

Introduction

Access to Education, Vocational Training and Labour Market for Asylum Seekers

Education¹ is a value by itself. It is a lifelong learning experience that pursues the objectives of personal fulfilment, social inclusion and active citizenship. Education does not only enable young people to build up their personal skills and competences, but also to learn about being part of society. The European Youth Forum affirms that education² is a human right and that all young people are entitled to a quality education.

Quality education concerns everyone in society and investing in quality education is a long-term return on investment for society at large, in cultural, economic and social terms. Furthermore it makes a contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of an individual and the development of society as a whole. Governments need to take on the responsibility in guaranteeing the right to quality education. Given the interdependent and interrelated nature of all human rights, fulfilling this right means contributing to the right to life with dignity and to the development of young people as autonomous, supportive, responsible and committed citizens.

The European Youth Forum calls for free and equal access to education, as part of a commitment to quality education for all. We consider access and quality as indivisible elements for the exercise of the right to education. As recognised duty-bearers of all human rights, states are responsible for the fulfilment of the right to education and should be made accountable for the education that young people have access to. Governments should take the necessary steps and measures to invest in educational opportunities for young people, life-long and life-wide. The European Youth Forum believes that education facilitates the participation of young refugees in the cultural, economic and social life in society. Especially for children and youth it gives them the chance to have a sense of normality and brings some routine into their lives.

A quality job is seen as a key factor for successful inclusion into society. It is therefore necessary to provide young refugees quickly as possible access to the labour market. This will contribute to enable the financial independence of young refugees and will self-determined lives after traumatic experiences while minimizing the expenditure on social benefits. Refugees could thus make their own contribution to the social system.

An overlooked criteria of a quality job³ is becoming employed in a position that enables the young refugee to use the skills they have acquired throughout their formal and non-formal education. Matching the skillset of a young person with their employment is crucial as it proved job satisfaction and increases productivity, whilst also contributing to the development of these skills and to the young person's overall personal and professional development. Not being able to use one's skills in a job has consequences for both the young person in question and society as a whole.

Therefore, the European Youth Forum calls for access to education, vocational training and labour market for asylum seekers as soon as possible, within six months at the latest.

¹ LoveYouthFuture: A new European Deal for and with Youth
http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2013/10/0570-12_LYF_FINAL1.pdf

² Policy Paper on Quality Education http://www.youthforum.org/assets/2014/03/0317-13_POLICY_PAPER_QUALITY_EDUCATION_FINAL_withExSum11.pdf

³ Quality Jobs for Young People https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/yfj_qualityjobs_en_issuu_

Furthermore, the validation of previously acquired qualifications abroad has to be facilitated, keeping in mind that, as refugees may come from countries with a completely different educational system, both formal and non-formal prior learning experiences need to be recognised with a fair and transparent assessment.

What needs to be done?

The European Youth Forum believes that the sharing of best practices has led to genuine learning about each other's capabilities. Therefore, we collected a set of good practices existing in different European countries. Best practice shall provide stakeholders, such as the European institutions and governments, with ideas and incentives to implement measures to grant young refugees the access to education, vocational training and labour market as soon as possible, within six months at the latest. Furthermore, this has to be facilitated with the validation of previously acquired qualifications abroad.

a. Provision of teaching resources for educators

Educators play an instrumental role in the provision of quality education and they are affected by the demands placed on them, and the resources available to them. The British Red Cross published the Positive Images⁴ toolkit as an educational resource for teachers, youth workers and other educators to teach young people about migration and development. The toolkit consists of an introduction guide for educators, four different themes which are (a) why do people migrate? (b) who are migrants? (c) migration patterns and journey (d) positive images and furthermore an action planning worksheet.

b. Access to language courses

Adequate language skills are among the most important factors for a successful inclusion. In order to promote integration, tandem language courses could be encouraged both at institutional and non-institutional level, bringing a mutual enrichment.

Several Member Organisations of Don Bosco-Youth-Net in Germany, Italy, Spain and Austria offer free language courses to young refugees as a first step to the integration in the local community (f.ex. Don Bosco für Flüchtlinge⁵ in Vienna, Austria). The language courses are offered by volunteers from the hosting community and are complimented by leisure activities and exchange between young refugees and the volunteers from the hosting communities.

c. Skills matching

Only if the qualifications of young refugees are collected comprehensively and as early as possible, appropriate measures can be taken to prepare them for the labour market.

- According to the competence check⁶ conducted by the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) states that 67% of the competence check-participants from Syria, 90% of participants from Iran and 73% of participants from Iraq are qualified beyond compulsory education, meaning they have either studied, finished their A-levels or vocational training. In 2016 the competence check will be extended and 12.000 refugees residing in

⁴ <http://www.redcross.org.uk/What-we-do/Teaching-resources>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/donbosco.fuerfluechtlinge>

⁶ http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160112_OTSO118/kompetenzcheck-ergebnisse-personen-aus-syrien-dem-iran-und-irak-sind-am-besten-qualifiziert

Vienna will have the possibility to participate in the competence check. Furthermore a counselling facility will be established to support refugees after their competence check.

- The Swedish Public Employment Service started the so called “fast track”⁷ to identify forms and measures for making the best use of valuable skills possessed by newly arrived immigrants with education or experience in shortage occupations so that they can be matched more quickly with the needs of industries and enterprises. The purpose of the fast track is to shorten the time from the newcomers' arrival to work. Newcomers will therefore as soon as possible get out in a workplace that is relevant to the individual's education, experience and interest. Sectors where there are labour shortages will support with talent management. Sweden has, together with the social partners, the Employment Service and other relevant authorities held talks on measures within the framework of the establishment of the mission to create so-called fast track into employment for newcomers who have training or experience required in Sweden.

Fast track constituents:

- Swedish Education will begin already at the asylum accommodation
- Early assessment of newcomers' experience, skills and motivation
- Validation and assessment of training and professional skills for sectoral demands
- Occupational and educational guidance
- Suitable individuals are offered fast track in the appropriate fields of industry
- Support for employers to find suitable participants
- Swedish Education relevant to the professional field
- Additional training as required
- Training in language / complementary courses combined with internship or work
- Language support, tutors and mentors in the workplace

d. Recognition of prior learning

National authorities and higher education institutions should ensure flexible conditions, procedures and processes for the recognition of degrees and diplomas, periods of study and prior learning of refugees, in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The assessment process should be transparent, equal and completely free of charge. It should also take into account non formal education learning paths.

- The Establishment course at the Swedish Folk high school is one of the best practices regarding this issue. The training is for 6 months and is conducted on the basis of popular education approaches and methods and includes study of the Swedish language. The training also includes preparatory work and guidance efforts. The studies shall be appropriate to the individual circumstances and needs. Internships may be part of the course as a complement but may not be the main employment of the participant. Language skills in Swedish will not be an obstacle for a person to be able to participate. The folk high schools chart the participants' language level and then adjust the arrangement. To increase participants work opportunities it starts from participants' experiences and to identify their target. The participants continues to work to improve their' self-confidence, validate their knowledge and experiences, motivate, reality anchor, broaden perspectives and guidance. Concrete examples of guidance efforts are working

⁷ <http://www.government.se/government-of-sweden/ministry-of-employment/>

with human rights and democratic values, equality, about how society is organized, the culture of Sweden and everyday practices. Establishment Course on folk high school is a labour preparatory action. However, it should be noted that the intervention's primary target group are less educated and often have the need for validation and ability to study further. One option might be to study at the General course at Folk high schools. This increases the possibility to establish themselves in the labour market and the risk of unemployment later in life decreases.

e. Young refugees as potential for the labour market

- The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) together with the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) and in cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy (BWF) and the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAK) started a pilot project⁸ for a national apprenticeship placement. The aim is to offer career prospects for young refugees in occupations and regions with an apprentice shortage. In the first phase 100 young refugees residing in Vienna will get a vocational training.

f. Vocational training for young migrants and refugees

- Pre-VET Training Courses offer a first chance of increasing employability of young migrants and refugees, regardless of their previous formation in their home countries. Don Bosco organizations have included the start of training courses in their T-VET centres with a special mentoring coming from the social workers in the shelters where they are hosted. This enables them to continue improving the language, initiate interpersonal relationships and obtain a first recognised certification.
- The cooperation between the formal education sector and youth workers has shown its effectiveness, in Don Bosco projects in Germany (Deutsche Provinz der Salesianer Don Bosco⁹), Spain (Plataformas Sociales Salesianas¹⁰) and Italy (Federazione SCS¹¹). This process concludes with an internship/apprenticeship¹² in companies and a further training in regular VET system. These projects are usually supported by regional, national and/or European public funds.

g. Support in the transition to the education system

- The project Youth College¹³ of the City of Vienna includes basic training courses for young refugees aged 15 to 21 years. The aim of the Youth College is to support young people into the regular education system successfully and to accompany them even to the level of education. This will be guaranteed through the integration of career orientation training, EDP, work job search or further school career placement in language classes.

h. The recognition of youth organisations' role in the reception of refugees

- The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations will work as a coordinator for youth organisations in the reception of refugees. This work is financed by state aid

⁸ http://medienservicestelle.at/migration_bewegt/2015/07/23/wifo-studie-asylwerberinnen-am-arbeitsmarkt/

⁹ <http://www.bbw-wuerzburg.de/berufsbildungswerk/index.php/jugendhilfe/angebote-jugendhilfe/unbegleitete-minderjaehrige-fluechtlinge>

¹⁰ <http://www.psocialsalesianas.org/>

¹¹ <http://www.salesianiperilsociale.it/portale/>

¹² <http://pinardi.com/primeraperienciaprofesional/>

¹³ <http://www.interface-wien.at/5-sprache-und-arbeit/70-jugend-college>

because it is one of Sweden's political priorities. LSU is right now in the planning phase and will in the future be able to provide more information on best practices for coordination.

- The Swedish Red Cross Youth is a member of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and exists to prevent and alleviate human suffering. They work with children and young people and have friend groups for young people who have just arrived in Sweden and through breakfast clubs make sure that school children get a good start to the day. In relation to unaccompanied children they work in order to make sure these children and young people are part of a friend group, which usually makes waiting for the asylum decision a little easier, especially since they are alone in an especially vulnerable situation.
- Tamam is an NGO that works with children and young people with diversity, anti-racism and young people's social commitment to create new venues, organizing meaningful leisure activities, provide equal opportunities in schools and encourage young people's social commitment. They are working to create new social meeting places on diversity, homework assistance (especially for asylum seeking young people) and recreational activities for children and young people, to be a platform for young people's social involvement and encourage and support initiatives, as well as with international collaborations and exchanges.
- Kontrapunkt is both a cultural and a social centre. They function as a platform that promotes the free and un-established cultural life, with particular emphasis on being an underground scene with global and local roots. This autumn Kontrapunkt have actively worked to support and improve the situation of homeless Roma people in Malmö, as well as meeting with refugees as they arrive in Malmö.
- Ensamkommandes förbund is an independent organisation made up of and run by self-organized unaccompanied young people from different countries. One of the organisation's main purposes is to make the voice of unaccompanied children and young people heard, and to actively work to make sure they are met with a dignified treatment in the asylum process and enjoy their human rights in society as a whole. The organisation aims to function as a social network where unaccompanied children and young people can support and empower each other. The social work includes a great variety of activities: anything from sports-, music- and theatre projects to the organisation of camps, cultural festivals, workshops and lectures.
- Vård På Centralen is an activity where hundreds of healthcare professionals with the aid of medical and nursing students have gathered daily at Stockholm the past months to provide basic medical care and information about the local healthcare system to refugees coming to Sweden. Medical care at the Central Station - staff with medical competence assist refugees with over-the-counter medication and simple forms of examination. If needed we can determine whether or not they need to seek further medical assistance, inform them of their rights as well as providing them with guidance to the right medical institution.

i. Youth organisations non-formal educational work with young refugees and migrants

The German National committee for international youth work (DNK) represents all German youth organisations. The DNK is a joint working group of the German Federal Youth Council (DBJR), the Council of Political Youth organisations (RPJ) and the German Sports Youth (DSJ) with over 13 million young members. We promote diversity in order to speak with a strong voice in the interest of all youth. Almost all of the member organisation of DNK have projects with young refugees and migrants. The prime goals are giving them a warm welcome in German society, bringing them in contact with local youngsters and fostering their language, cultural and social skills.

The following examples are taken from the youth of the German Alpine Club (JDAV) - a large nation-wide youth organization with nearly 300,000 members. Youth work in the JDAV takes place mainly in local groups with children and youth, volunteered by about 3100 youth leaders inside the organisation. The emphasis is on joint activities in the field of mountain sports and environmental education.

The work of JDAV based on the following educational goals:

- promoting the personal development of young people;
- education for environmentally conscious thinking and acting;
- the impartation of social behaviour and encouragement to become involved in civil society;
- training to responsible exercise of mountaineering;
- promoting equal opportunities for all young people and advocating for gender equality.

Participation is a fundamental principle within the work of JDAV. In sectional, state and federal level, the association is directed by volunteer young people. Especially the self-organized activities of young people in youth associations are an ideal place for integration into society. The common experience and the experience in educational activities interconnects and creates trust. Young people organize their activities in the JDAV not only themselves, they must also each take care of themselves and others. Whether in the climbing gym or on the mountain: one must always be able to rely on each other. This applies regardless of skincolor, origin or other characteristics. Therefore one encounters in the JDAV from the start on an equal footing.

- End of 2014, in the county of Munich JDAV organized by cooperation talks with the Heimaten-Jugend on a hike in the Bavarian Alps with participants from both organizations. The trail offered the ideal environment for a relaxed exchange and establishing contacts on migration. A joint hike connects and can prejudice not arise. The cultural exchange was also not too short, and at the top of the mountain there was Bavarian, Syrian, Afghan and Iraqi picnic.
- With the project "Berlin Moabit neighbourhood climbing" the JDAV Berlin cooperates with the DAV Climbing Center Berlin, two youth clubs and two refugee camps in the neighbourhood. For children from the Moabit Kinderhof, the Zille-club and the house Leo the Berlin City Mission, a weekly appointment climbing course is offered. The youth leaders inside emphasize that secure the participants mutually and also girls and boys climb together. The common climbing strengthens the self-confidence of the young people and creates space for personal development and success.