

## UNHCR Europe NGO Consultation 2017 Regional Workshops – Western Europe

### Promoting the Inclusion of Beneficiaries of International Protection Across Europe

#### Title of the session

**Promoting Family Reunification and Labour Market Integration in Western Europe**

**Date:** 16 October 2017  
**Time:** 11:30-13:00 and 14:00-15:30

#### Countries (as per UNHCR organisational structure)

Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK

#### Focal points / Moderators

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Note taker: **Jessica Pradille**, ECRE Secretariat

#### Speakers / Panellists

**Kerstin Becker**, Asylum Policy Officer, Der Paritätische Gesamtverband, Germany  
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**Peter O’Sullivan**, Resettlement Officer, UNHCR, Bureau for Europe  
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## Background

While the Western European region generally has much experience in receiving persons both through the asylum system and, more recently for some, resettlement, challenges remain in providing robust integration support to beneficiaries of international protection. This is in evidence in the themes of labour market integration and family reunification in the region.

The ability of beneficiaries of international protection as well as asylum seekers to access the *labour market* is undermined by a number of factors. For example, the possibility for asylum seekers to work varies across the region, influenced by national legislation or the Reception Conditions Directive (for those States bound by the latter). Where uncertainty and inactivity exists, this can create dependency in the long term, and lead to skills decline and a lack of self-confidence when subsequently trying to gain employment.

Quality language training is essential. However, such quality differs across States, and is often not advanced enough to best support access to employment or higher education. Common barriers to language acquisition include: a lack of adequate courses, delayed access to publicly funded language courses, overcoming illiteracy, and a lack of opportunities to practice. An inability to access child-care also has a telling impact on the ability of women, and particularly women of female-headed households, to access language training.

Beneficiaries of international protection also face challenges in having qualifications and work experience attained in their country of origin recognised, and while it is theoretically possible, the requirements are often extremely difficult, if not impossible, to meet due to the loss of documentation and qualification certificates, or particular difficulties with validation (for example, no possibility to contact the institutions of their country of origin due to security concerns).

Moreover, many refugees often do not know where to get the information they need, including on job opportunities. Additionally, some administrative bodies lack adequate knowledge on the rights of beneficiaries of international protection and how best to guide them when navigating the labour market.

Persons granted subsidiary protection often face additional obstacles compared to refugees. For example, receiving shorter residence permits can impact upon their ability to access the labour market as employers may be less inclined to provide them with work opportunities without greater certainty on their ability to remain.

On *family reunification*, beneficiaries of international protection face specific problems in Western Europe. For example, they are often confronted with lengthy procedures, including instances where children may 'age out' and are therefore excluded from the application, possibly resulting in permanent family separation.

Insufficient and inconsistent information also represents problems for beneficiaries of international protection, with a lack of information potentially undermining their ability to apply for family reunification within sometimes short deadlines. As a consequence, they face more costly and complicated procedures in which they have to prove, amongst other things, that they can financially provide for their family members. Furthermore, it can be difficult to obtain the required documents due to their loss, or the inability to contact institutions of their country of origin due to security concerns. Likewise, proving family connections can be difficult for applicants.

In addition, the financial costs attached to an application can be burdensome. Many States in the region still require a request for family reunification to be made at the embassy in the applicant's country of origin. However, where there is no embassy, applicants may have to cross a border, which can be both costly and dangerous.

Since 2015, a noticeable trend towards more restrictive family reunification procedures can be observed within the region. Advocacy in this field is difficult owing to the current political climate. However, this also underscores the importance of devising effective strategies to improve access to family unity, which is a fundamental principle of international law.

**Objectives /  
Guiding ques-  
tions**

**Guiding questions: Family reunification**

- » How can civil society and UNHCR work together to promote better access to family reunification in Europe? How could various communications strategies, including a campaign, help to achieve this goal?
- » How can UNHCR and civil society better promote integration (including family reunification) through the media?
- » How can the problems of restricted access to family reunification in Europe be addressed? What can be done to help individuals and families to successfully reunite with their families?

**Guiding questions: Labour market integration**

1. Regarding initiatives on labour market integration, what are some examples of successful participation and participatory approaches adopted by the relevant stakeholders, including NGOs but more so the authorities, to promote inclusion?
2. How do employers get informed and motivated to hire refugees?
3. What are some challenges and best practice for language acquisition? Including:
  - a. Innovative practices, including use of technology etc.
  - b. Language acquisition for older teens /young adults; women, in particular stay-at-home mothers, who are often more isolated than others;
4. In what way can ECRE members/ civil society and UNHCR contribute to the involvement of and coordination between local institutional and non-institutional stakeholders in the labour integration of refugees?
5. How can UNHCR and civil society better promote integration (including labour market integration) through the media?

**Methodology  
Agenda**

Panel presentations / tour de table

**11:30-13:00 – Family reunification**

Opening remarks on UNHCR Strategy: [Peter O'Sullivan](#)

Family reunification in Germany – the current state of play: [Kerstin Becker](#)

Q&A and debate with the participants

*Lunch*

**14:00-15:30 – Labour market integration**

Opening remarks on UNHCR Strategy: [Peter O'Sullivan](#)

Challenges and best practice for language acquisition: [Najib Obaid Babakherkhail](#)

Access to the labour market: a Dutch perspective: [Paul Mbikayi](#)

Q&A and debate with the participants