



UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

**United Kingdom National Conference
University of Glasgow, Scotland**

HIDDEN TREASURE

**The development of European concepts for the use of qualifications and
competences of women immigrants for their vocational training**

21st March 2001, 1000 to 1630

University of East London (UEL), Docklands Campus

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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Note from the Chair, Dr Pamela Clayton, United Kingdom Project Partner

First I would like to thank the Bridge Project, particularly Val Nobbs, for organising this conference; the University of East London for providing the facilities at cost price and to Professor Miller for kindly agreeing, at very short notice, to speak at the conference; and the Leonardo Programme of the European Union for funding the conference and supporting the project on which it is based.

I would also like to thank Maren Gag and Gisela Euscher of GATE, Hamburg, Germany, who devised and co-ordinate the project; Dr Heinrich Epskamp of the Hamburg University of Economics and Politics, for his contribution to the theory and methodology; Franz Lorenz, Hamburg Ministry of Education, for his support; and the other partners, Vagn Saerkjaer, Poul Jeppersen and Irinia Ovtchinnikova, AMU East Jutland, Aarhus, Denmark, and Katarina Navratilova, DHV CR, Prague.

The speakers from the British Refugee Council and the World University Service freely gave their time to the conference and I am very grateful to them and to their organisations for their kind and valuable contribution. I thank the University of Glasgow for allowing me to run this conference in London rather than in Glasgow.

Thirty women contributed to the University of Glasgow research, of whom six were based in Glasgow, two in the North of England and the remainder in East London and Essex. Their help, and the help of the organisations who allowed me to use their premises for the interviews, was essential to the success of the research and I am extremely grateful to them.

Finally, let me express my gratitude to those who were able to attend and who contributed not only their interest but their ideas, experience and in some cases skills at workgroup facilitation; and also those who wished to attend but were unable to and who expressed their interest in the topic, their good wishes for the conference and their desire to receive more information about our project.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Welcome and opening: Mr Rashid Teladia, Chief Executive of the Bridge Project, and Professor Nod Miller, Assistant Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Innovation Studies, University of East London

Keynote address by the Conference Chair, Dr Pamela Clayton, Research Fellow, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Glasgow

Presentations by:

Beliyou Fekede and Rosemary Dowden, British Refugee Council, London

Sanja Potnar, RETAS, World University Service, London

Gisela Euscher, GATE project, Hamburg, Germany

Vagn Saerkjaer, AMU East Jutland, Aarhus, Denmark

Katarina Navratilova, DHV CR, Prague

Working groups

WELCOME AND OPENING

The conference was formally opened by Mr Rashid Teladia, Chief Executive of the Bridge Project, Whitechapel, London, which delivers education and training and guidance to immigrants and refugees in East London. He read out a message of support from the Honourable Member of Parliament, Oona King, who would have attended the conference but for a prior parliamentary commitment.

Professor Nod Miller, Assistant Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Innovation Studies, University of East London, then welcomed delegates to the University of East London, which was a particularly suitable venue as the University actively and successfully recruits students from non-traditional backgrounds, including ethnic minority and immigrant women. Among other initiatives, it has a key

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worker for Asian women, uses APEL and runs a master's course in refugee studies.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr Pamela Clayton, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Glasgow

The main issues for the vocational training of immigrant and refugee women

Introduction

In 1999 a vocational training institute in Hamburg, Germany, with a strong interest in the needs of immigrants and refugees, devised a project which was intended to explore these needs in greater depth, discover if the problems that they found among immigrant women in Germany were the same in other European countries, and work with European partners to develop strategies for helping to solve these problems. The other partners are AMU, a vocational training institute in Denmark, DHV, a Human Resource Development unit in the Czech Republic, and the University of Glasgow for the United Kingdom.

There are two main aspects to this European project:

- vocational training, by which we mean any kind of education or training that may qualify people to find employment or increase their skills;
- the situation of immigrant women who wish to access vocational training.

These two aspects are informed by an ethos of equality:

- equality between immigrants and existing residents;
- equality between women and men.

Hence the project is intended to be a contribution to two aspects of European policy:

- immigration policy;
- vocational training policy;

Our primary focus, however, is on vocational training policy.

I should say before going further that the term 'immigrant women' simply means women who were not born in the country in which they now live. We could have chosen the term 'expatriate women' and perhaps this would have been more suitable; all I can say is that there is nothing pejorative about the term - it simply describes a particular situation.

The rationale for the project

Too often, immigrant women find that the only jobs that are available to them are unskilled, menial jobs. This is the experience even of many women who have obtained high qualifications and skills in their countries of origin or who have had valuable work experience.

Vocational training can, potentially, assist women:

- to convert their qualifications into ones which are recognised in their new country;
- to obtain new qualifications;
- to update their skills;
- to assess and perhaps accredit their prior experience and knowledge [APEL];
- to equalise their chances of employment in competition with men;
- and to integrate more easily into the new society.

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Pilot projects in Germany and elsewhere have demonstrated that women can succeed in the labour market after following vocational training which is focused on their specific needs and abilities. Too often, however, immigrant women are treated as if they were blank pages, with no prior qualifications or competences. Hence they have to begin all over again. We believe, on the contrary, that immigrant women constitute hidden treasure - that they bring a wealth of experience, skills and abilities which could be useful both to them as individuals and to their new countries - hence the title of this conference.

In addition, immigrant women have another potential advantage: their experience of immigration and the knowledge and experience that can be transferred from their country of origin and their journey to the new country.

The challenges

Women immigrants in Europe are a very diverse group, if we can call them a group. They arrive with:

- different experiences of learning,
- different levels of training and education,
- different levels of knowledge of the language of their new country
- and different kinds of work experience.

They also come to Europe for different reasons:

- as refugees,
- as economic migrants
- or to join or accompany members of their family.

When they arrive, they face different conditions concerning residence and employment law. Most of you here will be familiar with the situation in the United Kingdom, and you will hear later from our European colleagues what the situation is in their countries.

Several European aspects are very relevant to the situation of immigrant women, even though they are not focused specifically on this group.

- First, there is already a European debate concerning two kinds of learning: that which has taken place previously, and that which was non-formal. Non-formal learning includes learning that has not taken place in formal institutions, and this includes experiential learning. The debate is about how to identify such learning, how to recognise it and how to validate it.
- Second, there are different systems of vocational training in European countries. What are the possibilities for transfer between these different systems? How can we make the systems transparent? How can all of these systems be made more accessible to immigrant women?
- Third, we need to consider the role of the different national labour markets. How does each labour market, and different sectors within each labour market, view the relevance of qualifications and competences?

All of these are of relevance and importance to immigrant women who wish to enter the labour market with equal chances of success with others who have the same qualifications and competences.

The aims and objectives of the project

The intended direct beneficiaries are teachers and planners in institutions which are responsible for planning schemes for immigrant women. The ultimate beneficiaries are to be immigrant women themselves.

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We believe that immigrant women should be inserted into vocational training programmes at a level which is suitable to their prior qualifications and experiences, so that they can build on their skills rather than needlessly repeating processes. To do this it is necessary to assess these prior qualifications and experiences as accurately as possible.

We therefore had several aims:

- first, to develop a survey instrument to find out what skills and qualifications immigrant women have, including those skills that were obtained before, through and after the process of migration. Such a survey has two aims:
 - ⇒ to promote the recognition and accreditation of their competences and qualifications;
 - ⇒ and to demonstrate the knowledge they have gained from their experiences;
- second, to outline criteria for the planning of vocational education and refresher schemes for immigrant women, which integrate their real qualifications, that is, both those that are officially recognised and those that are not;
- third, to disseminate practical recommendations and common European concepts;
- and fourth, to contribute to a specific European policy of immigration.

Our objectives were that educational systems would:

- initiate more flexibility and innovation into conventional systems of vocational training in favour of immigrant women;
- improve access to appropriate levels of further education for immigrant women;
- more effectively facilitate access to the labour market for immigrant women;
- and contribute to the practice of the recognition of qualifications.

The results of the project so far

The four European partners between them have interviewed over one hundred women immigrants. My own interviewees range in age from 24 to 55; some arrived in the United Kingdom as small children, others arrived last year. Most were refugees but some left their homes voluntarily in order to accompany their husbands or families.

This afternoon, our partners from Germany, Denmark and the Czech Republic will be presenting their findings, and the situation of immigrant women in their countries. I am not going to present the United Kingdom findings, because I suspect that you in this audience would find no surprises. Instead we are going to hear from three people working with refugee women in London, Sanja Potnar from the World University Service and Rosemary Dowden and Beliyu Fekede from the Refugee Council.

Finally ...

We know that in this audience we have a wealth of experience and expertise and we are very grateful to you for taking the time to come to this conference. We hope you will learn something about the situation in other European countries; and we hope and expect that we will learn a lot from you. This is why we have organised work groups in the afternoon, in which we would like you to discuss, not only the barriers for immigrant women but, more important, the solutions that you have found or are in the process of testing.

Concerning the United Kingdom findings, I will say that the thirty interviews I conducted in Glasgow, East London and Essex uncovered a wealth of hidden treasure - and a great deal of wasted talent and frustrated hopes. I hope that we can all work together to put things right.

PAPER 1: Beliyou Fekede and Rosemary Dowden

British Refugee Council

Some experiences of refugee women in the United Kingdom

The presentation was based on case studies of some experiences of women refugees during their struggles to find jobs in their professions and the barriers they encounter. For reasons of confidentiality the case studies are not presented here.

The main barriers of women finding jobs and/or further education in the UK were identified as being problems with:

- language
- childcare
- recognition of prior knowledge and experiential learning
- producing certificates to prove qualification
- producing portfolios of work
- very lengthy periods to re-qualify or gain recognition of prior learning
- UK work experience
- UK references
- providing payment for requalification exams
- cultural discrimination
- a lack of recognition of the particular problems women face in accessing jobs and training
- and sufficient provision of help, support and advice to overcome these problems

PAPER 2: Sanja Potnar

Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service, World University Service (United Kingdom)

Refugee women and access to education

The Refugee Education & Training Advisory Service (RETAS) is a division of the World University Service (UK), a charity supporting education for development, and was formed in 1985. It has 22 staff, the majority of whom are of refugee origin themselves. RETAS is a respected advice service for refugees and asylum seekers, is regarded as the UK centre of excellence on integration of professional refugees into the academic life and labour market and is a referral point for many organisations in London and outside London.

RETAS has three teams:

Advice Team

- advice and guidance on education and training opportunities in London and the regions
- provision of training to service providers and refugee community organisations in London and the regions
- policy and campaigning around education and training issues in the UK and Europe
- distribution of grants
- capacity building/ mentoring support to refugee community organisations in London and the regions

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Employment Team

- in-depth employment support
- delivery of prevocational and vocational training courses in London and the regions
- setting up mentoring schemes for refugees
- distribution of grants
- policy and campaigning around refugees' employability in the UK and Europe

European Team

- funding proposals
- monitoring and financial management
- dissemination and evaluation
- policy and campaigning on refugee issues at European level

RETAS statistics for 2000

In 2000 RETAS provided advice and guidance to 1200 refugees and asylum seekers, of whom:

- 900 were seen in the office and on outreach basis (328 female refugees, 36%)
- 300 were given advice and guidance through RETAS' telephone advice line (81 female refugees, 27%)

Of the refugee women who were provided face-to-face advice and guidance, 207 were asylum-seekers, 61 had Exceptional Leave to Remain and 60 had refugee status.

Concerning their family status, 51 were single parents, 130 were married and 147 were single.

The largest number, 238, were aged between 25 and 49. Of the others, 37 were 18 or under, 42 were aged between 19 and 24, and 11 were 50 or over.

Finally, 110 were of black African and other black origin, 80 were white, 8 were Asian and 130 came from other ethnic backgrounds.

They were in general well qualified. No fewer than 156 (47%) had overseas qualifications at first degree and postgraduate level, and a further 129 (39%) arrived with further education qualifications. Only 43 (13%) had only basic education or no formal education at all.

Common problems

Despite their diversity, the women faced common barriers to education, training and employment. The most common barriers were (and are):

- language problems
- a high level of anxiety regarding the outcomes of their asylum applications
- immigration status
- family responsibilities
- a lack of suitable and/or affordable childcare facilities
- lack of recognition for overseas qualifications

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- lack of suitable advice and guidance provision
- lack of information on education, training and employment opportunities
- lack of local courses suitable to their needs
- lack of money to meet educational expenses
- poverty (exacerbated by the voucher system)
- the policy of dispersal with the attendant discrimination, isolation and loss of community support
- the impact of negative reporting by the media

Some solutions

RETAS succeeded in overcoming some of these barriers for women who used its services and is working to overcome the barriers erected by policymakers through giving training sessions to service providers to increase the understanding of refugee women's issues, and holding and attending conferences and discussion forums at both United Kingdom and European levels.

Practical solutions, and the results in 2000, include the following:

1 Suitable provision

a combination of office, outreach (including home visits) and telephone advice reached 328 women

2 In-depth educational advice and guidance in order to increase motivation, facilitate informed choices in education and training, and recognise the value of prior experience, skills and competences

Advice was given to 73 women on basic education, 62 on further education and 193 on courses at higher education level. Additional support was given in the form of the reimbursement of travel expenses to advice sessions.

3 Grants for further education

Grants for courses, including computing/ESOL, hairdressing, administration, health care and higher education degrees were received by 55 women.

4 In-depth employment advice (including an audit of previous work experience and skills)

- the RETAS Jobsearch course was attended by 47 women
- the RETAS Self Employment course was followed by 18 women who also received business support
- work placements were found by 19 women
- job interviews were attended by 49 women
- jobs were found by 39 women
- NVQ course in Advice and Guidance was attended by 10 women

Additional support consisted of childcare and travel expenses for those on courses, and travel expenses paid for employment support.

5 Mentoring support by professionals from different fields, including finance, careers and medicine

One-to-one advice by mentors was received by 55 women.

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PAPER 3: Gisela Euscher
GATE Project, Hamburg, Germany
Results of the project in Hamburg
with regard to the situation of immigrants in Germany

A Immigration of foreigners to Germany

a) Immigration to a “non-immigration country”

Germany has a total population of about 82.000.000 with 7.34 million foreigners¹, i.e. people without a German passport. The **rate of foreigners** amounts to 9%. 25% of the immigrants come from the European Union. The largest group among immigrants to Germany are people from Turkey, by 28 %. Illegal immigration has increased but there are no reliable figures.

With regard to the **average age** the foreign population is much younger than the Germans. 22.5% of the foreigners are born in Germany, 52% have lived in Germany for more than 10 years. In spite of this **length of stay** the residence status of many migrants still leaves much to be desired.

Although immigration has existed for more than 40 years, Germany has not been declared an immigration country.

The term “migrant” stands for different groups of immigrants, apart from the inner-European migration there are the following :

1. During the 50s and 60s agreements were signed between Germany and several Mediterranean Countries to **recruit workers** for a limited period of time. After the recruitment stop came into force in 1973 only family members of labour migrants have been allowed to enter Germany.
2. About 16% the of immigrants are **refugees and asylum seekers** . Germany has acceded the Schengen Agreement and the Treaty of Amsterdam for a closer cooperation. There are different forms of asylum. Victims of political prosecution benefit from the right of asylum under the German constitution. Civil war refugees are tolerated in Germany, but according to the Aliens Act a long-term residence permit can be issued only under very limited conditions. The Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees decides about the asylum procedure. Nowadays only recognised refugees have the right to be joined by their families and have access to the labour market.
3. A third group of immigrants are so called **returning ethnic Germans** and their families, mainly from the former Soviet Union. They have come to Germany since the upheavals in Eastern Europe. Although their problems of integration are similar to those of the other immigrants they have a right to citizenship and they do not come under the Aliens Act: statistically they are not foreigners.

Everybody without a German passport needs a permit of residence. The kind of permit depends on the reason of immigration, on the country of origin, on the duration of stay and on the recognition as a refugee. There are different levels of permit of residence, which form a hierarchy among migrants:

- Residence title for **specific purposes** (e.g. students must leave Germany when the reason for the stay expires),
- **Limited** residence permit establishes the basis for permanent residence,

¹ Nearly all figures are for 1999.

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- **Unlimited** residence permit can be applied for after five years; it is the first step towards a secure status,
- **Right** of unlimited residence can be applied for after eight years; this is the most secure status under the Aliens Act,
- Residence title for **exceptional purposes** is usually granted on humanitarian grounds, in practice mostly to civil war refugees,
- Temporary **suspension of deportation** stands for a residence permit, and the state cannot deport the person concerned,
- **Permission to reside** is the status accorded to an asylum seeker whose application is being processed.

All foreigners coming from outside the EU-countries and without right of unlimited residence need **work permits**. According to the level of permit of residence, there are two different kinds of work permit: the **limited** and the **unlimited** permit which requires 5 years of employment covered by the social security system.

Since the work permit depends on the situation of local and regional labour markets (e.g. high rate of unemployment or lack of qualified workers), the employment offices have a great deal of latitude and can make use of it to varying degrees. There is a special kind of ranking for each job offer, e.g. first the vacancy should be filled by a German then by a foreigner with preferential status (EU-national, person with right to asylum). The “priority check” especially discriminates against immigrants from extra-European countries.

The rate of unemployment among migrants is more than twice as high (18.4%) as the general rate of unemployment (8.8%). The unemployment of people from Turkey amounts to 24%.

These figures only refer to West Germany and an additional hidden unemployment of women must be taken into account.

Nearly 78% of all unemployed foreigners have no vocational qualifications (compared with 37.6% of Germans), but with regard to the legal situation this is not the main reason for discrimination on the labour market.

During the last year (2000) criminal offences with xenophobic motivation rose by 40%. Racism exists partly without foreigners: $\frac{3}{4}$ of the foreign population lives in west German cities, and yet neo-fascism is a huge problem in east Germany, taking into account an unemployment rate there of about 20%, so all statistics apply to former West Germany. With regard to the debate about integration and segregation the latest research in Hamburg on xenophobia showed a rather low rate in quarters with high percentages of immigrant population.

b) New discussion under the Red-Green government

After 16 years of government of the conservatives the new “Red-Green” government in 1998 promised to develop a policy of immigration, this was also necessary before the background of the newest demographic statistics.

- In January 2000 a new law of **naturalization** was put into force. Now children who are born in Germany obtain German citizenship and dual nationalities are tolerated on a larger scale in some cases. However the first year shows a rather low acceptance. But most important was that the law was changed from *ius sanguinis* (corresponding to extraction, literally ‘blood’) to *ius solis* (corresponding to the place of birth, literally ‘soil’). In the long run this will have consequences on the foreigner statistics.

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- In the context of the EXPO 2000 our Chancellor discovered the “**green card** model” to solve the problem of shortage of highly qualified IT-specialists. This started a fundamental discussion on further education, lifelong learning, skill needs and immigration.
- The government has established a **commission for immigration** to work on fundamental questions of immigration, legislation and integration. The results are expected before the summer.
- Up to now participation in German language courses depends on the reason for immigration and there is no concerted policy of integration. The Commissioner for Foreigners’ Issues proposes that each immigrant should be entitled to claim **courses in integration**. The attendance should lead to privileges, there should not be any sanctions in case of non-appearance.

Meanwhile it should be indisputable that Germany is, in fact, an immigration country.

B Aspects of educational policy

As Germany is a Federal Republic the Federal States are responsible for educational policy.

Compulsory **school** starts at the age of six for all children and lasts 12 to 13 years, the last three years can be part-time within the bounds of the dual system. Secondary education is divided into different types of schools, corresponding different educational levels: general secondary school, intermediate secondary school and grammar school. All-day school tuition very rarely takes place. There is a demand for more all-day schools, to improve the situation of pupils without sufficient command of German (and to improve the situation of working women) among other things.

The integration of pupils speaking a foreign language is still a problem: 7.7% of the German pupils leave school without a certificate compared to 19.4% of so-called foreigners.

The dual system of **vocational education** and training combines part-time education in a vocational school with on-the-job training. There are about 380 recognized skilled occupations, training for which is standardized and follows a combined work and training system. Lack of training places is one problem, the participation rate of young people of foreign origin is declining. 8% of the Germans are without vocational education compared to 33% of foreigners and even 40% of young people of Turkish origin.

Further education can be one way to reduce the number of unemployed and long-term unemployed people, especially for those without any certificate or lateral entrants. In this context the relevance of a modular system of vocational training has been acknowledged as useful.

Immigrants and particularly women have to overcome various obstacles in order to participate in further education:

- In many cases immigrants cannot fulfil the requirements for training and retraining programmes which are subsidised by the employment office, as their legal status and work permit are combined.
- Moreover often they are not entitled to take part in programmes subsidised by the Employment Promotion Act. Many women do not even appear in the statistics of the Labour Office.
- Programmes of further education are usually aimed at German participants. Although there are preparatory German courses, immigrants cannot be expected to speak German like their mother tongue. That is why immigrants often drop out or even do not enter a programme.
- Although the enrolments of foreigners to further training reached their highest level in 1999, it is still relatively low (8,7%) in proportion to the total numbers of unemployed.

With regard to the federal structure of the German educational system the problem of recognition of diploma – especially non- European – cannot be solved within the scope of this project.

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C Results of the project from the German point of view

Women immigrants in particular are discriminated against. They live under a derived law: their permit of residence as well as their work permit depends usually on their husbands' legal status. Especially women were affected by the unemployment of the last years. A high percentage of women has no employment liable to social insurance but works in marginal part-time jobs. Generally speaking it must be realized that the living conditions of immigrant women differ in many ways, depending on their nationality, their age of entry, their marital status, their legal status and social status, their duration of stay and their education. Some figures may illustrate the general situation:

- 45% of all foreigners are women, 29% of them have Turkish origin
- 40% of the women are between 15 and 35 years old
- 34% of foreigners with employment liable to social insurance are women:
 - they mainly work in the service sector, the manufacturing industry and trade
 - they are employed on a precarious status, with little income and hardly any opportunity of professional advancement but with a great risk of losing their jobs
- 35% of unemployed foreigners are women
- unemployed women less often contact the employment exchange to get registered.
- Women of the first generation of immigrants rarely have school leaving certificates and are employed as unskilled workers or work below their level of skills.
- 60% of the mothers are unskilled workers and 73% of these have Turkish origin
- 33 – 50% of the young immigrant women between 20 and 25 years do not achieve a vocational qualification (12% of the corresponding German group).

For those who are qualified, the spectrum of professions is very narrow and hardly attractive: hairdresser and medical or dental assistant are still the classical career decisions. Although they are highly motivated and although they achieve better leaving certificates than young men of their nationality, young women of the second generation of immigrants have less chances to finish a vocational training.

The **target group** of our research were women from Turkey - as they represent the largest group of former recruited workers – and women from Iran and Afghanistan who constitute a large community of refugees in Hamburg, totally in all 36 interviewees. We got in touch with them through language courses, training centres, information boards and immigration associations. Most of them are married, have two children and have lived in Germany for more than three years. The most remarkable are the biographies of those women who chose a different way of life.

The statistics of qualification shows that more than half of the women (57%) had an upper secondary school leaving certificate and work experience in the country of origin (68%).

The pre-tests showed that the interviewees had to be highly competent in the **second language (German)**, otherwise we would have excluded from the narrative interviews a large group of women who don't speak German well enough².

Because of the first experiences we decided to do only 24 interviews in German and 12 interviews in the respective mother tongue of the interviewee (Turkish, Dari, Farsi, Persian). Among the 24 interviews in German there are four which were carried out together with a mother tongue co-interviewer but switching between two languages turned out to be too difficult for the interviewee. We

² One reason is that there is no integration policy up to now.

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expected to find out other aspects of experience and former learning in the mother tongue interviews because the women could talk more “freely”. It turned out that there was a difference in the relation between interviewer and interviewee and there were fewer intercultural misunderstandings.

Generally speaking the women’s attitude can be described as highly motivated:

- They want to live **independent of social benefit**, have their own income and be useful for the society (e.g. want to be a teacher).
- To be in work for them means to be **integrated** in the society.
- Some do **voluntary work** and are socially committed.
- Some would like to become **self-employed**.
- Nearly all of the interviewees project all their **expectations on their children**, all the more when they cannot realize a perspective of their own.

The general conditions of the interviews can be characterised by high expectations, hopes and stress expressed by the interviewees.

We decided to present the first results in terms of barriers.

What are the barriers for the immigrant women for access to further education, vocational training and labour market in the immigration country?

The barriers which are expressed in the interviews are mostly specific for women, specific for the situation of immigrants and some connect both aspects. The list is not representative and not complete.

- Immigrant women very often receive **information** about their possibilities in the country of immigration (purely) by chance or accidentally. That means
- they have no or not enough information about existing (German) language courses,
- they have not enough information about their legal position and access to the labour market,³ and about the procedure and chances for recognition of their diplomas
- they have no or not enough information about further education and vocational training.

The result can be that women seize every opportunity to take part in courses which in some cases leads them on a detour; and although there are numerous institutions offering information there still is the question how to reach the target group.⁴

Their knowledge of the **German language** was not very good. Most of the women would have liked to express themselves in their native language, they complained about and suffered from this incompetence. The motivation to learn the new language depends on the prospects they see or really have in the country of immigration. Those who can take part in vocational training are highly motivated and learn German quite quickly. Many of the interviewees are not in contact with Germans, which means they have no real language practice. Many have experienced discrimination. Many women did not find or had problems in finding a suitable language course. Either the course was too easy or it was too intensive or too expensive or there was no course at all.⁵

The **family background** has a lot of influence on the training opportunities for women, especially for immigrant women. Some are lucky enough to be supported by their fathers or their husbands. In any

³ This implies a high degree of uncertainty.

⁴ And what about those women who are not reached at all?

⁵ This must not only be a lack of counselling, the women might also express their problem to cope with the new language.

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case marriage and pregnancy mean interruption or the end of education and training. Additional problems arise in the country of immigration: those women who immigrated because of family reunion depend more on their husbands, their parents-in-law have a lot of influence and in many cases decide about their everyday life.

Child care is a big problem for every woman. For those who experience their surroundings as hostile or those who are single parents it is even more complicated to find a solution for this. Moreover some interviewees had to care for husbands and family members who were ill or addicted to drugs. Migration has torn many families apart. Especially for refugees the worry about the left behind family members often is a great burden for the immigrant women. Moreover they still feel responsible for their families of origin. (support them with money)

The **legal situation** in the country of immigration is difficult. Up till recently refugees were not allowed to work until they were granted asylum. Nowadays the situation has changed but the “priority check” is still in force. The long period of waiting leads to many psychological problems for asylum seekers and very much for those who have lived in Germany for years with limited permission to remain.

In some cases the housing conditions are an additional problem - some stay in refugee hostels for years.

In principle the **recognition of educational qualifications** is difficult. In many cases the women have no documents because they had to leave them behind or the authorities of the country of origin have not yet handed them over. Especially diplomas from extra-European countries are not fully recognized because of the different curricula and job descriptions.

Beyond these points of view the achieved educational level does not express the conditions of education in the countries of origin, i.e. political or religious impediments, living in underdeveloped areas with insufficient schooling. In many cases migration is an interruption of education.

Most of the immigrant women with work experience do not find access to the labour market matching their skills.

The guidance and counselling offered by the **employment office** was described by the women as not very helpful in practice. Apart from the work permit good German language competence is the crucial requirement without which immigrant women cannot take part in further training and retraining. German language courses are outside of the employment office’s scope of duties. General conditions of training measures e.g. age limits or specific entrance requirements (beyond German language) prevent the access of adult women.

Immigrant women very often work far below their qualifications. They experience discrimination on their jobs and get a low payment. But they depend on a **regular income**, taking into account additionally that they support family members in their countries of origin. But earning money and making their contribution to family income often prevents them from regularly attending a language course or training measures.

The **psychological situation** of many interviewees is very complicated. To cope with migration places high demands on immigrant women, especially for those whose residence permit has been uncertain for years. They suffer from homesickness, get depressed because time passes and nothing happens: “it’s too late for that now”. Long periods of inactiveness make them lose their self-confidence and they are not able to develop prospects for a satisfying life in immigration. Some even don’t want to be in Germany, “it just happened that way”. In this situation some women dream of a return. Many women feel isolated in the German society which makes them feel powerless and helpless. Moreover they suffer from cultural differences.

Thus it can easily be seen how their situation is connected to the legal situation.

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PAPER 4: Vagn Saerkjaer

AMU East Jutland, Aarhus, Denmark

The situation in Denmark and the Danish research findings

The first part of this paper consists of a brief introduction to the Danish integration system, and in the second part the results of the interviews with immigrant women will be summarised.

The Danish integration system

In Denmark, we distinguish between three groups of immigrants:

- The largest group of immigrants consists of people who seek asylum in Denmark. If they are granted asylum, they are given the status of refugees.
- The second group consists of people who have obtained family reunification, for instance because they are married to a Dane or a foreigner with residence permit in Denmark.
- The third group of immigrants come to Denmark because they have some special knowledge that the country needs. In this case, they are usually employed by a Danish organisation before going to Denmark.

The asylum application procedure is relatively short in Denmark. The average number of days used for the trial of an application is 186. This period is among the shortest in Europe. Nevertheless, the Ministry of the Interior and the Danish Immigration Service are working on a further reduction of the waiting time of asylum seekers. While the application is being tried, the applicants live in asylum centres that have been established in all parts of the country. They are given clothes and food, and the children go to school in the asylum centre or the local municipal school.

When an asylum seeker has obtained refugee status, a three-year integration process begins, consisting of several elements.

Housing is an important element, and the main principle is dispersal. The refugees are spread all over the country, each municipality being obliged to take a certain quota of refugees. The municipal authorities are responsible for finding a suitable residence. This only applies to refugees. Family reunified immigrants and people coming to Denmark to work or study are expected to solve their own housing problem.

Soon after the arrival of a refugee the municipality is responsible for the drawing up of an individual action plan for the integration of the refugee in the Danish society. An action plan can include courses in Danish culture and society, language courses and activation. Activation means that the refugee must participate in training and education, public employment projects or work placement in private enterprises. Activation and courses in Danish society and language are also offered to family reunified immigrants from countries outside the EU and Scandinavia.

Refugees participating in the integration programme receive the so-called integration benefit, including additional allowances for children. The amount received is the same as the social security benefit of a Danish citizen in the same socio-economic situation. If a refugee or immigrant does not attend his language classes or take part in other activities described in the individual action plan, the amount is reduced by 20%.

The children are placed in special preparatory classes in order to get a basic knowledge of the Danish language before being admitted to ordinary classes with Danish children.

The Danish language training offered to refugees and immigrants in the integration period includes 12 to 18 lessons per week and consists of three tracks:

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- Track I is for foreigners who cannot read and write their own language, illiterates, or people who do not know the Roman alphabet.
- The aim of track II is to give the participants basic language competences enabling them to be active citizens of the Danish society, perform a job and participate in retraining and continuing training for adults. This track is concluded with a language test at level I.
- Track III qualifies the participants for participation in higher education. The training programme is finished with a language test at level II.

The language tests are set by the Ministry of Education. Participants who have passed level II can be admitted to most institutions of higher education, such as university, business schools, etc. Only studies of medicine, dental science and journalism require further knowledge of Danish.

If refugees or family reunited immigrants are admitted to an educational institution or find a job during the integration period, they have the same financial status as Danes in a similar situation. Immigrants who have not got a job or been admitted to an educational institution at the end of the integration period, will receive social security benefits on equal terms with Danes.

In Denmark, great efforts are made by the social authorities to train and activate people who receive social security benefits in order to enable them to get a job and become self-supporting. This means that even after the integration period immigrants receive help to get a foothold on the labour market or in the educational system.

Results of the interviews with immigrant women

In this Leonardo da Vinci project we have interviewed a number of immigrant women in order to identify the barriers and obstacles experienced by the women during the integration process.

From a geographical point of view, we have interviewed a wide spectrum of refugee and immigrant women: 4 from Iran, 1 from Turkey, 1 from Bosnia, 1 from the Philippines, 1 from Syria, 2 from Lebanon, 2 from Vietnam, 1 from Somalia, 1 from Afghanistan, 3 from Iraq, 1 from Poland, 3 from Russia, 1 from Iceland, and 4 from Thailand.

The women interviewed described many different obstacles making integration in the Danish society difficult. These obstacles can be summarised as follows (using the formulation of the women):

- The Danish mentality is so different and strange.
- Constant stress due to a general insecurity.
- The employment situation in Denmark (the unemployment rate is relatively low, but still there is unemployment in certain areas and occupations).
- Lack of information on “the system”. Which authority is responsible for what? Where to go with your questions and problems?
- Refugees have counsellors to go to, but immigrants are “left alone”. There is no place where they can receive information and guidance.
- Women who have come to Denmark because of family reunification with their husbands, depend on their husband and his family, both financially and in other ways. The attitude of the husband and family sometimes prevents integration.
- “In general, immigrants in Denmark have no or inadequate education”.
- The media contribute to creating a bad impression of immigrants. Instead of interviewing competent immigrants with a relevant education, they often ask people chosen at random whose answers seem stupid because they lack knowledge of the subject. This creates a general, negative impression of foreigners.

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- Foreigners are received with scepticism. The “system” and long, complicated procedures make them insecure.
- The procedures for recognition of foreign diplomas are long, expensive and difficult.

PAPER 5: Katarina Navratilova

DHV CR, Prague, the Czech Republic

The situation in the Czech Republic and the Czech research findings

Aims of the study

The study was carried out by the Counselling Centre for Integration (PPI), Prague, for the DHV Czech Republic project. The aim of the study was to assess the situation in the area of integration of immigrant women living long term in the Czech Republic into work and society, and thus formulate answers to the following questions:

- Do the women possess qualifications enabling them to be integrated in terms of autonomous life in the new society, and if not, can they acquire such qualifications?
- Is the society able to recognise, accept and develop qualifications of women-foreigners?

The study was carried out on a sample of twenty immigrant women living in the Czech Republic on the basis of different types of residence permit for more than two years. The women were selected by a combination of methods of random and deliberate sampling from the PPI database, respecting the main socio-demographic and socio-economic parameters (age, education, region of origin) of the immigrant women. In-depth interviews recorded into answer sheets were carried out by five trained social workers of Counselling Centre for Integration during January 2001.

In general the reasons for coming to the Czech Republic can be divided in three main areas:

- a) The respondent left the country of origin due to an unbearable situation which occurred – persecution owing to the ethnic or racial origin, religious or political belief, war, change of regime, possibly prevented from returning home after study or work... These women in most cases received the status of political refugee (asylum).
- b) Respondents followed their husbands or families, who left the country of origin for the same reasons as under a). Also these immigrants often have asylum.
- c) A smaller proportion of women came to the Czech Republic to seek work, for economic reasons. During their stay in the Czech Republic they then obtained permanent residence.

Selection of the Czech Republic as a country of destination is very often explained by incidental factors (8 cases) – “... the money were enough for coming to Czech Republic only”, “... it was a coincidence, an attempt to request asylum”, “... the nearest safe country...”, “we had visas for here and we did not want to be in another country illegally”, “I did not need visa to come in the Czech Republic”.

Just as important fact for deciding to live in Czech Republic was for the respondents having relatives here (6 cases) “...I followed my husband, who worked here”, “my brother, who had married here, invited me”.

A relatively strong factor (3 cases) proved to be the cases when respondents or their family members lived or worked in the Czech Republic already before the events leading to their decision to stay, or when they had information on the Czech Republic from friends or acquaintances: “... I worked at the embassy”, “my husband studied in the Czech Republic, then he had problems and wanted to return here”, “we used to have friends in the Czech Republic, so we had information about the country”.

Institutional assistance

Only half of the respondent women (10), namely asylum seekers, passed courses of Czech language. The courses were of varying level and quality – from intensive one year courses (Institute of language

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and technical training) to 2-3 months courses of a few lessons per week. The effect of the courses differed significantly, positively appraised were especially the approach of women trainers, good organisation and the fact that women with refugee status did not have to pay for the course. As negative, the limited subject matter in shorter courses and participation of persons with different knowledge of Czech in the course, were seen. Women from more distant linguistic areas often found the courses insufficient. For women with permanent residence courses were not organised – they learned Czech mostly on their own, in contact with the environment, with friends or private language schools.

Only two respondents took part in retraining courses run by labour offices (computer use courses which did not lead to employment). Other courses were attended by one immigrant only – a sign language course for persons with impaired hearing (she accessed the course on her own through an organisation for health handicapped).

Not all the women co-operate with a Labour office (they cannot register with the office if they care for children aged under 4). The experience of those registered with UP range from frequent indifference (no jobs or training available, the office actually does not expect the woman to work), to repeated placement in unsuitable jobs. If the woman has a family, she is in most cases also registered with the social department. But there she only receives social benefits, without supporting steps towards employment or planning the future.

Recognition of education

Barriers:

- Lack of documents
- Unfamiliarity with the Czech language
- Complexity of the procedure

Employment in the Czech Republic

Barriers:

- Childcare or family care
- Language barrier
- Health reasons

Outlook for the future

- Wishes guided by interests of the family
- Finding and keeping job
- General wishes (more belief in God, peace, situation in Europe)
- Wishes concerning equal rights and legal status (e.g. permanent residence for children)

On the whole there is a high degree of orientation on the family and children, resignation or uncertainty with regard to their own successful career.

Summary and conclusions

From the low total number of women, who found adequate careers in the Czech Republic, and the marked low frequency of courses or acquiring qualification in Czech Republic, it clearly follows that this issue does not receive sufficient attention. Below we now attend to summarise the answers to the main questions that were the subject of interest of this study:

Do the women have usable qualifications?

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Part of the women do, part do not. Important are first of all the knowledge of Czech language, education and profession either usable in Czech Republic, or, contrary to that, a willingness to start with anything, own activity and attitude of the woman herself and her family. A linguistically and culturally closer area of the woman's origin is an advantage making adaptation to the new environment easier. Women from more distant areas sometimes have skills and experience the use of which in Czech Republic is at present very problematic.

If they do not, can they be acquired?

The women do have relatively high former education and are interested in continuing education. But when cultural differences/ individual attitudes come into play, courses of Czech or common re-qualification courses are far from sufficient. They would lead to knowledge and skills, but these would most likely not be used. More comprehensive "integration" programmes (which would moreover stimulate beliefs in career opportunities, motivate own activity and be specifically tailored to women) however do not exist.

Nevertheless it is likely that a group of women will remain, who cannot or do not want to involve themselves in the Czech environment as much as needed for success at work, which relates most often to their family obligations. It seems that they might slowly turn into the "lost generation", known from the countries of Western Europe. These households put all resources and hopes for successful integration and happy life into the next generation, i.e. children of the present respondents. The question is to what extent is this family orientation a primary interest, or a substitute fulfilment of life in a country where the woman cannot see career prospects for herself.

Is the society able to recognise and accept immigrant women's qualifications?

The Czech society as a whole is completely unconcerned with the issue of work skills and career opportunities of immigrant women. There are no national measures at all (from the Labour offices – Employment Services Administration of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs). The only activity is supported courses of Czech for recognised refugees by the Ministry of Interior – nevertheless without any regard to the qualifications of participants or gender specificity. This area is of no concern to either training institutions, or NGOs.

Foreign origin is only seldom and with difficulties found as career advantage (e.g. one respondent moderates radio programmes about the life of foreigners). Otherwise it is always a handicap, obviously for the following two reasons:

- a) in the Czech Republic there are on the whole few foreigners who do not create communities;
- b) Czech society expects from the foreigners an utmost adaptation and their attitudes towards foreigners are generally very cautious or even negative.

The fact that mutually supportive communities are not yet developed in Czech Republic results in an increased number of women, who, with their specific skills (African cuisine, Persian language) and imperfect knowledge of Czech, cannot find employment on the regular labour market.

Based on the interviews held, as well as the long-term experience of the Counselling Centre for Integration staff, it is necessary to point out the differences in life attitudes of foreigners – refugees and other foreigners (permanent or long-term residents). The refugees rely more on the authorities, expect assistance from the state and NGOs, consider themselves a "humanitarian category" – this is probably also related to the asylum procedure, which leads to passivity. The authorities often look at refugees as if they are tolerated for social reasons and do not expect them to be able and want to work in the Czech Republic.

The refugees then do not feel any signals from the society that career opportunities might be open to them. This is even more valid for women. This attitude is sometimes applied generally to all foreigners – but concrete stories of foreigners with other than refugee status show their different life expectations: they feel that they have to help themselves, at most they rely upon their friends and

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families, they are more often involved in work, even though they start careers in inferior positions. In the long run this employment strategy is more successful in Czech Republic.

We feel that the mutual relationship of expectations and requirements by the society, versus expectations of immigrant women themselves and foreigners in general, is of key importance for resolving the issue at hand.

PERSPECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

Edited by Pamela Clayton

Immigrant women and vocational training: barriers and solutions

Three groups shared their ideas and experiences in order to make recommendations on how to improve the chances of immigrant women to access appropriate education and training. Since there was some overlapping, the results have been combined here. Thank you to all participants including facilitators and rapporteurs.

Prerequisites?

Research

Solutions should be focused on women's needs, so research into these needs should be undertaken. This research could include monitoring of women's qualifications and competences at various crucial stages, such as when they obtain residence status or register at a Job Centre.

Another important added value that research could offer is to collect and disseminate examples of good practice which could be transferred and expanded.

Policy

Although details of this conference were circulated very widely there was little interest from official bodies, so a press release on the outcomes of the conference should be issued. Such a press release could point out that members from other European Union states were present

However, we should be under no illusion that this issue does have official support and intensive campaigning is necessary.

One issue on which policy-makers should be lobbied is that of funding for organisations which help immigrant women. Such funding should be official and permanent, or at least long-term, rather than a series of short-term fixes.

Associated with this is the need to raise the status of immigrants within United Kingdom society through a concerted attempt to change attitudes towards them. The media could play a positive role here, instead of its current negative role, especially among the tabloid press.

The shortage of unskilled labour in the United Kingdom (an under-publicised problem) is currently being filled to some extent by immigrants, including some without legal status. Recently on Radio 4 there were interviews with farmers who depend on such labour and wish for more legal immigration; and many construction firms are dependent on immigrant labour. There is thus a role for employers to enhance the role of immigrants, through the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Businesses, Chambers of Commerce and so on, and through Development Agencies and the Small Business Service. Central and local government also has an important role to play.

Refugees face the problem of having to wait for a decision regarding their status, a decision that can take a very long time. In the meantime, they need access to all programmes as soon as practical.

Childcare facilities in the United Kingdom are scarce relative to the demand, expensive and of variable quality. At the same time, there is in some areas duplication, and there is a need for better co-ordination to avoid unnecessary competition between providers and 'turf' issues - without, however,

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reducing the overall supply. There is also a need for 'culturally sensitive' childcare. Models of this do exist.

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Holistic approach

Where support agencies exist, there is sometimes a bewildering array and a lot of confusion as to which agency provides which service. Furthermore, the needs of a single individual are frequently very diverse - e.g. for information on benefits, housing, legal status, employment and education/training. One solution that has been set in place in various areas is to have a single centre staffed by trained personnel in these different areas, either as part of the same organisation or in separate organisations in the same building, with an efficient system of referral between the different bodies.

Partnership, synergy, networking

There is a need for true partnerships between different educational providers, so that progression routes for individual women can be worked out on the basis of the fullest information - including the needs of each woman. There is also need for synergy between similar organisations, and closer relationships between mainstream and voluntary organisations. One suggestion is for the involvement with, for example, refugee organisations, with the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS), local authorities and the Learning and Skills Councils.

Advice and guidance services

Many more are needed in order to give information on opportunities. The 'one-stop shop' model is favoured and it is recommended that such services have specific provision for refugees, with detailed knowledge of their legal rights to access to education, training and employment. This raises the issue of the need for specialised training in this area.

Reaching out

In the experience of one guidance worker, over 60 per cent of whose clients are immigrants, Asians tend to rely more on their own communities than on outside bodies. Where accessible services exist, however, with an outreach policy, it is possible to attract Asian women to use them.

There are also issues in parts of the United Kingdom where there is not a sufficient concentration of immigrants to justify special provision.

The Community Education model is a useful one and the Learning Centres being organised under Learn Direct could form a useful resource for immigrant women.

Financing study

There is also the question of finance so help with grants is important for many women, either through direct organisation of grants or help with finding and applying to grant-making trusts and other bodies.

Education and training provision

ESOL

For some women, such as many Somalis, the greatest initial need is for basic ESOL. For those with some English, a combination of further ESOL and IT training is suitable before they are referred to FE colleges or go into employment. Here the role of voluntary organisations is crucial, in providing basic training, information, advice and support.

Adaptation courses

The opportunities to adapt overseas qualifications for use in the United Kingdom should be advertised widely; e.g. leaflets could be given to women at various stages of registration (see Research).

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Recognition of qualifications

Given global movements of people, there is a need for development of the recognition of qualifications on a global scale, for example, through a United Nations body such as UNICEF. In the meantime, such recognition can take far too long and is often very expensive. One suggestion is to shorten this period by using practical assessment of skills by a recognised professional organisation.

Personal development, cultural adaptation, integration programmes

Very little exists in the United Kingdom that could be termed an integration programme for new arrivals (though at least one exists for refugees with a medical background) and these could be very useful. Such a programme could usefully include Jobsearch courses, information about the United Kingdom including the importance of learning or increasing competence in the English language, what services exist (for example, health, social, educational, housing) and how to access them; their rights and obligations according to United Kingdom law and culture; social skills needed in the United Kingdom; and general knowledge about the culture here. Motivating and confidence-building are also useful for many women.

Vocational training

Immigrant women are very diverse and the types of vocational training suitable for them are likewise very diverse, so good advice is very important. Furthermore, in some cases suitable training does not exist and there is a need for these gaps in provision to be filled. For example, some women might need specially-tailored courses before going on to mainstream provision.

Employment

Work experience, work placements

To overcome the problem of having qualifications but no work experience in the United Kingdom, unpaid work placements can be very useful, supported where necessary by help with childcare and travel grants. These could be run by NGOs, using existing networks, including New Deal. Such work placements could be undergone during the period when asylum-seekers are awaiting status so that by the time they receive status they are ready for employment and to contribute to the legal economy.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Pamela Clayton, Research Fellow, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Glasgow, has been interested in issues concerning immigrant and refugee women since 1995 and has worked on several European projects concerning vocational guidance issues for groups including ethnic minority people. She is currently the United Kingdom researcher on the *Hidden Treasure* project.

Rosemary Dowden, British Refugee Council, is currently co-ordinating a project called Refugee Women Workshops, funded by the Basic Skills Agency. The project runs intensive basic English courses for refugee women to prepare and equip them with the language skills needed to access further education and/or vocational courses. Her interest in the topic stems from the inequality of access and provision for women that exists in retraining or training to access work or further education.

Gisela Euscher, GATE, is the co-ordinator of the *Hidden Treasure* Leonardo Project. She is a graduate in Educational Science and has been working on the subject of further training for immigrant women since 1989 in different contexts, including the INTEGRA Project 'New Employment Opportunities for Female Immigrants'. For ten years she was consultant for the development and promotion of special courses for immigrants at the Hamburg Department for Vocational Training and Further Education, which is a local project partner at the moment.

Beliyou Fekede is language and communications tutor at the Training and Employment Section (TES) of the British Refugee Council. She teaches ESOL and IT as part of the intensive basic English course for women. Her interest in the topic arises from her experience of working with refugee women struggling to make their way in education and employment in their host country.

Katarina Navratilova, researcher on the *Hidden Treasure* project, is from the Human Resources and Institutional Development Unit of DHV CR, Prague, graduated in 1998 from the Faculty of Economics with a specialisation in regional development in the Slovak Republic. She was employed as project manager in the Regional Development Agency before joining DHV in August 2000. Since graduation she has worked on European projects within the Leonardo da Vinci programme and Phare Multi-country Sector Framework Contract for Social Development. She is herself an immigrant in the Czech Republic.

Sanja Potnar, RETAS Advice Co-ordinator/Project Manager, is a qualified English teacher from Bosnia who has been working for the Refugee Education and Training Advisory Service (RETAS), a division of the World University Service (UK), for the last seven years in various capacities. Currently, Sanja is co-ordinating the work of RETAS' Advice Team and managing a number of projects funded by UK and EU funding, such as the National Lottery Charities Board, the Millennium Commission, the Diana Fund, ESF, INTEGRA and the Preparatory Measures to Promote the Integration of Refugees. A number of these projects have a transnational dimension.

Vagn Saerkjaer, Head of the International Training and Consulting Department of AMU East Jutland, MA in Social Science, has been working on the subject of integration of refugees and immigrants since 1972. First, as a local politician he was, among other things, co-author of a report on the consequences of the concentration of ethnic minorities in a certain housing estate. Later he was responsible for the vocational and educational guidance of refugees and immigrants, aiming at the social and labour market integration of migrants, and managed the Danish contribution to the Tacis project *Improving Capabilities to Provide Migrants with Adequate Social Protection and Social Integration in the Russian Federation* and conducted training of Russian migration service staff at national, regional and local level.

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