



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

WORKING TOGETHER

A UNHCR report on the
employment of refugees and
asylum seekers in Malta



WORKING TOGETHER

A UNHCR report on the employment of refugees and asylum seekers in Malta



UNHCR/ Dragana Rankovic

UNHCR is mandated by the UN General Assembly to work towards protection and solutions for refugees, and to assist governments and civil society in this regard.

Working Together: A UNHCR report on the employment of refugees and asylum-seekers in Malta is a report written for employers, employees, policymakers, government and non-government organisations and other stakeholders that outlines the challenges and also the opportunities found in employing refugees from both the employer and the employee perspectives.



Contributors:

UNHCR would like to thank the following contributors in Malta for their assistance in realising this report:

- Jobsplus
- Jesuit Refugee Service
- African Media Association
- Malta Employers’ Association
- Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID)
- General Retailers and Traders Union
- CORE

Report first published in December 2019
Author: Sarah Farrugia, Durable Solutions Associate
Design: farrugiagroup.com
Cover photo: Timo, an asylum-seeker from Somalia, and his manager, Jonathan Mangion, at P. Cutajar & Co. Ltd.
© UNHCR/Joanna Demarco

This document is for general distribution.
All rights reserved.
Reproductions and translations are authorized, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged.

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| Executive Summary | 7 |
| Definitions | 10 |
| Introduction | 13 |
| Methodology | 15 |
| Refugees in Malta | 19 |
| Main Findings | 25 |
| Conclusion | 33 |
| Appendix 1 | 35 |
| Appendix 2 | 39 |
| Appendix 3 | 43 |



Kahin Ismail, UNHCR Representative, makes his opening speech at the Refugees and Employment Conference, November 2019 . © UNHCR Malta

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is written to assist employers, employees, policymakers, government and non-government organisations and other stakeholders by outlining the challenges and also the opportunities found in employing refugees from both the employer and the employee perspectives.

UNHCR's regular contact with key stakeholders, NGOs and refugee communities often brings to the discussion a number of challenges related to employment. Employers, government and non-government employment agencies and refugee communities raise valid issues from their own standpoint and experience, with few structures available that allow a space for sharing, discussion and solutions.

With the support of other stakeholders such as Jobsplus, the Malta Employers' Association (MEA), the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and African Media Association Malta (AMAM), UNHCR organised a number of focus groups with the aim of obtaining insight into the difficulties and opportunities faced by each of the corresponding stakeholders. Through these focus groups, UNHCR gained a comprehensive understanding of the needs of all involved, sharing stakeholders' concerns in a space of mutual understanding and problem-solving.

Through the focus groups, UNHCR succeeded in building a good relationship with a number of stakeholders, each contributing to the employment initiative by sharing their knowledge, experience and expertise. Networking was a crucial component for guaranteeing the success and sustainability of the employment initiative and the follow-up actions resulting from it.

The initiative culminated in a half-day conference, bringing all the stakeholders together to come up with realistic solutions to the challenges identified during the focus groups.

The main findings and corresponding solutions of the employment initiative were as follows:

POSITIVE ACTIONS

Service-providers are extending their services to refugees

UNHCR commends the support of service-providers and encourages further awareness through the use of public events and campaigns of success stories related to integration through employment.

Employers and human resources staff are recognising the need to adapt to a multicultural workplace

UNHCR encourages further support such as site-specific language courses and cultural training to be given to those who employ refugees.

Success stories both from the employers' and the employees' side emerged

UNHCR encourages the development of appropriate tools to bridge the gap between refugees and employers through outreach, career guidance and job-matching events.

MAIN CHALLENGES AND CORRESPONDING RECOMMENDATIONS

Lack of clarity or information and administrative challenges regarding the correct procedures in applying for a work permit

Main recommendations:

- Disseminate clear and concise information regarding how to recruit refugees and apply for the corresponding work permits depending on status.
- Reduce costs concerning the application and renewal of work permits.

Poor grasp of English, Maltese and IT among refugees

Main recommendations:

- Circulate booklets and deliver courses targeting work-specific technical vocabulary.
- Employers to provide refugees with support at work, such as opting for a bilingual team leader and providing site-specific language courses.

Urgent need for courses on cultural orientation, employment rights and current services

Main recommendations:

- Provide information on required work conditions, the work permit and employees' rights and obligations.
- Deliver tailor-made courses on cultural orientation, required work conditions and employees' rights and obligations under Maltese law.

Recognition of qualifications and skills

Main recommendations:

- Establish a body to assess and recognise the skills of refugees who do not have recognized certificates or refugees who no longer have the certificates in their possession.
- Promote vocational testing and provide on-the-job training, apprenticeships and internships.

Employers are adapting to a multicultural workplace but finding difficulties

Main recommendations:

- Provide employers and all staff with information and training on working in a multicultural environment.
- Provide continuous on-the-job training, mentoring and post-placement support for refugees.

Refugees with protection in Italy or other Member States (MS) who are unable to work in Malta

Main recommendations:

- UNHCR will continue to advocate among policymakers for a way to regularise the employment of refugees with protection in other MS in order to eliminate the illegal employment that widely exists but is not acknowledged and the associated exploitation and abuse of workers.
- UNHCR encourages all stakeholders who share this concern to advocate with policymakers and employers' associations to put in place legal pathways to employ refugees with protection in other MS.

Opening of bank accounts

Main recommendations:

- Raise awareness and assist with the dissemination of information among refugees, employers, NGOs and other stakeholders on the payment account and its basic features.
- Train desk officers on the different types of status and the corresponding documentation, as well as the rights of persons with international protection to open basic bank accounts as per Legal Notice 411 of 2016.

Discrimination and racism

Main recommendations:

- Create public educational campaigns targeting equality and combating discrimination.
- Promote the employment of refugees



Hon. Dr Helena Dalli MP, Former Minister for Affairs and Equality, makes her opening speech at the Refugees and Employment Conference, November 2019 © Department of Information

DEFINITIONS

Migrant: No universally accepted definition for 'migrant' exists. The term is usually understood to cover all cases in which the decision to migrate was taken freely by the individual concerned for personal reasons and without the intervention of an external compelling factor; it therefore applies to persons, and family members, moving to another country or region to better their material or social conditions and improve the prospects for themselves or their families.

Asylum-seeker: An asylum-seeker is a person who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided upon by the country in which he or she submitted it. Not every asylum-seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee (or given another form of protection), but every refugee is initially an asylum-seeker.

Refugee: A refugee according to the 1951 Convention (and also Maltese legislation) is a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality or habitual residence and is not able to or, because of that fear, is not willing to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

Subsidiary Protection: Subsidiary Protection is a form of complementary protection given to those persons who, if returned to their country of origin, would suffer serious harm (the death penalty or execution; torture or inhumane and degrading treatment or punishment; a threat to life through indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal armed conflict).



A refugee consultation was carried out, which included an information session on the HR management of the hotel. Credit: UNHCR

According to Malta's Refugees Act, the Refugee Commissioner can recommend two types of international protection:

- Refugee Status (in terms of the 1951 Refugee Convention)
- Subsidiary Protection (in terms of the EU Qualification Directive)

Persons with Refugee Status or Subsidiary Protection are regarded as **beneficiaries of international protection**.

Humanitarian Protection: The Office of the Refugee Commissioner can also recommend another form of protection, Humanitarian Protection. This is a local status granted in special and extraordinary cases where applicants are found not to be eligible for recognition as refugees or beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection but are nonetheless considered in need of protection for humanitarian reasons.

- **Temporary Humanitarian Protection (THP):** THP was established in 2008 and given to asylum applicants who did not satisfy the criteria for Refugee Status or Subsidiary Protection but nevertheless needed to be protected: Either they were unaccompanied minors or it was found that they should not be returned to their country of origin on medical or humanitarian grounds.
- **Temporary Humanitarian Protection New (THPN):** In 2010, the policy of granting THP to former asylum-seekers who fulfilled a number of other criteria was adopted, thus extending the application of the THP status established in 2008. These criteria, which were assessed by the Office of the Refugee Commissioner, included:
 - Having lodged their application for international protection at least four years prior to the date of submission of an application for Temporary Humanitarian Protection under the 2008 procedure
 - Providing evidence that they had been residing in Malta.

Humanitarian Protection has been converted into:

Specific Residence Authorisation (SRA): In November 2018, a new policy was introduced, addressing the situation of a number of THPN certificate holders and other persons who did not have international protection and could not be or had not been returned to their country of origin. Individuals who meet the eligibility criteria may be granted an SRA after an assessment by Identity Malta in cooperation with the immigration authorities.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT UNHCR

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950, during the aftermath of the Second World War, to help millions of Europeans who had fled or lost their homes. The High Commissioner's core mandate covers refugees, that is, all persons outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalised violence or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and who, as a result, require international protection. The High Commissioner has a mandate with respect to refugees globally, regardless of their location.

The High Commissioner is primarily mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance while seeking permanent solutions for persons within the office's core responsibilities.¹ The effective exercise of its mandate presupposes the commitment to and collaboration with governments and partnerships with other international agencies and non-governmental organisations.²

UNHCR's overall objective in **Malta** is to advocate for **access to protection** on appropriate terms and to promote **durable solutions** for all persons of concern.

UNHCR's main areas of activity can be categorized as follows:

- Monitoring the access to protection and conditions of asylum in Malta
- Advocating for a protection-sensitive asylum system and related policies
- Strengthening the capacities of government and partner agencies
- Improving the availability of durable solutions, including local integration
- Increasing the general awareness of asylum issues in the country

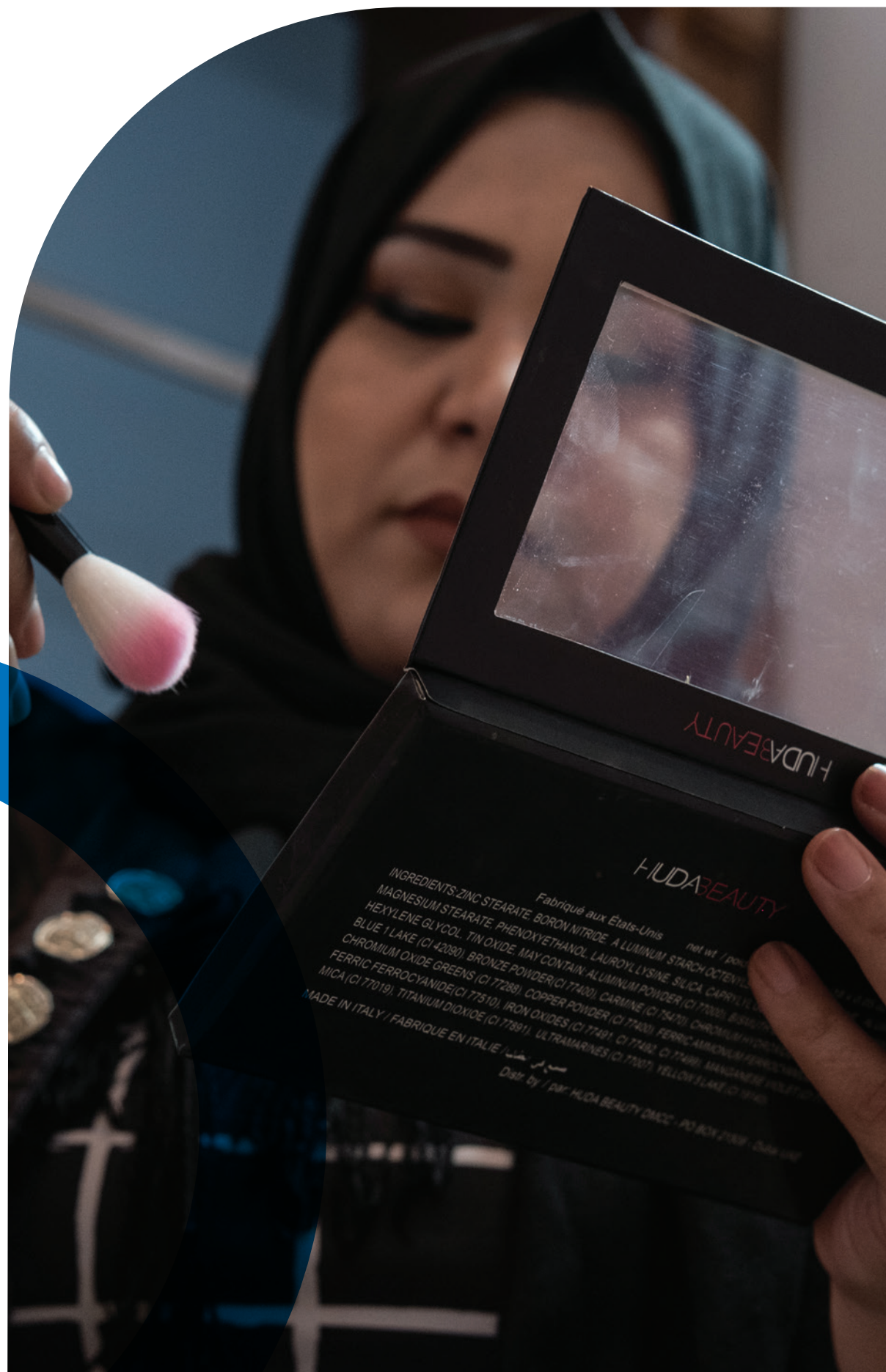
UNHCR has in recent years increased its outreach to the refugee community, promoting participation in all matters relating to the situation of refugees, and has developed its capacity to engage more broadly with the stakeholders active in the area of migration and asylum.

Proactive engagement with the government and relevant authorities is crucial in achieving further progress for persons of concern, in particular as regards self-reliance and local integration possibilities.

Through **economic integration**, the livelihoods of people in host and refugee communities can be improved. It also contributes to better integration outcomes.

¹ Paragraph 1 of the Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees as revised by General Assembly res. 58/153, 22 December 2003.

² Article 35 of the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.



UNHCR/ Joanna Demarco

THE MALTESE CONTEXT

As Malta is experiencing an economic boom, there is an increasing demand for new workers. As more opportunities become available, challenges in the realm of employment are in dire need of addressing, and it has thus become a priority for employers, government and non-government employment agencies and refugee and migrant communities (ReMCO) to find ways to understand each other's challenges and try to come up with holistic solutions for the existing gaps.

Integration is the complex process by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and groups. It is a two-way, legal, economic, social and cultural process undertaken by both the host community and the displaced population. As refugee integration into the social fabric of a country is not an automatic process, segregation, exclusion, discrimination and marginalization of refugee and migrant groups can be a threat to social cohesion. It is therefore not only important to leave space for refugees to articulate their problems, but also to hear the perspective of locals, crucial for the success of integration.

Employment is unsurprisingly one of the pillars of integration. It secures the integration of refugees into society, since it enables interaction, increases opportunities for learning local languages and provides the opportunity to build a future and regain confidence. On the other hand, non-participation in the labour market comes at a high cost for the host society, for the prospective employer and for refugees. It results in fewer social contributions to the host country and a loss of skills, motivation and social competencies. It narrows the refugees' options for integrating, not only in the world of work but in many other social and cultural spheres.

The refugee perception of Malta is gradually shifting from it being a transit country on the way to Europe to one offering the possibility of employment and a new life. At the same time, the government, employers and other intermediaries involved in the labour market have repeatedly expressed that workers with skills and experience are a needed resource for Malta to retain its competitive edge and fill labour shortages. Jobsplus, the government recruitment agency, has indeed stressed that the priority be given to workers residing locally, providing them with incentives to stay in Malta. Attention should be paid, therefore, that the required manpower is ready for employment and the necessary structures are in place to facilitate it.

METHODOLOGY

AIMS

The aim of the employment initiative was to gain an in-depth understanding of refugee opportunities and challenges in the employment sector from the perspective of employers, government and non-government employment agencies and refugees. Moreover, a half-day workshop provided the space to facilitate communication between all parties, identifying opportunities together and providing realistic solutions.

The objectives of this initiative were achieved through the use of qualitative methods, which aim to provide an understanding of individual and personal experiences. Hence this research does not purport to present a comprehensive or representative overview of all the issues affecting asylum-seekers, refugees, employers and other stakeholders in Malta.

This initiative was characterized by a strong participatory component which aimed to involve both the relevant stakeholders and the beneficiaries of protection, engaging in dialogue and generating knowledge about issues and problems of concern to them, and creating the space and capacity to influence and determine change.

Participatory assessment promotes meaningful participation of refugee men and women of all ages through a structured dialogue. This consists of holding separate discussions with men and women, in order to gather accurate information on the challenges they face and their underlying causes, and to hear the subjects' proposed solutions.³

This approach is best described as community based. It motivates members of the community to participate in a process which allows them to express their needs. It also seeks to understand the community's concerns and priorities, mobilizing community members and engaging them in protection and programming. The latter was crucial for the successful participation of the community all throughout the initiative. In addition to the refugee community, UNHCR also wanted to have the valuable input and perspective of stakeholders such as employers in the private sector, employers' associations, NGOs, recruitment agencies and others having a role in the employment of refugees.

With this in mind, separate focus groups were held:

- With employers in Malta and Gozo
- With employees in Malta and Gozo
- With recruitment agencies
- With key government and non-government stakeholders

³ UNHCR. (2006, May 01) The UNHCR Tool for Participatory Assessment in Operations. Accessed December 15 2018 from <https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/450e963f2/unhcr-tool-participatory-assessment-operations.html>.

THE PROCESS

The following maps out the process used throughout the employment initiative, that is, the tools used and the methods of engagement at each stage.

Stage 1: Pre-workshop

Initially, UNHCR set up a number of meetings with key representatives from all perspectives, with the aim of seeking collaboration and participation in the organisation of the initiative. The entities involved included Jobsplus and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), African Media Association Malta (AMAM), Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID), Malta Employers' Association (MEA), Corporate Citizenship for Responsible Enterprises platform (CORE) and the General Retailers and Traders Union (GRTU).

Through a series of discussions, an appropriate method was chosen in order to:

- Fully engage different stakeholders
- Elicit true and concise information

It was agreed that the best approach would be to conduct a series of focus groups with all the different stakeholders, that is, employers, employees, government and non-government recruitment agencies, government organisations, non-government organisations and others.

Stage 2: Focus groups

UNHCR sought the assistance of other entities to engage with participants for the focus groups. MEA, Jobsplus, CORE and GRTU disseminated the invitation for the focus groups among their members and contacts. Similarly, AMAM, JRS and UNHCR shared the information among refugee communities to bring forward refugee employees.

The reasons for opting for focus groups were:

- The condensed nature of the focus groups made it possible for UNHCR to solicit opinions and feedback on multiple aspects of the discussion without the time-intensive process of individually soliciting interviews. It was also observed that discussions were generated by one participant hearing another's opinion and/or experience.
- Their usefulness for obtaining detailed information about personal and group feelings, perceptions and opinions, providing for a broader range of information and offering the opportunity to seek clarification.

In collaboration with the entities that committed to collaboration in the employment initiative, the following set of activities was organised:

1. Focus groups with employers in Malta and Gozo

UNHCR held three focus groups with employers and met a total of 19 employers (mainly SMEs) working in the private sector. Employers came from different sectors, such as construction, cleaning and hospitality. UNHCR initially met with employers in Malta, however due to recent migration to Gozo, it was considered beneficial to also speak to employers there. As expected, in Gozo the needs and challenges were similar.

The focus groups with employers were held at the MEA premises in Valletta and the Ministry of Gozo.

2. Focus groups with employees in Malta and Gozo

UNHCR organised three focus groups and met a total of 18 employees working in the private sector. The pool of participants varied, as some were in long-term employment, while others were seeking work but had previously been employed.

The focus groups with employees were divided by gender, therefore one specifically targeted men and the other was for women.

It was observed that female participation was much higher in the Malta focus group. In Gozo, no women attended the focus group, the reason being that few refugee women are in employment in Gozo.

The focus groups were held at Microsoft Skyparks and Jobsplus Gozo.

3. Focus groups with recruitment agencies

UNHCR met with three recruitment agencies (public and private). The meeting was held at UNHCR's offices.

4. Focus group with key government and non-government stakeholders

The aim of this focus group was to bring together a number of stakeholders which, though not directly involved in the employment of refugees, act as intermediaries or have a crucial role to play. The stakeholders identified for this focus group consisted of refugee groups, NGOs, employers' associations, unions and relevant government departments. The focus group was well attended and brought to light a number of issues which had also been mentioned in the previous focus groups.

In attendance were Jobsplus, MEA, the General Workers Union (GWU), GRTU, SOS Malta, AMAM, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER), Occupational Health and Safety Authority (OHSA), Malta Hotels and Restaurants Association (MHRA), the Sudanese Migrant Association and Malta Microfinance.

The focus group was hosted by Business 1st in Mrieħel.

A similar focus group was planned for Gozo. However, due to the lack of active stakeholders in the field, this was not possible.

The focus groups took the following format:

- A brief introduction by UNHCR explaining what UNHCR is and its role in Malta
- A brief explanation of the employment initiative and how it complements UNHCR's mandate
- Three questions were asked to generate discussion:
 - What are the challenges you encounter?
 - What are the opportunities?
 - What are the training needs or information needed?

The research findings will be discussed in the next section of this paper.

REFUGEES IN MALTA

Stage 3: Engagement with relevant government departments

Following the conclusion of the focus groups, two crucial meetings were organised:

1. Identity Malta

UNHCR requested a meeting with Identity Malta to present the findings gathered from the focus groups and to discuss three issues affecting the employment of refugees:

- The costly fees to apply for and renew a work permit
- The negative attitude of desk officers to migrants
- The long delays in processing applications forms

2. Ministry of Education and Employment (MEDE)

UNHCR requested a meeting with MEDE to present the findings gathered from the focus groups and to encourage MEDE's participation during and after the employment conference.

UNHCR's request was well received. MEDE agreed to open the conference, stressing the importance of such networking and discussion among stakeholders.

MEDE's support is crucial for any follow-up actions following the employment initiative.

Stage 4: The conference

A half-day conference was organised, seeking the participation of mainly small- and medium-sized private companies, government and non-government employment agencies, NGOs, refugee groups, educational institutions, trade unions, employers' associations and relevant government organisations and ministries. All those involved in the process of the employment initiative were invited to attend and participate in the conference.⁴

The conference focused on three elements:

- Presentations of findings on the opportunities and challenges identified during the focus groups
- The provision of information and practical tips on the employment of refugees from an employee and employer perspective
- An active discussion and a holistic approach to problem-solving between all the stakeholders attending the conference

⁴ Kindly refer to Appendix 1 to view the full agenda and list of attendees.

MALTA ASYLUM TRENDS IN BRIEF

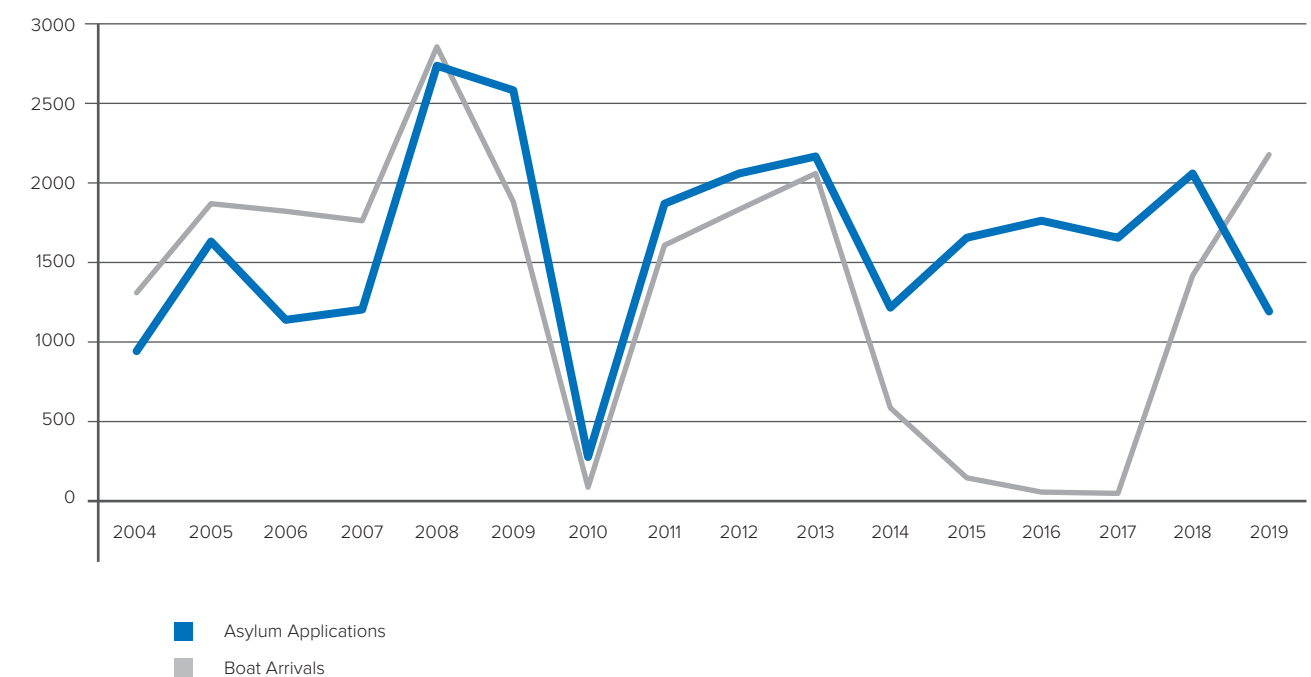
In 2018, Malta experienced the first sea arrivals since 2014. 1,445 people were either rescued by the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) or helped to disembark by different search and rescue (SAR) NGOs. Malta also reached a number of ad hoc arrangements with a number of EU Member States to relocate some of these arrivals. It should also be noted that asylum-seekers from Libya and Syria continued to arrive in Malta through regular channels. The number of asylum applications in 2018 reached 2,034, the highest since 2013.

33% of the 2,034 asylum applicants were granted international protection and 2% Temporary Humanitarian Protection. 51% had their application closed.

1,445 disembarked by sea in Malta, with 133 being women and 331 children, including 214 unaccompanied minors. 423 individuals were relocated to different MS through ad hoc arrangements.

It is estimated that some 10,000 beneficiaries of protection live in Malta, both in private accommodation and in open centres.

In 2019, there have been 2,804 disembarkations (as at the end of September) and 1,854 asylum applications (as at the end of July).

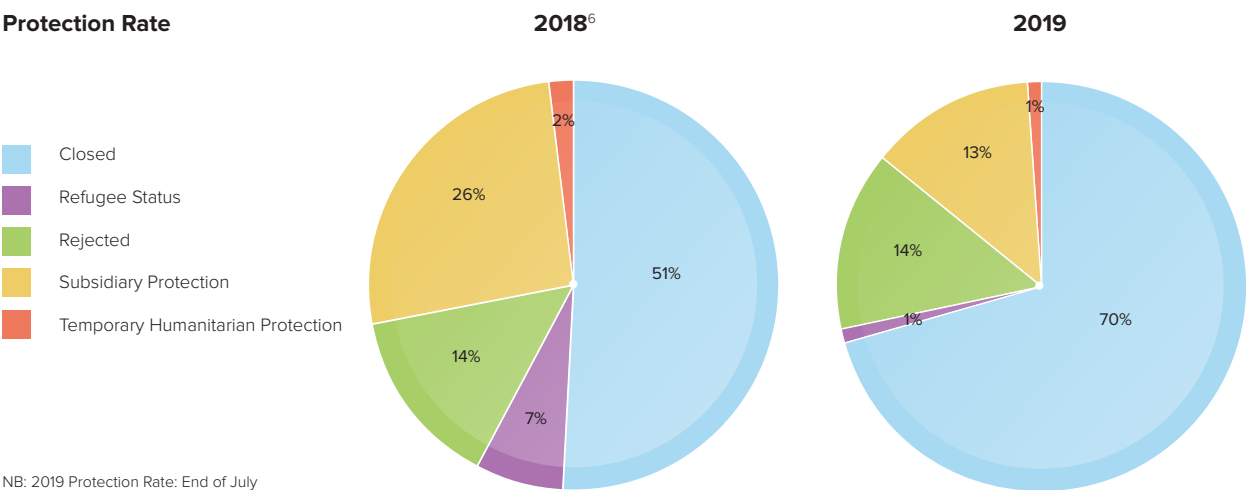


Number of arrivals by boat and asylum applications.⁵

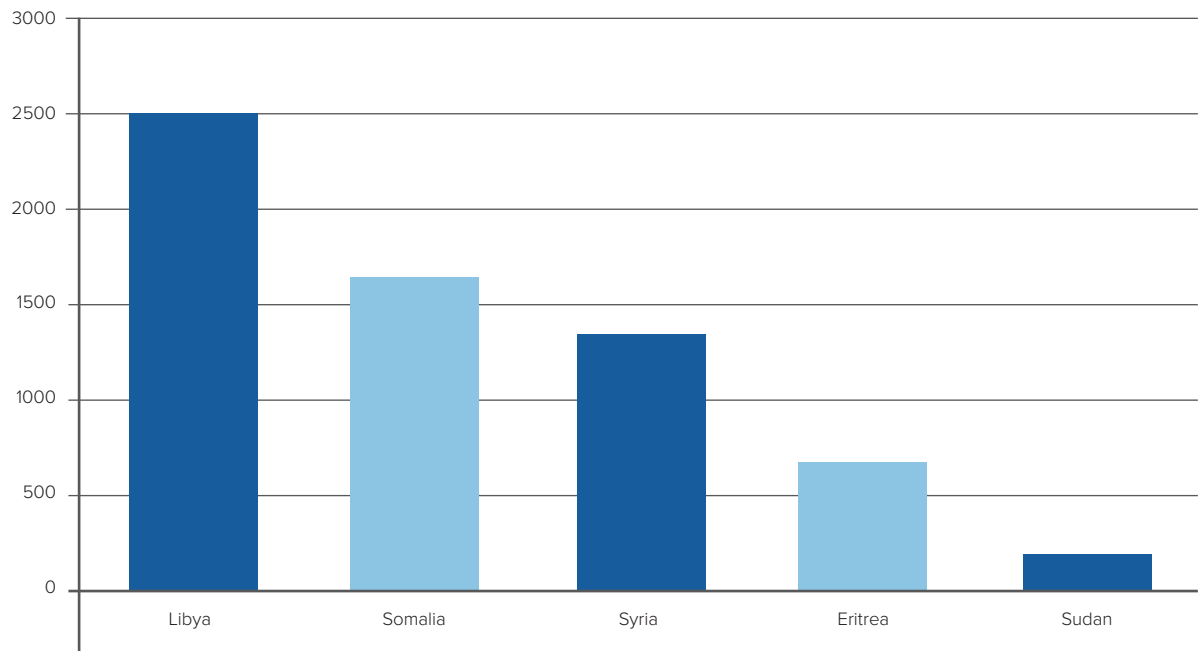
NB: 2019 Boat Arrivals: end of August
NB: 2019 Asylum Applications: end of June

⁵ Source: Immigration Police and the Office of the Refugee Commissioner

Protection Rate



Main countries of origin of persons of concern in Malta⁷



⁶ Source: Immigration Police and the Office of the Refugee Commissioner

⁷ Numbers are rounded. The populations of concern are estimates based on various sources. It is difficult to determine the precise numbers, as persons of concern tend to move in and out of the country.

REFUGEE EMPLOYMENT LICENCES

The kind of status a person has during the asylum-seeking process and following the decision on his or her asylum claim impinges directly on access to employment. Different forms of work permits are allocated depending on the type of protection granted to the individual.⁸ Irrespective of the person's status, he or she must in all cases obtain an employment license issued by Jobsplus.

The Reception of Asylum Seekers Regulations state that access to employment should be granted no later than nine months following the lodging of an asylum application.⁹ Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to access the labour market under the same conditions as Maltese nationals, therefore as employees or self-employed.

Employment licenses are issued for three months for asylum-seekers whose application has been rejected and six months for those whose application is still pending. In such cases, the employer applies on behalf of the employee, and the employee cannot use this licence to take up a different job, to change his or her working conditions or to work for a different employer.

For beneficiaries of international protection, the duration of such employment licenses is 12 months and they are renewable. The employee applies for the employment licence and is granted one in his or her own name.

Refugees have access to benefits including employment insurance and pensions, however for beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection, Maltese legislation only grants access to core social welfare benefits, meaning they have no access to employment insurance and pensions.

Obstacles in this area include the application and renewal costs. A new application costs €58, while renewal costs €34. Employers are deterred from applying for the permits because of their short duration and the administrative burden associated with the application. Similarly, it is taxing for employees, whose employment licences are issued in their own names.

⁸ Immigration Act, Chapter 217 Article 11. (1) It shall be an implied condition of any leave granted to any person under article 6(1)(a) or, saving the provisions of Part III, of a residence permit issued to any person under article 7(1) that such person shall not in Malta exercise any profession or occupation or hold any appointment or be employed by any other person or engage in business without a licence from the Minister. (2) It shall be an implied condition of any leave granted to any person under article 6(1)(b) or extended under paragraph (c) that such person shall not in Malta exercise any profession or occupation or hold any appointment or be employed by any other person without a licence from the Minister.

⁹ The Reception of Asylum Seekers Regulations, Subsidiary Legislation 420.06 Article 10. (1) An applicant shall be granted access to the labour market after the lapse of nine months from the date when the application was lodged, provided that he is still an applicant when such a lapse has occurred. (2) Where an appeal is lodged against a negative decision, access to the labour market shall not be withdrawn during the appeals stage.

Employment Licences

| Migrant status | Migrant applies for employment licence | Employer applies for employment licence | Validity of employment licence (in months) |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Asylum-seeker | | X | 6 |
| Failed asylum-seeker | | X | 3 |
| THP or THPN | X | | 12 |
| Subsidiary Protection | X | | 12 |
| Refugee | X | | 12 |

Table 1

Refugees in the Labour Market

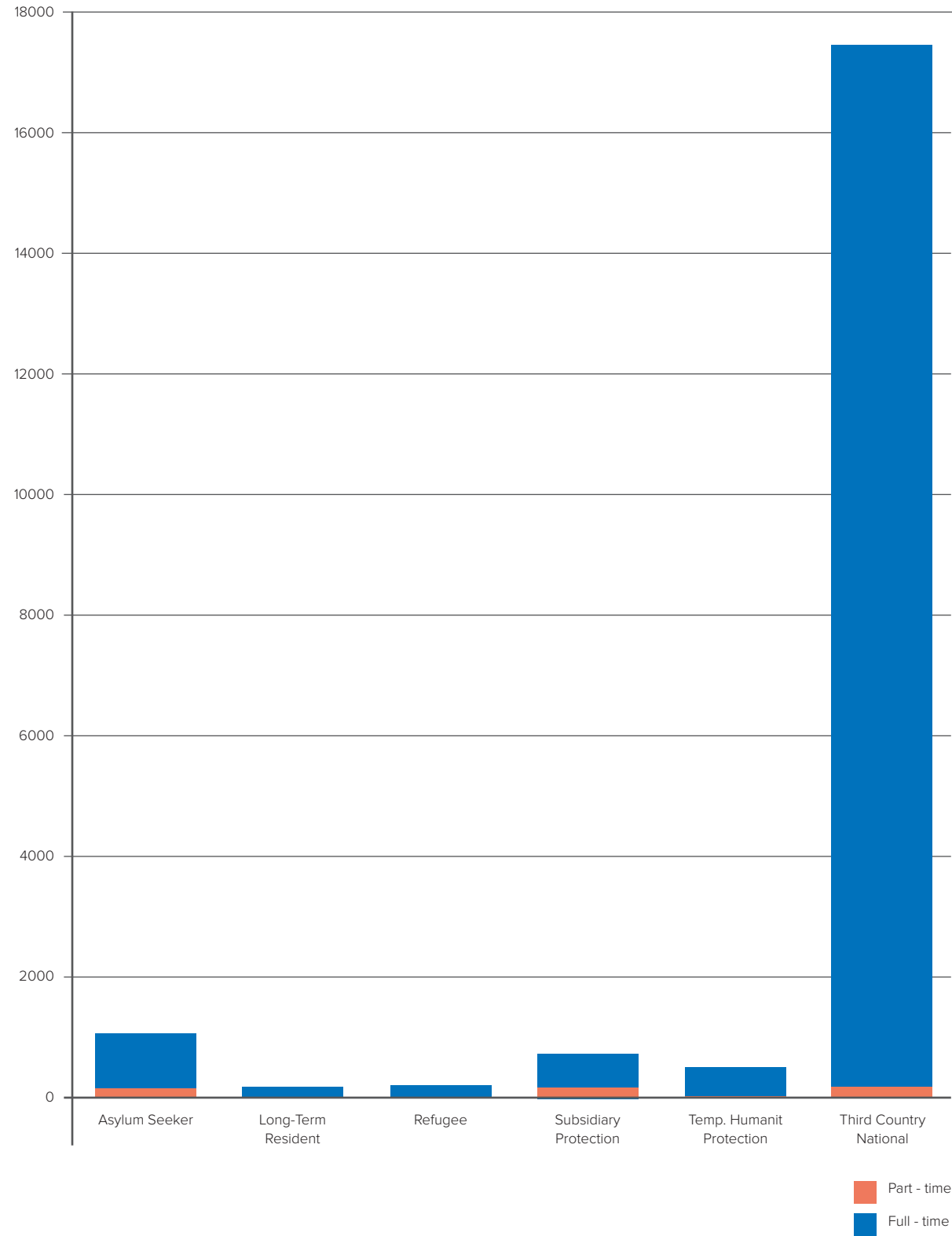
| Persons in employment as at the end of June 2018 | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Category | Citizenship | Full-Time | Part-Time | Grand Total |
| Third-country national | ASYLUM-SEEKER | 838 | 135 | 973 |
| | LONG-TERM RESIDENT | 150 | 8 | 158 |
| | REFUGEE | 173 | 46 | 219 |
| | SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION | 580 | 140 | 720 |
| | TEMP. HUMANIT. PROTECTION | 406 | 65 | 471 |
| | THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONAL | 17,856 | 140 | 17,996 |
| Third-country nationals in employment ¹⁰ | | 20,003 | 534 | 20,537 |

Table 2 ¹¹

¹⁰ Rejected asylum-seekers are included with Third-Country Nationals.

¹¹ Source: Jobsplus

Total number of applicants as of January 2019



MAIN FINDINGS

Facts and Observations ¹²

- The number of third country nationals in employment as of January 2019 was 20,537.¹³ Figures include new applications and renewals submitted by both employers and employees.
- 87.6% of work licences were issued to third-country nationals. The second highest rate was for asylum-seekers (4.7%), persons with Subsidiary Protection (3.5%), Temporary Humanitarian Protection (2.3%), refugees (1%) and long-term residents (0.3%).¹⁴
- The 4.7% of work licences issued for asylum-seekers may reflect the recent trend of refugees with protection in other countries (mostly Italy) coming to work in Malta. Beneficiaries of protection in other countries are not permitted to work in Malta, however upon arrival, they are able to lodge an asylum application. Until they receive notice that their case is inadmissible, they can work in Malta as asylum-seekers. 4.7% is a positive percentage, indicating that a high number of asylum-seekers are in legal employment while their asylum claims are being processed.
- Among beneficiaries of protection, female participation in the labour market is considerably low.
- The data provided is not fully accurate, as no checks are made on the Jobsplus employment engagement form. The information listed on the engagement form is assumed to be true.

Services Assisting Migrants in the Labour Market ¹⁵

“It is now the government’s responsibility to ensure that public policy and targeted measures support these efforts and institutionalise new ones, because it is ultimately in the best interest of everyone that it succeeds. The government is therefore creating a basic but sufficient framework to improve the chances of success for all migrants who want to belong, and will continue to tweak policies and services in order to remove unnecessary bureaucracy and burdens.” ¹⁶

A number of positive actions are being undertaken by the government, civil society and NGOs, among others, for refugees to be integrated in the labour market. However, migrants unfortunately still face a number of difficulties. Challenges such as language barriers, limited academic backgrounds, discrimination and cultural differences often lead to exploitation and abuses such as long hours, low salaries, irregular work and unsafe conditions for those working without a work permit.

The following are the main findings from the focus groups and employment conference. The findings represent the views of all the stakeholders involved in the employment initiative, along with the proposed recommendations elicited by the stakeholders attending the conference.

POSITIVE OBSERVATIONS

1. Service-providers are extending their services to refugees

Over the course of this initiative, UNHCR encountered stakeholders coming from different fields. It was extremely positive to note that a majority of them gave their full support. It was evident that service-providers such as unions, recruitment agencies, employers’ associations, DIER, OHSA and others have recognised the importance of outreach to refugees, with a number of other stakeholders willing to learn and adapt to the new needs of the market.

Recommended actions:

- Raise awareness of success stories related to the integration and employment of refugees.
- Raise awareness of the positive aspects of multiculturalism.
- Use the media and press as a tool to change negative stereotypes.
- Raise awareness of how refugees are contributing to Malta and to their host communities.
- Organise public social and networking events.
- Organise public campaigns promoting the inclusion of refugees in newspapers and TV and radio adverts and showcasing positive narratives.

2. Employers and HR departments are recognising the need to adapt to a multicultural workplace

A number of positive gestures by employers and HR managers in the acceptance and integration of cultural differences emerged from the focus groups. Examples included flexible arrangements to suit cultural requests, prayer rooms at the workplace and reduced hours during Ramadan.

Recommended actions:

- Provide employers of refugees with support, such as site-specific language courses and cultural training for staff.

3. Success stories emerged from both the employers and employees

¹² Data provided by Jobsplus

¹³ This includes asylum- seekers, long-term residents, refugees, persons with subsidiary protection or temporary humanitarian protection and third country nationals with a single work permit.

¹⁴ Kindly refer to Appendix 2 for further information on employment licences.

¹⁵ For a more comprehensive list of services assisting migrants kindly refer to Appendix 3.

¹⁶ INTEGRATION = BELONGING Vision 2020, December 2017, Ministry for European Affairs and Equality. Accessed December 15 2018 from <https://meae.gov.mt/en/Documents/migrant%20Integration-EN.pdf>

A number of success stories emerged from the focus groups. Some employers expressed that they view refugees as hardworking and loyal employees, and some refugees commented that their work environment is a positive one where they work well with their colleagues. It was also encouraging to hear of cases in which an employee progressed professionally within a company due to his or her performance.

Recommended actions:

- Develop tools to improve outreach and bridge the gap between refugees and employers, and promote job-matching, for example, through targeted job speed-dating, fairs, online platforms and apps.
- Provide career guidance, through, for example cooperation with education and training institutions and organisations.
- Implement targeted outreach activities such as visits to enterprises, trial internships, bridging schemes, employer visits to schools, university visits to open centres.

MAIN CHALLENGES

1. Lack of clarity or information and administrative challenges regarding the correct procedures in applying for a work permit

There is a general sense of confusion regarding the correct procedures in applying for a work permit. This is aggravated by the fact that the different types of status are not well understood. The link between the different types of status and their corresponding work permit is a major impediment in the employment of refugees. This was voiced by employers, recruitment agencies and government and non-government organisations.

Administrative issues are also seen to negatively impact the labour market. The constant need to renew work permits, accompanied by long delays, was highlighted as one of the main problems not only for employers but also employees. This is especially the case for asylum-seekers, whose work permits need to be renewed every three months at a cost - the burden of which is placed on the employer. This adds an economic and administrative disincentive. This situation leads, at times, to abusive situations in which employees end up working without permits or paying for them themselves.

Recommended actions:

- Make available information booklets providing both employers and employees with clear and concise information on how to apply for a work permit. Such booklets should be translated into the main languages and distributed to employers, local councils, LEAP centres, police stations and health clinics.
- Reduce the costs of applying for and renewing work permits.
- Send the applicant (employer and employee) automatic reminders prior to the expiration of the work permit.
- Provide employees the option to pay the application fee in instalments or once employment is found.
- Disseminate information on how to apply for work permits and procedures for migrant recruitment depending on the different statuses.
- Provide each application with a corresponding number whereby the applicant can check its progress online.

2. Poor grasp of English, Maltese and IT among refugees

Employers were unanimous in their view that refugees' understanding of English and Maltese is generally rather low. This language barrier is a problem, especially when it comes to refugees receiving instructions, productivity and proper adherence to health and safety procedures.

Recommended actions:

- Circulate booklets and/or deliver courses containing specific technical vocabulary for work purposes. This is advised especially for health and safety issues.
- Provide courses in language, work ethics and cultural orientation at the reception stage using accessible venues such as local councils and LEAP.
- Use schools to disseminate information on available courses in order to reach parents.
- Have MCAST offer childcare and child-minding placements during school hours to encourage women's attendance.

Recommendations to recruitment agencies and NGOs with employment programmes:

- Improve language and skills assessment before referring migrants for jobs. Assessment should be a true reflection of a migrant's abilities.

Tips for employers:

- Appoint a colleague to act as a bilingual team leader and assist with interpretation.
- Provide on-site English classes. This initiative could be supported by the government.
- Communicate clearly with refugees by speaking slower, not louder.
- Make sure that directions are clear and do not use idiomatic language.
- Check for understanding by asking questions that clarify, not yes or no questions.

3. Urgent need for courses on cultural orientation, employment rights and current services

Cultural differences between local and migrant employees is a major issue for employers. Employers, recruitment agencies and government stakeholders have expressed the need for an induction programme explaining Maltese culture and practices. This could be extended to explain some services available in the Maltese system, since not many employees are knowledgeable about them or their rights under Maltese legislation.

Recommended actions:

- Provide information and courses for refugees and their communities on required work conditions, along with work permits and employee rights and obligations under Maltese law.
- Provide refugees and their communities with information sessions on what constitutes bullying and discrimination and the legal remedies. It was suggested that such information sessions should be delivered by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE).
- Provide refugees and their communities with information about self-employment.

¹⁷ The Malta Qualifications Recognition Information Centre (MQRIC) is the competent body within the National Commission for Further Higher Education (NCFHE) that recognises qualifications against the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF) Services offered by Jobsplus for migrants to access the labour market.

4. Recognition of qualifications and skills

For refugees who are already in possession of certificates or academic qualifications, the barrier to entering the labour market is retrieving them, that is, obtaining them from the country of origin and then having them recognised.¹⁷ This is aggravated by long waiting times, which often result in a negative reply. The situation is even more challenging for those who require a warrant to practise their profession.

It was observed that this can result in the following:

- An individual with experience and certificates but no evidence thereof. Certificates can be lost during the journey from the country of origin.
- An individual with experience and certificates who is unable to have them recognised
- An individual with experience but no certificates

Another burden is the cost incurred in translating certificates. The migrant, while waiting for the certificates to be recognised, either cannot work or must opt for work of a different kind.

Recommended actions:

- Use the National Commission for Further Higher Education (NCFHE) or establish a body to assess the skills of refugees who do not possess any form of recognised qualification.
- Promote vocational testing.
- Have in place a predictable structure whereby, through interviews and assessments, refugees not in possession of the mandatory certificates are able to access university study if their academic background is determined to be adequate. This mechanism could take the form of similar testing to that adopted for adult learners to start university.
- Look into alternative forms of learning such as the Prince's Trust International ¹⁸ - in particular the XL Programme, which focuses on 'Personal Development and Employability Skills'.
- Support (possibly from the government) to employers to pay the cost of translating certificates.
- Enable refugee employment programs to pay the cost of evaluating credentials.
- Have skills evaluated during on-the-job training or offer competency-based promotions for refugees lacking certificates.
- Provide apprenticeships and access to vocational training - placements for refugees, combined apprenticeships with other training, apprenticeships that take into account the specific needs of refugees.
- Promote internships that are structured around concrete learning outcomes, having due regard for the needs of enterprises and refugees.
- Promote entrepreneurship and self-employment in order to mitigate discrimination at work and foster socio-economic participation, social empowerment and inclusion.

5. Employers are adapting to a multicultural workplace but finding difficulties

Some good practices emerged during the focus groups with employers. Despite admitting that the transition to working in a multicultural environment is not easy and difficulties often arise with Maltese co-workers, there are companies that have been very active in promoting the inclusion of refugees at work - by having a prayer room, for example, or adapting working hours not to clash with prayer times and offering reduced hours during Ramadan.

Employers have also come to realise that to encourage good working relationships between local and non-local staff, an understanding of cultures must exist. Some employers are providing staff with cultural information not exclusive to Malta to facilitate workplace integration.

Recommended actions:

- Employers organise training for staff when the workforce is a multicultural one.
- Provide information and training to employers and managers on working in a multicultural environment.
- Raise awareness of schemes undertaken by Jobsplus.
- Raise awareness of the incentives offered by Jobsplus for employers to hire migrants.
- Allow time off for religious holidays for employees who take time off in advance, or allow for different break times during Ramadan to accommodate prayers and breaking the fast.
- Practise openness with employees about Maltese culture, explaining, for example, the importance of arriving on time.
- Allow refugee employees to give feedback anonymously.
- Offer diversity training to highlight workplace diversity and mitigate the negative effects of cultural differences.
- Assign refugee employees a mentor who can help them adjust, practise their English and develop meaningful relationships at work.
- Incorporate sharing of culture at company events. Promote intercultural dialogue in the workplace, for example, intercultural and diversity training for staff, organising cultural events, etc.
- Promote diversity and multiculturalism in the company's marketing, social media, etc.
- Provide employees the opportunity to learn about refugees and how to communicate with individuals who have limited English skills.
- Provide continuous on-the-job training, for example, specialised, work-related training.
- Provide mentoring or coaching programmes to support refugees in their skill development and overall integration in the workplace.
- Conduct on-the-job skills assessments, validation of skills acquired through training or employment.
- Provide post-placement support to refugees after they start employment to ensure the sustainability of employment and job retention.

6. Refugees with protection in Italy or other European Member States are unable to work in Malta

Refugees with protection in Italy or other European MS are not issued a work permit according to Malta's current policy and thus end up working without one. This leaves them susceptible to abuses and exploitation or only eligible for certain types of work.

¹⁸ The qualification of the XL Programme into the MQF will ensure that the skills and qualifications that young people achieve through it are acknowledged and awarded within the Maltese context. Retrieved from <http://princestrustinternational.org/whatwedo/education-and-training/>

On the other hand, employers are frustrated that despite the current shortage of workers, there are capable individuals whom they are unable to employ. It also occurs that employers who have already invested in such employees later discover that they cannot be employed or cannot renew their work permit.

Recommended actions:

- UNHCR will continue to advocate for a way to regularise the employment of refugees with protection in other MS who are working in Malta in an irregular manner.
- Provide refugees with protection in other MS at least the same opportunities of TCNs working in Malta.
- UNHCR encourages all stakeholders who share this concern to advocate with policymakers and employers' associations to put in place legal pathways to employ refugees with protection in other MS.

7. Opening of bank accounts

With the introduction of Legal Notice 411 of 2016 to the Payment Accounts Regulations, every individual¹⁹ residing in Malta or another EU Member State is entitled to open a payment account with basic features,²⁰ either free of charge or at a reasonable cost. The Malta Financial Services Authority (MFSA) is working to create awareness and to protect all consumers in the financial sector, however problems still persist.

The difficulty in opening bank accounts, long delays in processing ID cards and the general lack of knowledge on refugee and asylum issues of front desk officers and receptionists at government services create problems for employers and employees. Employers wish to pay employees in the most expeditious manner, while employees are scared that administrative problems will act as an additional deterrent to their employment.

Recommended actions:

- Set up an alternative banking platform such as online banking.
- Train bank employees, explaining the different types of status and the corresponding documentation.
- Hold regular stakeholder meetings with banks and the MFSA.
- Raise awareness among refugees and their communities on the functions of the payment account with basic features.
- Disseminate information on the payment account with basic features to NGOs, employers and other stakeholders.
- Link the opening of a bank account with the work permit.

¹⁹ Persons residing legally in Malta or another EU Member State, including persons with no fixed address, refugees, stateless persons or asylum seekers and persons who are not granted a residence permit but whose repatriation is not possible for legal or factual reasons. Basic Payment Account – Your right to Basic Banking Services. Accessed 8 February 2019 from <https://www.mfsa.com.mt/news/media-centre/>

²⁰ Features of a payment account with basic features include all the operations required for the opening, operating and closing of the account; an international debit card to access the funds placed in the account; withdrawals of cash at the counters of the bank or at ATMs in Malta, Gozo and other EU Member States; effecting payments through the payment card, including online payments; effecting credit transfers, including standing orders at terminals and counters and via the online facilities of the bank; and executing direct debits within the European Union. Basic Payment Account – Your right to Basic Banking Services. Accessed 8 February 2019 from <https://www.mfsa.com.mt/news/media-centre/>

8. Discrimination and racism

Discrimination was an issue voiced by all the stakeholders involved in the focus groups. Employees expressed their frustration at being discriminated against for mostly religious and cultural reasons. Discrimination occurs when migrants apply for jobs (not being shortlisted due to a foreign name, for example), during interviews and also at work. It is unfortunately a widespread problem that most workers feel they need to tolerate. Similarly, employers often face difficulties when employing refugees due to colleagues not being welcoming or customers submitting complaints.

Recommended actions:

- Create a public educational campaign targeting equality and combating discrimination.
- Create a work environment that promotes inclusion.
- Actively attempt to eliminate discrimination, taking part, for example, in anti discrimination campaigns and implement anti-discrimination strategies in the recruitment process.
- Promote diversity in the company's image.
- Promote the recruitment of refugees.

Other challenges identified during the focus groups:

- The fact that most beneficiaries of protection do not benefit from **family reunification**²¹ is seen as a problem for job retention. Individuals with Subsidiary Protection or Temporary Humanitarian Protection are not able to be reunited with their families, leading to instability and high work turnover.
- The rise in rent prices is an overall problem affecting not only employees but also employers. It was expressed numerous times that the rental market needs to be capped and rent contracts regulated to avoid the fast and dramatic increase in rents.
- Maltese **salaries** are not seen to reflect the current cost of living.
- The fact that refugees are beneficiaries of **social benefits** is considered a detriment to the regularisation of employment. It was suggested that social benefits be linked to language courses.

²¹ Only persons granted Refugee Status are eligible for family reunification.

CONCLUSION

Through this initiative, UNHCR succeeded in bringing a number of stakeholders together. The positive response and support reflect the urgent need for a common platform to share ideas, discuss challenges and also learn from the best practices currently observable in the labour market.

The discussions moderated by UNHCR were founded on a rights-based perspective. Keeping this in mind, UNHCR presented a business case to a variety of stakeholders. Providing refugees with appropriate resources and culturally sensitive environments where they can in turn use or learn new skills is an immediate benefit to Malta's growing economy.

This report hopes to provide a good indication of the immediate needs of employers, employees and other stakeholders, along with realistic solutions to the challenges they face.

UNHCR encourages all stakeholders to acknowledge their responsibility and consequently to do their utmost to improve the employment of refugees in Malta. UNHCR will seek to support any of the solutions recommended and assist stakeholders in the execution of the proposed follow-up actions.

UNHCR will continue to collaborate with those who supported this initiative, maintaining a positive working relationship with the government of Malta and other key stakeholders in order to improve the employment experience of refugees in Malta



Discussion group at the Refugees and Employment Conference, November 2019 © UNHCR Malta



UNHCR/ Dragana Rankovic

APPENDIX 1

THE CONFERENCE AGENDA

Welcome Address

Mr. Kahin Ismail, UNHCR Representative to Malta

Guests were welcomed by the local UNHCR representative, who gave an overview of UNHCR's work in Malta while outlining the basis of the employment initiative.

Opening Speech

Hon. Dr. Helena Dalli, Minister for European Affairs and Equality

The Honourable Minister addressed the audience with a welcoming speech, emphasising that the employment of refugees is not only helpful, but a beneficial step towards achieving a more integrated society. Dr. Helena Dalli also spoke of the government's introduction of the National Integration Strategy and Action Plan, which will provide courses in Maltese, English and cultural orientation, starting the way forward in 2019.

Presentation of Employment Initiative and Findings

Ms. Sarah Farrugia, Durable Solutions Associate, UNHCR Malta

UNHCR's Ms. Farrugia gave an overview of the methodology adopted throughout the initiative. The challenges and the good practices identified by employers, employees and other stakeholders were discussed, setting the context for the audience.

Jobsplus Procedures and Services to Train and Employ Migrants

Ms. Ylenia Vella, Unit Manager of the Jobseekers' Advisory Services

Ms. Vella started off by introducing the different services Jobsplus offers, including active labour market programmes assisting both employees and employers. Ms. Vella proceeded to explain the Employment Licences Guidelines, linking the work permit to the different types of protection status. She concluded by presenting upcoming services from Jobsplus emphasising the importance of regular working groups and collaborations between entities.

Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees: A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society

Ms. Ellen Lee, Associate Livelihoods Officer, UNHCR HQ Geneva

Ms. Lee gave a presentation outlining an action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society, with international examples of good practices in refugee employment.

Panel Discussion: Facilitating communication and understanding between employers and employees

Moderator: Ms. Mireille Sant, Durable Solutions Officer, UNHCR Malta

In attendance:

Mr. Joseph Farrugia, Director General at Malta Employers' Association
Mr. Denis Gatt, Operations Manager of BD International Group
Ms. Rabia Haddud, Member of Libico
Ms. Ellen Lee, Associate Livelihoods Officer, UNHCR HQ Geneva
Mr. Abdishakur Mohamed, Refugee Focal Point in Gozo
Ms. Ylenia Vella, Unit Manager of the Jobseekers' Advisory Services

The scope of the panel was to facilitate a constructive discussion on the employment of refugees taken from different perspectives. Employers, employees and government employment agencies were asked to discuss the challenges they encounter and what they believe is needed to improve the situation.

Moderated by UNHCR, the panel touched on a number of topics from the employer and employee perspectives. Both employees present for the panel discussion agreed that refugees in Malta have a strong desire to work. However, certain difficulties, including language barriers or limited financial support for those who want to pursue training or education, present obstacles and prevent refugees from gaining or maintaining stable employment. Employers strongly suggested providing refugees and migrants with more orientation courses in order to become familiar with local work culture and pre-empt certain issues at the workplace.

The Director of the Malta Employers' Association stressed that refugees should always be considered job candidates and that, due to the current economic boom, employment should not solely be perceived as an opportunity for the Maltese labour market. From an employer's perspective, the system should provide more incentives and facilitate the process of employing refugees to make recruitment easier.

- **Breakout Workshop Sessions: Finding solutions to the challenges identified in the employment market**

The workshop involved a presentation of the findings on the opportunities and challenges identified during the focus groups. Each working group consisted of seven to nine persons representing refugee communities, employees, employers, unions, educational institutions, NGOs and other relevant government and ministry departments. Each group was asked to discuss the challenges identified and come up with tangible solutions from the members' perspective. The workshops served as a very useful tool for a number of stakeholders to discuss and share ideas.

“Employment is in fact one of the most important factors of integration. Having a gainful job, with all the rights and entitlements associated with it, is an important marker for self-sufficiency, harnessing the economic potential of refugees and creating a win-win situation.”

In attendance:

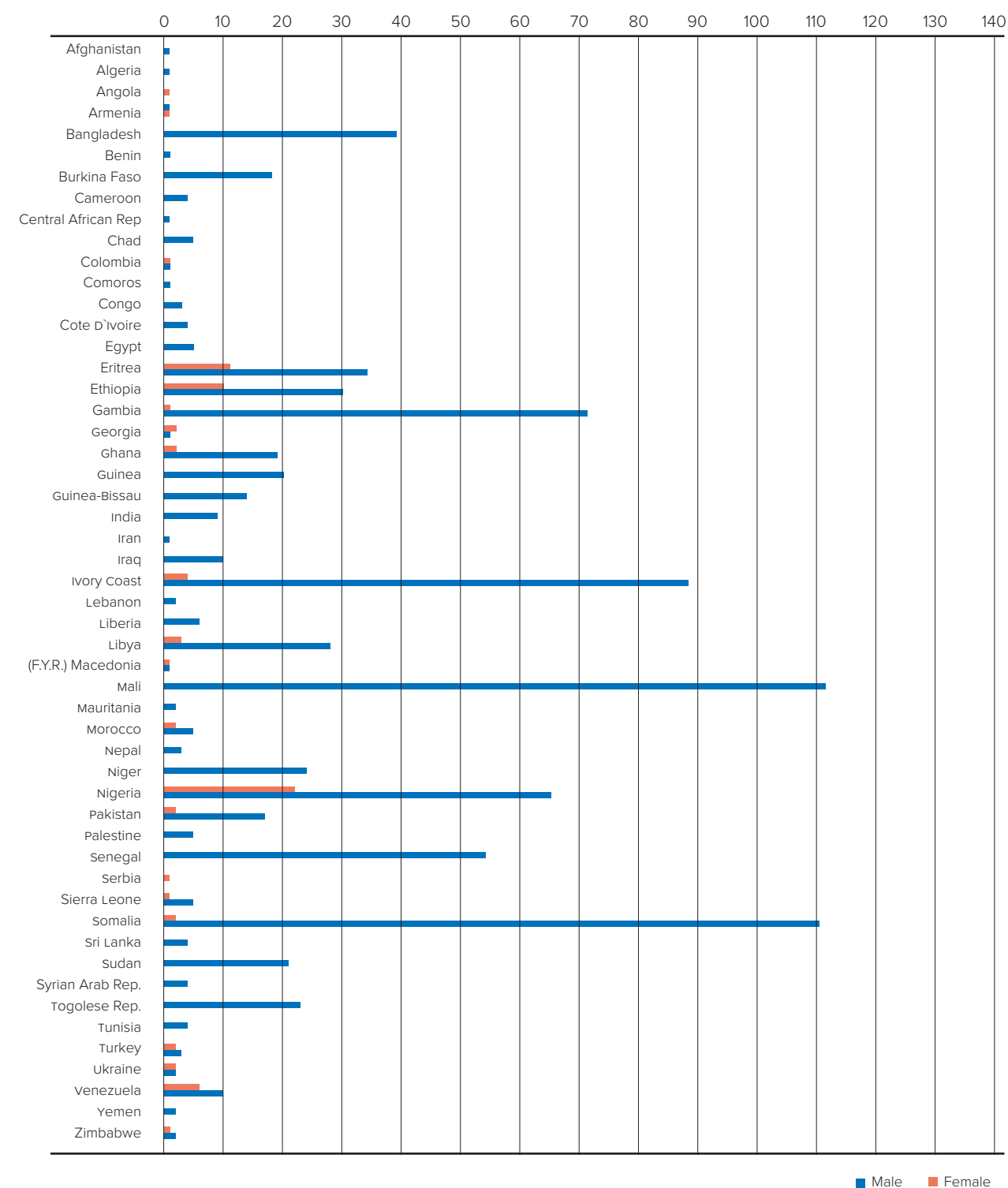
Aditus Foundation
African Media Association Malta
Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers
Binda Consulting International
CARITAS
CCA Interserv Ltd
Department of Industrial and Employment Relations
Eritrean community
Ethiopian community
Foundation for the Promotion of Social Inclusion Malta
Gozo Refugee Focal Point
GRTU - Malta Chamber of SMEs
Human Rights and Integration Directorate
Hudson Group
International Organization for Migration
Jobsplus
Jesuit Refugee Services
LEAP North Region
LEAP Northern Harbour Region
LEAP South-East Region
LEAP West region
LIBICO
Malta Employers' Association
Malta Microfinance
MAPFRE Middlesea plc
MCAST
The Ministry for Education and Employment
Migrant Women Association Malta
The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality
Paragon Europe
People for Change Foundation
Department of Social Security
Somali Community
SOS Malta
Spark 15
Sudanese community
Syrian community
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
University of Malta



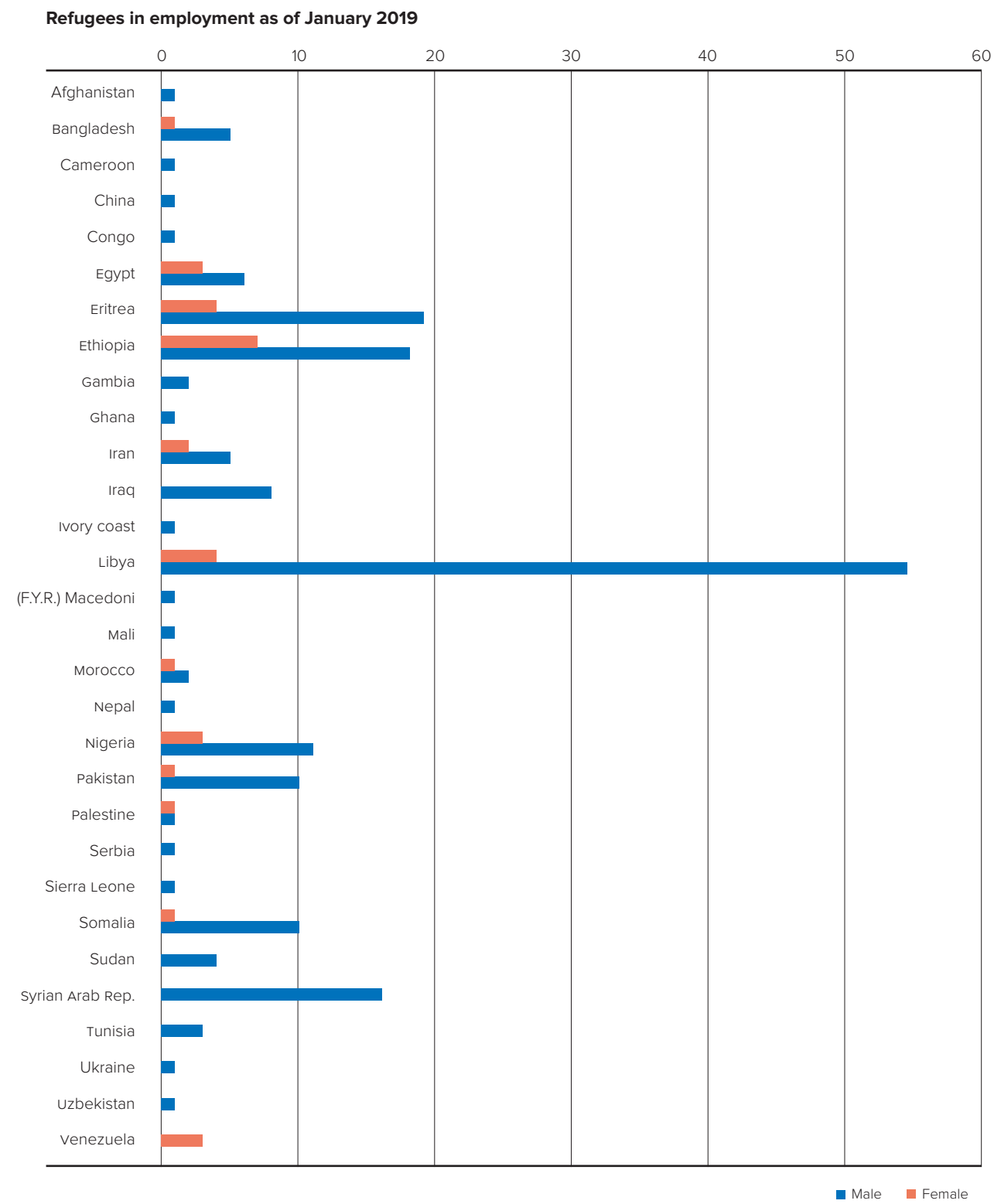
A Refugee Consultation Group was carried out at the Hilton Hotel which included an information session on the HR management of the hotel. Credit: UNHCR

APPENDIX 2

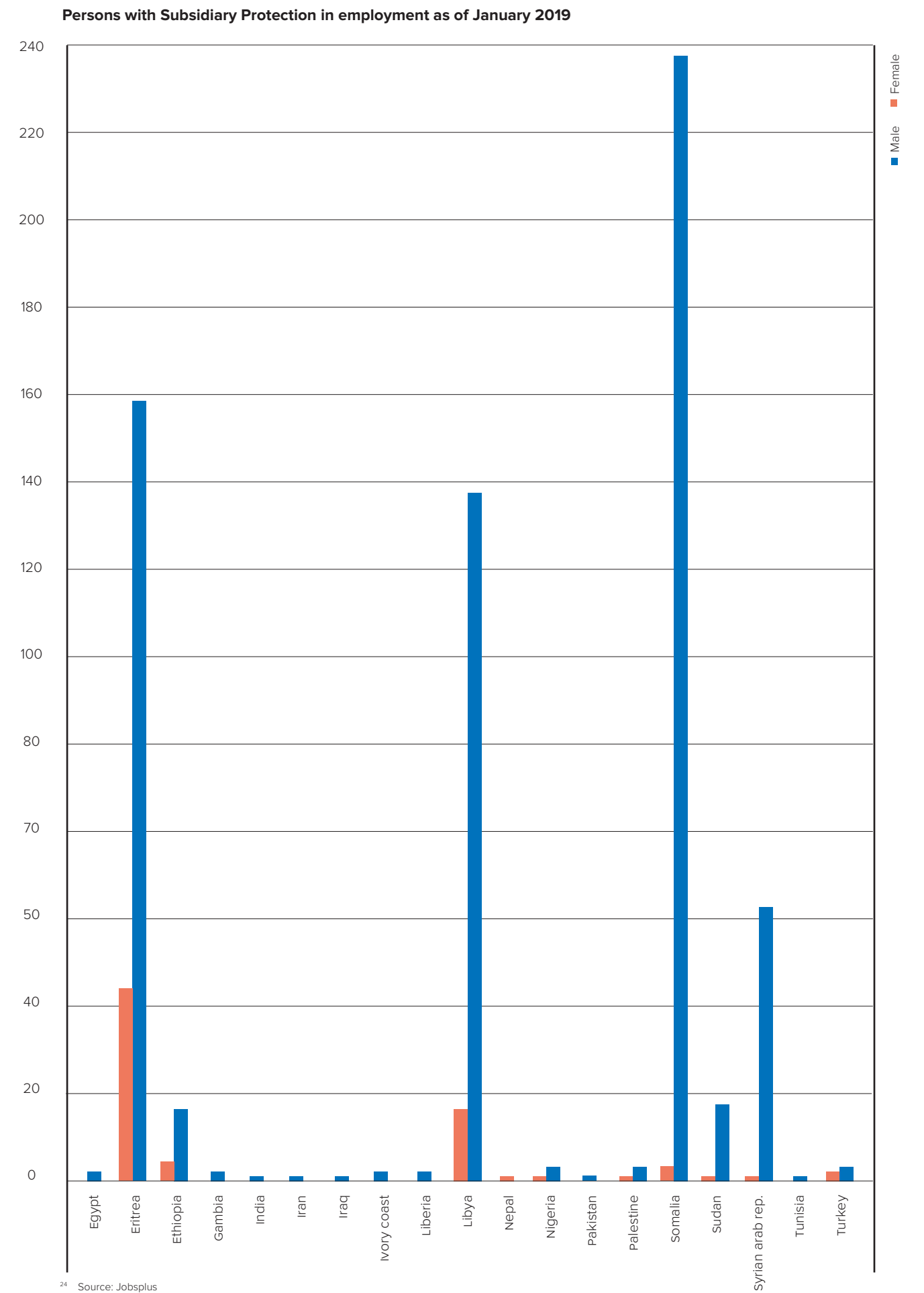
Asylum-seekers in employment as of January 2019, by country of origin



²² Source: Jobsplus

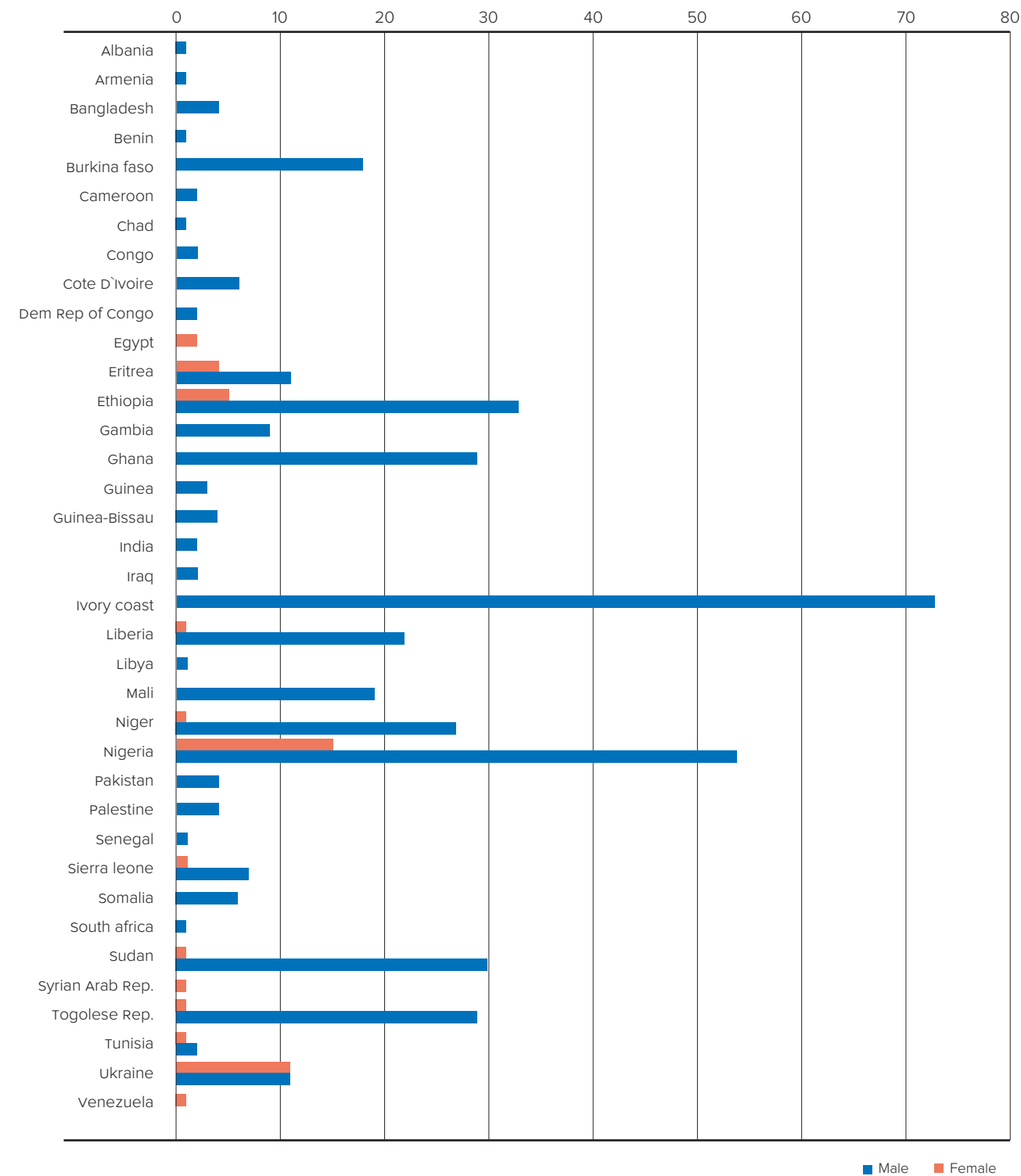


²³ Source: Jobsplus



²⁴ Source: Jobsplus

Persons with THP in employment as of January 2019, by country of origin



25 Source: Jobsplus

SERVICES ASSISTING MIGRANTS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Jobsplus

Employment Advisory Services

Jobsplus strives to assist clients in finding the right job and providing tailor-made guidance services according to individual needs. Upon communication with Jobsplus for initial guidance, a client is allocated an employment advisor, who becomes the primary contact with Jobsplus.

A meeting between the individual and the employment advisor is set within two weeks to discuss the applicant's current employment situation, the options available and to develop a personal action plan (PAP). The initial PAP session also includes the provision of information on where to search for jobs, local training opportunities and relevant Jobsplus services such as short courses, work exposure schemes, traineeships and any other Jobsplus initiatives.

Courses at Jobsplus

Jobsplus aims to assist individuals who want to acquire or upgrade skills and enhance their employability or change their career prospects, and assists employers looking for ways to improve upon an employee's skill base. This is achieved through a series of courses aimed at helping individuals acquire transversal or specific skills which are labour market related. Different types of courses are available, varying from short courses to vocational courses pegged to the Maltese and European Qualification Frameworks.

To apply for a course with Jobsplus, refugees and persons granted Subsidiary Protection or Temporary Humanitarian Protection must submit a copy of the certificate issued by the Refugee Commissioner, while asylum-seekers and failed asylum-seekers must submit a copy of their police card.

The Work Exposure Scheme

The Work Exposure Scheme is available for registered unemployed persons, inactive jobseekers and employers both in public and private entities. It intends to facilitate the transition into employment by providing jobseekers with initial hands-on training that will help them obtain the knowledge, skills and competencies required to find and retain employment. This scheme is designed to mirror contemporary labour market demand, such that the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with employer requests. The duration of the work exposure is 12 weeks, and a participant is to report to the place of work for an average of 20 hours each week. Participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage.

Traineeship Scheme

The Traineeship Scheme intends to provide jobseekers with initial vocational training that will help them obtain the knowledge, skills and competencies required to find and retain employment. Traineeships are based on the dual system of vocational training, providing a combination of on-the-job and off-the-job training. The programmes offered are labour market driven, such that the job preferences of the jobseekers are matched with the requests made by employers participating in the scheme. The duration of a traineeship varies between 14 to 16 weeks and an average of 40 hours each week. Programmes are recognised by the NCFHE and pegged at respective levels with the Malta Qualifications Framework (MQF). Participants are paid a training allowance, payable by Jobsplus for every hour attended, which is calculated on the national minimum wage.

Job Brokerage Office

The Job Brokerage Office was set up in order to tackle the problem of irregular work and the exploitation of workers. Irregular forms of work result in precarious conditions for refugees, beneficiaries of international protection and failed asylum-seekers. The office was therefore introduced for service-users who require occasional labour market services for a period ranging from a few hours to a maximum of 600 hours annually. Through the introduction of this office, the government aims to forever spare migrants the indignity of waiting for roadside offers of precarious work. Jobsplus also organises other activities such as ad hoc information sessions and developmental workshops.

The Human Rights and Integration Directorate, Ministry for European Affairs and Equality

‘I Belong’

With integration and obtaining long-term residency in Malta as its scope, the ‘I Belong’ programme is designed for EU nationals, third-country nationals, refugees, asylum-seekers, beneficiaries of international humanitarian protection and others with similar statuses. Though not strictly oriented towards employment, the programme focuses on the cultural knowledge and speaking skills of the clients involved. The programme is composed of two parts:

Stage 1: Pre-integration certificate

- Maltese language at MQF Level 1
- English language at MQF Level 1
- Basic cultural and societal orientation at MQF Level 1

Stage 2: Integration certificate

- Cultural orientation: The social, economic, cultural and democratic history and environment of Malta, with a specific focus on the Constitution, law, democratic values and practical sessions
- Maltese language for integration at MQF Level 2

OTHER PROJECTS FACILITATING THE EMPLOYMENT OF REFUGEES:

JRS

Employment programme: JRS offers an employment programme of cultural orientation through dialogue and mutual understanding wherein they provide participants with information on employment, preparing them for job interviews through training courses and role-playing.

African Media Association Malta

Migrant Skills Register: The aim of the Migrant Skills Register is to interview and identify migrants, recording their skills with the intention of creating a useful resource for potential employers needing those skills and to give migrants an opportunity to work. African Media Association Malta also provides workshops focusing on personal development training for migrants to nurture their skills.

Other Reading Material

Assessing the Economic Impact of Foreign Workers in Malta, Central Bank of Malta, article published in the Quarterly Review 2016:1, pp. 39-44
<https://www.centralbankmalta.org/file.aspx?f=31399>

Challenges in the Labour Market Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees, European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO), May 2016
<https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15894&langId=en>

Engaging with Employers in the Hiring of Refugees. A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employers, refugees, governments and civil society. OECD/UNHCR 2018
<https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/UNHCR-OECD-Engaging-with-employers-in-the-hiring-of-refugees.pdf>

Job Brokerage Office Consultation Document 04/2016
<https://jobsplus.gov.mt/resources/publication-statistics-mt-mt-en-gb/fileprovider.aspx?fileId=1729>

Malta's Demographic Challenges, A Position Paper by the Malta Employers' Association, November 2017
<http://www.maltaemployers.com/en/news/1/2035/position-paper-facing-maltas-demographic-chal>

