into your business.

- **Information.** You can lay on brief introductory events and prepare written introductory materials, in English and/or refugees' mother tongues, setting out clearly what is expected of them in their job
- **Orientation.** Refugees' first steps in a new working environment come amidst the general process of arriving and orienting themselves in a strange land, meaning that issues such as housing, health provision or schooling can impinge on refugees' working day. If personnel managers view this process as a single whole, they can refer refugee staff to the appropriate authorities and compensate for their lack of knowledge about the Austrian system, saving time and resources, not only for the refugees but for the firm as a whole.
- **Internships.** These offer refugees the chance to gain a realistic insight into the world of work and to improve their understanding of cultural and professional expectations. Should these effects prove insufficient to ensure access to the labour market, they can be enhanced by making use of training courses and testing opportunities provided by the AMS.
- **'On-the-job' training.** This can enable employers to upgrade the skills of existing refugee employees.

## Integration means comparable opportunities

Integration into the workplace is a two-way process involving individual refugees as well as their environment. The aim must be to ensure that they have comparable working conditions, performance and chances of promotion as their Austrian co-workers.

## Dealing with cultural diversity in the workplace

Just like other employees with an international background, refugees bring with them experiences and ideas about the world of work that are different from those of Austrians. Yet research has shown that they quickly adjust to the culture of reception countries such as Austria, and so begin to adapt to the initially unknown culture of work.

The following tips can help employers in dealing with cultural diversity in their business.

- **Training courses about diversity issues** should involve both refugee workers and native Austrian employees, so that the two groups can learn from each other and experience how diversity can provide enrichment both for the individual and for the business as a whole.
- **Intensive communication between employers, refugee workers and their colleagues** is necessary to ensure that all parties understand one another's points of view. It can also help in learning to interpret culture-specific non-verbal forms of communication.

- **Bearing in mind differences in religious traditions** is also crucial. It can involve, for instance, allowing time off for religious festivals, or adjusting working hours or the timing of work breaks. In exchange, non-Christian employees could be expected to show flexibility in being available during, for example, the Christmas or Easter holidays.
- It should not be forgotten, however, that not all refugees hold strong religious beliefs; in fact, many were forced to flee their homeland precisely because of their secular views.



**Tip:** On pages 40-43 you will find an overview of easy-to-access online materials for learning German, such as podcasts, apps and internet radio channels.

## Language and communication

Research shows that people learn a new language quickest when they truly need it and have the chance to make use of it - for instance, in their job. Although refugees must attend courses in German, the competences they acquire there are usually very general and not always tailored to the specific requirements of their jobs. Frequently, too, there are wide differences between refugees' written and oral skills, something employers need to appreciate at the outset. In practice, refugees mostly learn the technical vocabulary they need very quickly through interaction with their colleagues and managers.

- **Company documentation and resources** can be made available in a range of languages, in particular English, especially when firms are planning to take on employees with refugee backgrounds.
- **Digital resources and apps** offer excellent opportunities to improve German language skills and learn technical vocabulary. Refugees, and international employees in general, can be encouraged to make use of them, and perhaps given an incentive by allowing them some hours free each week for that purpose. The AMS provides financial support for workers who participate in language courses and for the personnel cost involved.
- **Assistance for refugees in understanding the various dialects** that are such a feature of Austrian workplaces - and often initially difficult for German-learners to understand - can also be a valuable support. You can ask dialect speakers among your workforce to show appreciation of the problem. In fact, colleagues whose first language is not German are often pleased to learn words and phrases in dialect and to have their meanings explained.

## Who can provide workplace support for refugee employees?

→ **Senior management.** The conduct and personal backgrounds of top managers are decisive in shaping employees' attitudes and behaviour with regard to diversity and openness. Only if the upper echelons truly 'walk the talk' will they achieve the effects they desire.

**Tip:** It can help to discuss and network with other managers who have recruited refugees. Many of the challenges and opportunities they describe will sound familiar, so that you can hopefully learn a great deal from one another.

→ **Personnel departments.** Staff with HR responsibilities can greatly assist the process of workplace integration. They are often the first point of contact with the firm concerned, and lie at the interface between refugee employees and their line managers, during both recruitment and onboarding.

→ **Diversity and Inclusion managers.** Along with personnel departments, these play a crucial role in developing and implementing strategies to achieve a firm's diversity goals. As well as generally promoting inclusion and diversity, they can address systemic issues as well as responding to individual complaints.

**Tip:** Most companies now have guidelines and procedures designed to promote gender diversity. These can provide a good basis for recruiting and onboarding of female refugees. For them, the flexible career paths so important for Austrian women are of even greater relevance, especially as some have come to Austria accompanied only by their children.

→ **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) managers.**

Firms that integrate refugees into the labour market make an important contribution to social inclusion, equal opportunities and global responsibility. Publicising this fact is an essential task of those responsible for CSR in companies.

**Tip:** Migration-related goals are embedded in several of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Offering refugees genuine opportunities and involving them in discussion of the SDGs can feature prominently in firms' reporting on Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance. Of particular significance is the impact of such activities on SDG5 (Gender Equality), SDG8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG16 (Peace, Justice Institutions), and SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals).



→ **Public Relations.** Businesses can make refugee workers visible in both their external and their internal communication. That is best planned and implemented through discussion on equal terms with those affected, to ensure that refugees themselves have a voice rather than having their words spoken by others.

→ **Colleagues who themselves come from migration backgrounds.**

International employees from different countries often find that they have much in common and can thus build strong feelings of collegiality and friendship.

## Integration means comparable opportunities

Two common ways to facilitate workplace integration are mentoring and buddy schemes. In both cases, co-workers with some knowledge of refugees' first language, or with family connections in their region of origin, can be of great help in building the necessary bridges.

But of course neither mentors nor buddies need come from an environment similar to refugees' own. Their Austrian co-workers can be equally well-suited to the task. What really matters is that mentors are in a position to ask refugees questions without making them feel threatened; line managers are definitely not suited to the task. Ideally, mentors should be able to provide both professional and social support.

In order to set the ball rolling it may be useful to begin by switching roles, with refugees telling their Austrian mentor about their cultural background and previous work experience outside their homeland.

**Tip:** Do you know about the *Human Library* project?

This advisory scheme is not aimed specifically at employers of refugees. However, it can be a valuable source of inspiration for them, providing as it does the chance to learn from experience in over 80 countries.

For details, visit [humanlibrary.org](http://humanlibrary.org).



*"While many employers appoint more senior employees as mentors in order to support refugees in integrating into the workplace, others are trying out 'reverse mentoring'.*

*In other words, they encourage refugees to share their knowledge about their country of origin and its culture of work. Creating a truly integrative workplace requires a two-way flow of information from which both parties can benefit."*

Betina Szkudlarek, University of Sydney





## Providing advice and support with health problems

Refugees may be very worried about relatives and friends they have left behind. And some - though by no means all - suffer from health problems, both physical and mental, caused by their experiences of flight and conflict. Hence the need for refugees to be allowed easy access to psychosocial advice and support at work, whenever they need it.

Here too cultural differences must be considered though. Many refugees are suspicious or feel uneasy if advised to see a psychologist, perhaps because in their homeland that is unusual or stigmatised. So any offer of psychological services to refugee workers needs to be phrased very carefully.

**Tip:** The association *Fremden werden Freunde* offers free psychosocial support and coaching for young people with experiences of flight or migration through the project *AZIMA - Gemeinsam für mentale Gesundheit*. Its services are available both in person and online.

## Attitudes and expectations

Using refugee employees to assist in managing cultural and social diversity also involves managing the expectations of their non-refugee colleagues.

- **Checking the pulse.** Before recruiting refugee workers, it is advisable to talk with the existing workforce about any concerns or reservations they may have. Rather than simply ignoring negative stereotypes, half-truths and rumours, it is better to create a forum for discussion and to have established facts at the ready. Both formal meetings and informal get-togethers can be appropriate settings.
- **Avoiding inappropriate expectations.** Refugees in general and refugee workers in particular are often expected to show gratitude. If non-refugee coworkers feel it is not forthcoming, they can become resentful. Employers can preempt this reaction by stressing from the outset that both refugees and Austrian employees are ultimately concerned with bringing success to the business. All workers have the same responsibilities appropriate to their particular job, and all of them have the same rights.
- **Managing the impact of customer reactions.** In the service sector, how customers react to refugee workers can play an important role in speeding up or slowing down their integration. Both management and workers need to be aware of that and should encourage refugee colleagues to share their experiences in this regard in an appropriate secure setting.

# Why employers' motivation matters

## Humanitarian and pragmatic motivation

Managers who recruit refugees often do so on humanitarian grounds. That is a sound, perfectly justifiable motivation. But research carried out in Germany shows that it is of advantage for both parties if the underlying motivation is at the same time pragmatic and comes from recognising that refugees' have significant skills and abilities to offer. These six qualities can help managers in making that recognition.

### 1. A rounded view of refugees.

Managers should not view refugees as one-dimensional (e.g., only as victims), but as multifaceted people just like other employees.

**2. Reflectiveness.** Managers need to reflect on the assumptions and possible prejudices that underlie their decision to recruit refugees.

**3. Sensibility.** Managers should respect refugees' autonomy and respond sensitively to their individual needs.

**4. Supportiveness.** Managers should provide refugees with the training and support they need to become skilled workers and generally promote their career development.

**5. Selectiveness.** Managers ought to place refugees in positions requiring skills and competences they already possess or have the potential to develop.

**6. Empathy.** Managers should offer it only if it is truly needed and actively sought - but then as generously as possible.

## Rapid integration

- Prioritises economic (structural) integration
- Provides entry-level jobs as quickly as possible
- Focuses on low-skilled tasks with precarious working conditions (part-time, fixed term jobs with low wages, often in domestic services)
- Risks de-skilling refugees and employing them in jobs for which they are over-qualified, thus eroding the new supply of human capital

→ **Faster and initially more cost-effective**

## Sustainable integration

- Incorporates cultural and social integration
- Prioritises matching refugees with jobs, taking account of the skills they already have, the location they live in, and the social milieu they come from, thus reducing the risks of de-skilling
- Involves investment in language courses, skills upgrading and measures to enable recognition of formal qualifications

→ **Slower and initially less cost-effective**

Further tips can be found online under *4 strategies for hiring refugees successfully*



## Workplace integration: Examples of best practice

The **Reboot-Programme** run by Dutch bank **ABN AMBRO** offers refugees job opportunities and a one-year coaching scheme focused on language and cultural training as well as individual support.

Various German companies including **Daimler, Telekom, Allianz, Thyssen-Krupp** and **Siemens** responded to the 2015 influx of refugees by joining with the German government in developing employment schemes tailored to the particular needs of the new arrivals. Under the name of **Wir-Zusammen** more than 30 German firms came together to promote the integration of refugees. Thyssen-Krupp alone created 150 new apprenticeships and 230 internships.

**Chobani** is the best-selling yoghurt brand in the US. Employees with a refugee background make up over 30% of its work force. Founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya has lots of tips on working with refugees and gives inspirational TED talks and Youtube interviews on the subject. He also set up the worldwide programme **TENT – Partnership for Refugees** in order to encourage other entrepreneurs in hiring refugees.

**IKEA** created the initiative **Skills for Employment** to support at least 2,500 refugees in over 300 of its stores with vocational and language courses, and so permit them to enter the labour market successfully. IKEA Austria has also made diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion cornerstones of its work culture.

**Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)** in particular are well-advised to pluck up their courage and recruit from the refugee community and so generate mutual benefits. Workplace integration can function just as well in the family atmosphere of smaller firms as in major concerns. While big companies have the resources needed to set up across-the-board structures to promote integration, SMEs have the advantage when it comes to fostering one-to-one interaction. And they too can profit from the internationality and cross-border contacts that refugees provide.



*"Connecting small and medium-sized businesses to international markets can create work for host country nationals alongside refugees, building economic growth and resilience in host communities."*

Aranca Gonzalez, formerly UN Assistant Secretary-General and Executive Director of the International Trade Centre

## Networks and partnerships

Cross-sectoral partnerships between public, private and non-profit organisations can help to release resources and jointly promote the workplace integration of refugees.

Here are a few examples of organisations and networks that can provide you with support in hiring refugees and integrating them into your business.

### In Austria

- **WIRKT** (formerly *More Than One Perspective*) is a social enterprise, one of whose focuses is on matching refugees to job opportunities.
- The **Beratungszentrum für Migrantinnen und Migranten** provides advice, a first point of contact for people with qualifications obtained abroad, and other services for particular social groups such as women from refugee backgrounds.
- **Mentoring für Migrant/inn/en** is a structured mentoring programme offered free of charge. It assists people with qualifications and a refugee background in joining the labour market, and so also helps Austrian firms to internationalise.

→ **lobby16** has been seeking since 2018 to give young refugees access to education and employment. It cooperates above all with enterprises providing professional education.

→ **Making it in Austria** is a Youtube channel social/professional network for qualified migrants that makes use of LinkedIn and in-person meetings.

### Worldwide

- **The Tent Partnership for Refugees** ([www.tent.org](http://www.tent.org)) Offers specialist advice and extensive resources in cooperation with over 300 multinational corporations.
- **Migration, Business & Society** ([www.migrationbusinesssociety.net](http://www.migrationbusinesssociety.net)) Provides access to research articles, toolkits, videos and contacts to academic experts.

# Appendix

**Want to learn more?** The information contained in this brochure is based on scholarly insights derived from research in many countries. Below you will find a selection of the studies drawn on, as well as suggestions for further reading. Please be aware that some academic articles can only be accessed if you have bought a subscription to the relevant journal.

## Books

Aichholzer, Julian, Christian Friesl, Sanja Hajdinjak & Sylvia Kritzinger, Hrsg. 2019. *Quo vadis, Österreich? Wertewandel zwischen 1990 und 2018*. Verlag Czernin.

Betts, Alexander. 2021. *The Wealth of Refugees. How Displaced People Can Build Economies*. Oxford University Press.

Kerr, William. R. 2019. *The Gift of Global Talent. How Migration Shapes Business, Economy & Society*. Stanford Business Books.

Kohlenberger, Judith. 2022. *Das Fluchtparadox: Über unseren widersprüchlichen Umgang mit Vertreibung und Vertriebenen*. Verlag Kremayr & Scheriau.

## Online Resources

*A new home at work: An employer's guide to fostering inclusion for refugees in the workplace*. Deloitte Insights.  
→ [www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion/refugee-workers.html](http://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/value-of-diversity-and-inclusion/refugee-workers.html)

*Breaking Barriers. UK Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees*. TENT.org.  
→ [tent.org/resources/uk-employers-guide](http://tent.org/resources/uk-employers-guide)

*How Multinational Corporations Can Support Refugee Workforce Integration: Empathize Globally, Strategize Locally*. Article by Betina Szkudlarek, Priya Roy & Eun Su Lee. AIB Insights.  
→ [insights.aib.world/article/32998-how-multinational-corporations-can-support-refugee-workforce-integration-empathize-globally-strategize-locally](http://insights.aib.world/article/32998-how-multinational-corporations-can-support-refugee-workforce-integration-empathize-globally-strategize-locally)

*Changing the way we see refugees and their economic integration*. Article by Aida Hajro, Milda Žilinskaitė, Paul Baldassari & Cristina B. Gibson. World Economic Forum.  
→ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/06/refugees-economic-integration>

*Refugee Employment. Collection of multimedia resources on refugee employment developed at the University of Sydney Business School*.  
→ [vimeo.com/showcase/7679043](http://vimeo.com/showcase/7679043)

*Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential: Closing Economic Gaps to Benefit All*. Research report by Rayian Kabir & Jeni Klugman.  
→ [www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A84357](http://www.voced.edu.au/content/ngv%3A84357)

*What Migration Means for Business*. Article by Milda Žilinskaitė & Aida Hajro. Network for Business Sustainability.  
→ [nbs.net/what-migration-means-for-business](http://nbs.net/what-migration-means-for-business)

## Studies and articles in academic journals

Eggenhofer-Rehart, Petra M., Markus Latzke, Katharina Pernkopf, Dominik Zellhofer, Wolfgang Mayrhofer, & Johannes Steyrer. 2018. "Refugees' career capital welcome? Afghan and Syrian refugee job seekers in Austria." *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 105: 31–45.

Fitzsimmons, Stacey R., Yuan Liao, & David C. Thomas. 2017. "From crossing cultures to straddling them: An empirical examination of outcomes for multicultural employees." *Journal of International Business Studies*, 48(1): 63–89.

Guo, Grace Chun, Akram Al Ariss, & Chris Brewster. 2020. "Understanding the global refugee crisis: Managerial consequences and policy implications." *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 34(4): 531–545.

Lee, Eun Su, & Betina Szkudlarek. 2021. "Refugee employment support: The HRM-CSR nexus and stakeholder co-dependency." *Human Resource Management Journal*, 31(4): 936–955.

Lee, Eun Su, Betina Szkudlarek, Duc Cuong Nguyen, & Luciara Nardon. 2020. "Unveiling the canvas ceiling: A multidisciplinary literature review of refugee employment and workforce integration." *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 22(2): 193–216

Lundborg, Per, & Per Skedinger. 2016. "Employer attitudes towards refugee immigrants: Findings from a Swedish survey." *International Labour Review*, 155(2): 315–337.

Ortlieb, Renate & Silvana Weiss. 2018. *Wie finden Geflüchtete in Österreich einen Arbeitsplatz, und welche Art von Arbeitsplatz finden sie? Erster Ergebnisbericht einer schriftlichen Befragung von Geflüchteten im Rahmen des Forschungsprojekts LAMIRA*. Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz.

Ortlieb, Renate, & Elena Ressi. 2022. "From refugee to manager? Organisational socialisation practices, refugees' experiences and polyrhythmic socialisation." *European Management Review. Under a Creative Commons license*.  
→ [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emre.12500](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emre.12500)

Pesch, Robin, Ebru Ipek, & Stacey Fitzsimmons. 2022. "Be a hero: Employ refugees like a pragmatist." *Organizational Dynamics*, 100912.

Van Tulder, Rob, M. Seitanidi, Andrew Crane & Stephen Brammer. 2017. "Enhancing the impact of cross-sector partnerships." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 135(1): 1–17.

Wang, Yijing, & Vidhi Chaudhri. 2019. "Business support for refugee integration in Europe: Conceptualizing the link with organizational identification." *Media and Communication*, 7(2): 289–299.

## Online resources for learning German

The following table is purely intended to provide information. The organisations and links have been carefully checked, but changes may have occurred since that was done.

Podcasts		
<b>Alltagsdeutsch</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/153GSe-d5uzyq7EwYUfBLjS?si=ibusIG-RzTPasMvfEFebvaw&amp;nd=1">open.spotify.com/show/153GSe-d5uzyq7EwYUfBLjS?si=ibusIG-RzTPasMvfEFebvaw&amp;nd=1</a>	Neue Deutsche Welle podcast about everyday life (in German) – with transcripts – for advanced learners (C1)
<b>Coffee Break German</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/3QiX0Z-kjLyGWmpemackWB?si=CF1D-vyRISwZs2tfMLrg&amp;nd=1">open.spotify.com/show/3QiX0Z-kjLyGWmpemackWB?si=CF1D-vyRISwZs2tfMLrg&amp;nd=1</a>	Leisurely language course for coffee breaks (A1–B1)
<b>Das sagt man so!</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/OnqMJF-h09Batr80ULCiwKk">open.spotify.com/show/OnqMJF-h09Batr80ULCiwKk</a>	Neue Deutsche Welle podcast (2-3 minute episodes) for intermediate-level learners (B1)
<b>Der Anruf</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/OrUX-t6CDIJgW3nAYA19Jm?si=ehe-PUpPqYeVu8hEYY4RtQ&amp;nd=1">open.spotify.com/show/OrUX-t6CDIJgW3nAYA19Jm?si=ehe-PUpPqYeVu8hEYY4RtQ&amp;nd=1</a>	Interesting stories from all across Germany in a wide range of dialects – for advanced learners (C1)
<b>Elementarfragen</b>	<a href="https://viertausendhertz.de/elementarfragen/">viertausendhertz.de/elementarfragen/</a>	Longer episodes with expert interviews on many different topics
<b>Easy German</b>	<a href="https://easygerman.org/podcast">easygerman.org/podcast</a>	– approx. one-hour episodes (from A2) – Topics from philosophy to travel
<b>Fest &amp; Flauschig</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/1OLc-Qdw2PFDPG1jo3s0wbp">open.spotify.com/show/1OLc-Qdw2PFDPG1jo3s0wbp</a>	Jan Böhmermann and Olli Schulz discuss personal, political and cultural topics
<b>Long Story Short by Chatterbug</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/236s-fJvojhrP6hsqC02G2Z">open.spotify.com/show/236s-fJvojhrP6hsqC02G2Z</a>	Short stories for beginners (A1)
<b>Slow German with Annik Rubens</b>	<a href="https://slowgerman.com">slowgerman.com</a>	Introductory series for absolute beginners (A1–B1)
<b>Speaking of Berlin</b>	<a href="https://babel.com/en/magazine/speaking-of-berlin-babel-podcast">babel.com/en/magazine/speaking-of-berlin-babel-podcast</a>	Bilingual Babbel German-English podcast

<b>Sprachbar</b>	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/show/00Y-qX972IVPKKzNt5xrwZz">open.spotify.com/show/00Y-qX972IVPKKzNt5xrwZz</a>	Deutsche Welle podcast about German idioms and common expressions for advanced learners (C1)
<b>Warum nicht?</b>	<a href="https://podbean.com/podcast-detail/8f3b2-3553a/Deutsch---warum-nicht-Series-1-%7C-Learning-German-%7C-Deutsche-Welle-Podcast">podbean.com/podcast-detail/8f3b2-3553a/Deutsch---warum-nicht-Series-1-%7C-Learning-German-%7C-Deutsche-Welle-Podcast</a>	From A0 to B1 in four steps. Produced by Deutsche Welle together with the Goethe Institute
Apps		
<b>Anki</b>	<a href="https://apps.ankiweb.net">apps.ankiweb.net</a>	– Learn new words as well as historical and cultural facts with the help of prompt cards – Free of charge
<b>Babbel</b>	<a href="https://about.babbel.com/en">about.babbel.com/en</a>	– A best-selling language learning app – 24 / 7 customer service – Research-based methods
<b>Busuu</b>	<a href="https://busuu.com/en">busuu.com/en</a>	– Improve your vocabulary and grammar, and your oral and written competence generally – Engage in real conversations and get feedback from native speakers
<b>Der Die Das App</b>	<a href="https://germanarticles.net">germanarticles.net</a>	– An enjoyable game to help you learn the gender of German nouns – Free of charge, or paid premium
<b>Drops</b>	<a href="https://languagedrops.com">languagedrops.com</a>	– Visual learning app focusing on vocabulary-building – Free of charge, or premium version from €5 per month
<b>Duolingo</b>	<a href="https://duolingo.com">duolingo.com</a>	– Short interactive exercises – 34 Duolingo hours = one semester – Free of charge
<b>Lingoda</b>	<a href="https://lingoda.com">lingoda.com</a>	– From €8 per class – 60-minute live language teaching, available 24/7 – Small groups

<b>Memrise</b>	memrise.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– App focusing on rote-learning with strong social element</li> <li>– Earn points by learning, compete with friends and rate lists produced by other users</li> <li>– Free basic version, or premium version from €8.99 per month</li> </ul>
<b>Mondly</b>	mondly.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lifelong access for a one-time payment of approx. €80.</li> <li>- App of the year (Facebook) and best new app (Apple)</li> </ul>
Yabla	german.yabla.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Video-based app</li> <li>- Free access for 15 days</li> </ul>
<b>TANDEM learning</b>		
TANDEM language learning involves two partners with different first languages (ideally native speakers) talking in one or other of the languages concerned.		
<b>Tandem</b>	tandem.net/learn/german/online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– App allowing you to talk with a fellow user whose first language is German</li> <li>– Chat, language tips and video calls with native speakers</li> <li>– Free of charge</li> </ul>
<b>Sprachencafé</b>	stationwien.org/projekte/sprachencaf.html	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A Vienna meeting point for anyone interested in languages</li> <li>– Voluntary moderators invite visitors to sit at their table and join the conversation in the moderator's first language</li> <li>– Events on several days each week</li> <li>– Open to all, free of charge, no registration required</li> </ul>

<b>Nachhilfe</b>		
GoStudent	gostudent.org/us	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Platform offering video-based individual instruction in over 30 languages including German (fee charged)</li> <li>– Experienced tutors put together a learning programme designed to improve participants' existing skills in the language concerned or prepare them for a particular language exam</li> </ul>
<b>News</b>		
Langsam gesprochene Nachrichten	dw.com/de/nachrichten/s-8030	Reduced-speed news in German for learners
News in Slow German	open.spotify.com/show/4CAP-KEyQ9KHtm9XEkjWHP3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– For advanced learners</li> <li>– Weekly news, German grammar and German expressions, all at reduced speed</li> </ul>
Tagesschau in 100 Sekunden	tagesschau.de/100sekunden	The most important news in German in 100 seconds
<b>Other</b>		
Deutsche Welle	dw.com/en/german-courses/s-2547	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Free German courses to help you learn German at your own pace</li> <li>– Computer-based e-Learning (videos, audio clips and podcasts; printable worksheets)</li> <li>– For both beginners and advanced learners</li> </ul>

To download a pdf copy of this brochure  
in the German language, visit



### **Authors**

Judith Kohlenberger (WU Vienna)

Milda Žilinskaitė (WU Vienna)

Teresa Riosa

With an English translation by Christopher Ross (WU Vienna)

Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU Vienna)

Welthandelsplatz 1

1020 Wien

### **Graphic design**

Katja Hasenöhr, Elisabeth Theodoropoulos

### **Graphic design support for the English version**

Oleh Hebura

### ILLUSTRATIONS

**Title page.** Rudi Raimo Rumppler; **pexels:** S. 4: RF\_...studio; **iStock:** S. 9: alvarez, S. 13: nortonrsx, S. 17: filadendron, S. 24 und S. 29: fizkes, S. 35: monkeybusinessimages

**Photos.** P16, Manuela Vollmann: caro Strasnik; P24, Herbert Langthaler: Mafalda Rakoš. All others: private collections.