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PROČ MĚJ ZOBRAZIT STRANOU?

**Land Ahoy!**  
Vocational Qualification  
for Refugees  
in Schleswig-Holstein

**JOPA**  
Jazyková a Odborná Příprava Azylových  
a žadatelů o azyl



# MOLE - More Options: Labour and Education!

Asylum Seekers  
and Labour Market Issues

Policy Recommendations  
and Policy Initiatives

<http://www.equal-mole.eu>



**EQUAL**

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# **1. Introduction**

## **1.1 General Background to the MOLE Partnership**

MOLE is a transnational co-operation partnership established in 2005 under the Asylum Seekers Theme of the EU EQUAL Program, funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The EU Community Initiative EQUAL aims at promoting new methods for the fight against inequalities and discriminations in the labour market via a cooperation of the member states of the European Union. MOLE brings together a range of Development Partnerships and organisations implementing services and projects in Germany, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The main aims and objectives of MOLE are set out in its Transnational Co-operation Agreement (TCA) and in summary include:

- The implementation of projects and services designed to improve the labour market access of asylum seekers;
- The assessment and evaluation of the impact of these activities in order to draw out lessons in terms of effectiveness and good practice;
- Based on success factors and good practice identified, to promote and encourage transnational practice and policy relevant to meeting the needs of asylum seekers. This includes specific policy developments such as the harmonisation (on a humane level) of asylum laws and the revision of the Council's Directive on Minimum Standards of Reception but also broader developments in areas such as addressing issues of social inclusion.

## **Constituent Partners and Project Actions**

MOLE works through General Assemblies and Steering Group Meetings, where decisions are taken, and Working Groups, where the actions to explore asylum seekers needs are undertaken. In order to go beyond the practice of individual model-like testing, emphasis of the promotion was laid on the distribution and increasing steadiness of tried-out action strategies and methods in politics and in practice. The findings will result in proposals to politicians, labour market actors and lobby organisations on transnational level.

### **1.2 MOLE Approach to Policy Influence and Mainstreaming Lessons**

A key aim of the MOLE partnership has been to maximise the opportunities for learning from the project activities engaged in and from this to inform relevant policy areas (at transnational level) so as to allow for the mainstreaming of lessons around effectiveness in meeting the social, economic and health needs of asylum seekers.

#### **Joint Learning and Policy Work**

To facilitate such learning across projects, two transnational working groups were established at the inception of the partnership covering the identified thematic key areas of “Empowerment” and “Policy”. Each of the working groups comprised development partnerships from all partner organisations engaged in different approaches and activities under each theme.

Actions undertaken by the working groups have included:

- Individual and joint documentation of project activities and outcomes - which has included a focus on comparing different methods and approaches to

achieving similar objectives (for example, different approaches to providing information);

- Identification of aspects of good practice in delivering positive outcomes and the transnational implications of these;
- The development of policy recommendations directed at European level based on the practice identified.

These actions were further supported through including external experts to help synthesise and refine learning and policy proposals.

### **1.3 Identified Key Areas for Action**

TCP MOLE have identified three strategically important starting points in relation to the needs emerging. These key areas for action are:

- To improve the provision of information related to labour market access.
- To retain empowerment of asylum seekers by qualification measures and trainings right in the beginning of the asylum process.
- To influence the policy mainstream and to increase public awareness for a labour market access to asylum seekers in general.

## **2. IDENTIFYING KEY AREAS OF POLICY IN RELATION TO ASYLUM SEEKERS' NEEDS AND PARTNERS PRACTICE**

### **2.1 Priority 1: Improvement of Information Provision**

#### **Principal Areas of Need Identified**

Much of the feedback from Partners regarding the provision of information relating labour market access addressed issues of

- availability of information provision
- suitability or appropriateness of information provided and
- visibility of responsibilities of information provision.

This was true in relation to:

- Visibility of responsibilities for information offers – where information either is not provided by competent authorities or where is a lack of clarity about the reference of information provision.
- Appropriateness of information content – where the information given is not necessarily the information that is needed; and where asylum seekers or employers may not necessarily understand that they do not have the right information.
- Appropriateness of the information-giving process – where information is given in a way that leads to confusion or lack of clarity on the part of the receiver; this relates to language and translation, but equally relates to a range of difficult and different rules and

regulations that may cause information to be interpreted wrongly.

- Appropriateness of the information-giving context – where the surroundings within which information services are located can add to a sense of distance, lack of security and lack of trust – thereby curtailing the extent to which asylum seekers feel comfortable about sharing their own information.

### **Universal or Area-specific?**

Information provision relating labour market access and laws is an area of concern for all partnerships within the Asylum strand of EQUAL. The issues as outlined above are of a greater significance in some countries, like Ireland, Portugal, Germany and Czech Republic – where the projects directly concerned themselves with providing information and advice, and with learning lessons from those activities.

A research of the TCP Working Group Empowerment documented similar problems in all Partner countries relating information provision. The European Council on Refugee and Exiles (ECRE) stated in a European wide research that “practical and administrative obstacles prevent asylum seekers from realising their right to work after 12 month. Imposing unnecessary administrative procedures and conditions.....seriously restricts asylum seekers’ ability to receive a work permit within a reasonable time.” (*The EC Directive on the Reception of Asylum Seekers: Are asylum seekers in Europe receiving material support and access to employment in accordance with European legislation?* AD3/11/2005/EXT/SH, page 19)

### **Why Address These Needs?**

Information provision is a systematic process that imparts understanding, having identified and addressed barriers to

information transfer. Information providers and information services for labour market questions fulfil key functions in a successful strategy designed to increase employment and to support the labour market actors; employees as well as employers.

Provision of information for asylum seekers should be an impartial process and part of a common labour market strategy in all EU countries. It should be mediated through the use of simple and accessible language, continuously taking into account linguistic barriers, as well as complicated and difficult rules and regulations relating to labour market access for asylum seekers. It should also be implemented independently from state-run services.

### **Policy Implications in Addressing These Needs**

Obviously – given the importance of issues as outlined above – the overarching and universally agreed aspiration in policy terms should be towards ensuring ease of access to relevant and timely information. In striving for this in the broader sense, however, several areas of policy were identified as being important in working towards the overall goal.

These were:

- The need, as part of this, to implement effective outreach functions – as a necessary offer in asylum reception and accommodation centres.
- The need to recognise the need for, and work towards, an integrated information scheme for labour market issues which includes asylum seekers, taking into account the need for allocating common responsibility for such a development in all labour market agencies.
- The need for outwardly visible individual responsibilities, asylum seekers and employers need

to know not only who has responsibility, but also how and with them they can co-operate.

- The need to recognise, and build positively upon, strengths of the NGO sector in its role as mediators between asylum seekers, employers and state-run departments. The most important strengths to be tapped in this respect relate to the capacity to build up trust with service beneficiaries, to assist a positive labour market policy, and to feed back lessons for mainstream policy and service provision.

### **Relevant Good Practice Examples**

Relevant examples where information about a legal access to the labour market is given to asylum seekers empowering the target group as well as to meet both the needs of the labour market and employers:

- Czech Republic, EQUAL Development Partnership NET 2005 (<http://www.konzorcium.cz>)

In the Czech Republic the development partnership NET 2005 is working to guarantee qualification and to increase the working skills of asylum applicants. One part of the work is Legal counselling. The main goal of this activity is to inform applicants about necessary legal background about their rights and responsibilities in the lower industry, as well as assistance in getting work permits or in finding work or other contracts. It is realised through seminars or individual counselling. In the DP there are as well NGOs as employment agencies, labour offices and the Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic. Booklets will be produced which shall be available at employment agencies, labour offices, refugee institutions.

- Germany, EQUAL Development Partnership SAGA (<http://www.equal-saga.info>)

In the EQUAL project SAGA leaflets inform about opportunities of labour market access and how to get a work permit. The leaflets were distributed in various languages. More than 3000 copies were ordered by lawyers, refugee aid organisations as well as from municipalities and labour market agencies. Additionally, counselling via telephone is offered for stakeholders or supporters of the target group (like teachers, neighbours, social workers ...).

- Ireland, RIS (<http://www.ris.ie>)

The RIS was established to provide information, advice, advocacy, and services for refugees and asylum-seekers; to support the work of community groups who work with refugees and asylum seekers and to provide information to the general public by way of training sessions; workshops etc. The refugee and asylum-seeking community is a vulnerable section of the community and consequently not easy to access. Therefore the RIS has developed an independent and confidential service that refugees and asylum-seekers trust by involving refugees and asylum-seekers in the management and delivery of the service. They are co-operative – working with and giving assistance to community groups (and other organisations working with refugees and asylum-seekers) and anti-racist - countering racism by the dissemination of accurate information on the rights and entitlements of refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. The website of RIS also informs about labour market access and penalties for illegal employment.

- Germany, INFONET (<http://www.infonet-frsh.de>)

INFONET is a pool of information concerning equal access to training and profession for asylum seekers and other refugees with an insecure residential status in the

area of Schleswig-Holstein. INFONET sensitises educational organizations, employers and authorities about the living conditions and capabilities of refugees. In co-operation with educational institutions, social counselling offices for migrants and refugees, and institutions of labour- and social administration INFONET is aiming at achieving an opening of these institutions' regular services for people with an insecure residential status.

## **2.2 Priority 2: Encouragement of Empowerment Through Education and Training**

### **Principal Areas of Need Identified**

The provision of opportunities in education and/or training would, in most circumstances, be seen as an effective way of encouraging empowerment on a personal level; as the chance for asylum seekers to work in the host society, since they have experiences, knowledge and skills which often remain unused. But, even where limited opportunities do exist for progression and integration, lack of key skills inevitably required in the local labour market can prevent access. And, as a result, progression or capacity building for asylum seekers is frequently limited to 'participation' in low-skilled, low-paid, often illegal, work positions. Other obstacles are lack of knowledge on the part of employees about their legal situation and possibilities of being employed as asylum seekers, and bureaucratized procedures (i.e. long-term priority checks before issuing limited work permits).

### **Universal or Area-specific?**

NGOs' and governments' experiences prove that many asylum seekers are employed illegally on hard manual, low paid positions as a result of the obstacles outlined above. In

many cases salaries are not paid off and the unsecured workers do not have any social and legal support. Asylum seekers are exposed to a higher risk of blackmail and exceptionally becoming victims of trafficking, i.e. as illegal cross-border commuters. These issues are well-known throughout the European Union. Therefore a common European strategy to combat these developments and risks is recommendable.

### **Why Address These Needs?**

Asylum seekers have potentials that should be used in the host societies. Asylum seekers who are prevented from learning and working are trapped between forced idleness, chronic poverty and threatening becoming criminalized, and often become seriously ill. It is completely inappropriate from our point of view that the potential of the applicants should be exploited by grey economy only, that the applicants are misused, and the state authorities omitted. By education of the applicants, acceptance of the achieved education in the country of origin, better orientation in the new society, we can help applicants to enter the legal labour market and – if returning to the countries of origin - better integrate to these labour markets. This will also increase psychological and social independence and health. Additionally, the teaching and learning of common European values ( as outlined in the draft Treaty for a European Constitution ) will contribute to a better understanding of the fundamentals of the respective host society.

### **Policy Implications in Addressing These Needs**

It is essential that addressing the personal progression needs of asylum seekers is regarded as an issue for EU education and social inclusion policy. It is through the application of only labour market policy considerations that many of these broader implications are missed. It is within the best interests of both asylum seekers and host country societies and

economies that assessments are made of the skills, capacities and aspirations of asylum seekers - to take place as early as possible in the asylum-seeking process.

Asylum seekers' integration in the European labour market is the declared will of the Council Reception Directive. Above that, every effort to encourage empowerment through education and training is supporting the revised Lisbon strategy of building up a stronger Europe. Apart from the respective National Action Plans which are supposed to be set up in order to implement the strategy it will be necessary to create a framework and an observatory to ensure the implementation of the Directive concerning labour market, education and social inclusion issues as outlined above.

### **Relevant Good Practice Examples**

- Slovakia, EQUAL Development Partnership JOPA (<http://www.clovekvohrozeni.sk/>)

The Slovak Development Partnership JOPA (2005-2007) developed methodology for teachers and study books for refugees of Slovak language as response to need of systematic solutions in language training of asylum seekers and recognized refugees towards their social and vocational integration. Teaching and study material has been elaborated in cooperation with University experts and based on long-time experiences with language training of asylum seekers and recognized refugees who have been involved in process of making the study material by their comments and inputs. Teaching and study material will be distributed to all refugee and integration centres in Slovakia aiming to reach common and systematic language training of target groups.

- Czech Republic, EQUAL Development Partnership NET 2005 (<http://www.konzorcium.cz>)

In the year 2006, the Czech EQUAL Development Partnership NET 2005 opened three multicultural centres close to refugee camps. Those centres are used for educational and cultural activities. During the first year of their existence, 335 asylum seekers were informed about the possibility of improving their qualifications by applying to the different courses, i.e. Czech and English language training, IT or other pre-qualification courses. Another issue is the information about possibilities of legal employment in the Czech Republic.

- Sweden, EQUAL Development Partnership RE-KOMP (<http://www.uppsala.se>)

In the Swedish EQUAL Development Partnership RE-KOMP (2002-2005), asylum-seekers with appropriate medical training and professional experience in their respective country of origin were trained to become international health advisors. The project aimed at improving the information structure for refugees and asylum applicants about the Swedish health care system, language support of the target group in the facilities of the health sector as well as the development of employment chances for asylum seekers.

- Germany, EQUAL Development Partnership SPuK (<http://www.spuk.info>)

In the German EQUAL Development Partnership SPuK (2002-2005) asylum seekers were trained to become language and culture mediators, not only to improve their personal health situation and empower themselves for the restricted German labour market, but also to help facilitating structural changes in the national health care system for refugees and migrants.

## **2.3 Priority 3: Enhancement of Public Awareness of Labour Market Access**

### **Principal Areas of Need Identified**

Successful access to labour market requires prepared job-seekers and “open” labour markets. Improvement of employment of asylum seekers is not only related to their “quality”, education and others skills but also to labour market and economic conditions. There are deeper concerns about social justice, equal opportunities and social exclusion.

To improve the employment situation of asylum seekers means also to combat labour market discrimination by common approach decision-makers, service providers, social partners, community organisations and others.

Each national labour market in EU has own particular problems and employment conditions, but often with overlapping similarities. Same basic strategies to improve access to employment and overlap particular problems are often common to the different countries.

### **Universal or Area-specific?**

Well-known experiences throughout the European Union show discrimination not only as an act of individual behaviour but also as an attitude of society and institution. Experiences show that discrimination is not only problem of some countries and some vulnerable groups. In case of economical recession all labour markets closing “doors” to immigrants and they are forced to exist in shadow economy. To help solve employment discrimination, information campaigns should focus on public and especially on job agencies, people making recruitment decisions, politicians.

## **Why Address These Needs?**

Asylum seekers face worse situation in criteria as income, housing situation, participation in working life, health and others criteria defining living conditions. Discrimination is one reason for lower quality in living conditions of asylum seekers themselves and their families. Feeling of inequality is transferred from parents to children and it is supporting sense of social exclusion.

Documentation of discrimination in labour market has been and is being compiled. There are a numbers of studies, researches, reports and statistics providing data on the labour discrimination. However, documentation and researches have to be transferred to direct action as public awareness campaigns, educations and lobbying to decrease discrimination in daily life.

## **Policy Implications in Addressing These Needs**

Prejudice and discrimination against migrants and minority ethnic groups is wide-spread across Europe, and labour market access to asylum seekers is still a controversial issue in the policy debates in Europe. In Council Directive 2003/9/EC minimum standards on the reception of asylum seekers are specified in Article 11, strengthening the position of asylum seekers on labour markets in EU countries.

Improvement of public opinion and awareness towards asylum seekers, improvement of economical condition of asylum seekers in EU and understanding of economical necessity to open EU labour markets for asylum seekers and migrants can suppress prejudices, fear of welfare-burden, xenophobia and racism among host society.

## Relevant Good Practice Examples

- Europe, EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Partnership MOLE (<http://www.equal-mole.eu>)

The EQUAL Transnational Co-operation Partnership MOLE itself has developed information material for the raising of public awareness on the right of asylum seekers to access European labour markets. A poster in four languages and similar postcards have been produced and have been disseminated across Europe.

- Czech Republic, EQUAL Development Partnership NET 2005 (<http://www.uprchlici.ecn.cz>)

The Czech EQUAL Development Partnership NET 2005 organized National evenings in the Multicultural Centres Starz, Teplice and Brno. The National evenings provided a platform for meetings of asylum seekers, employers and general public, introducing each other and discussing the current problems. They should contribute to reduction of cultural stereotypes, mistrust and prejudices. Employers from particular regions, people from organizations working with the asylum applicants, representatives of the Municipality and migrants with long term or permanent residency in the CR were invited to the Evenings.

- Germany, EQUAL Development Partnership perspective (<http://www.frsh.de>)

In the German EQUAL Development Partnership perspective (2002-2005), the part project "restart" enabled refugees in a six month course to restart professionally in the field of media and social services. In the course refugees produced various films reflecting their situation in exile, which can be used in schools and public relations to raise awareness and start discussions.

### 3. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 Priority 1: Information Provision

***We recommend:***

***It should be recognized that asylum seekers are part of the labour market; therefore asylum seekers should be included in labour market policies and labour market activities.***

The intention is to build up a bridge between labour market actors, asylum seekers and refugee aid organisations responding the duties of asylum seekers and the real needs of the labour market. The target groups shall be motivated to use existing information about opportunities of a labour market access and to implement this field/question in their own strategies and policies.

#### **Why?**

Work in MOLE! has demonstrated the effectiveness and necessity of information provision for asylum seekers and employers relating the legal frame of labour market access and labour market situation for asylum seekers. These benefits can be used in a profitable way if the involved partners will take into account that labour market access for asylum seekers is restricted but not prohibited and therefore asylum seekers are a part of the labour market.

Important reasons for promoting joint approaches and linkages include:

- The EU Reception Directive aims at an integrated information reception scheme for asylum seekers in all EU member states. Article 11 states that member states shall determine a period of time stipulating their

right to work. Except for France, Lithuania and Luxembourg all countries legally stand in conformity with this employment provision. But imposed additional conditions, procedures or even limitations are obviating or complicating asylum seekers' access to the labour market. These complicated regulations and procedures stand for an acute demand of advancing for both asylum seekers and employers as well. Therefore information should be provided as soon as possible.

- Very often employers and asylum seekers as well as actors in the asylum field and in labour market policy believe that an access to the labour market is general prohibited for asylum seekers (and other migrants). Often the existing duties to get a work permit are denied by authorities and prevent an access to the labour market. Stronger consideration of these labour market questions will help to correct false decisions and will meet the needs of both asylum seekers and labour markets. Often the refusals of work permits is not questioned and their correctness is not proofed. Despite of needs, possible labour market access will be not realized. A good information provision will avoid wrong decisions.
- Instead of legal work opportunities, asylum seekers are very often confronted with illegal job offers. Without a substantial information system asylum seekers are not informed about the illegality and contestability of these contracts and also not about their rights and duties in case of wage dumping and work accidents. It should be in the interest of legal employers to assist information provision about these duties and rights.
- Often the integration of asylum seekers in the labour market is not accepted as a task of labour market agencies. There is a labour market need in different work fields which are not served by the labour market

agencies. Strengthen the labour market issues relating asylum seekers in employers and trade unions policies will improve the attention of state-run labour market agencies towards asylum seekers and can lead to more effective targeting of services to the real labour market needs.

- Taking into consideration asylum seekers as part of the labour market will strengthen the improvement of reception conditions and will help to build up a reception regime which set asylum seekers as integrated part of the receiving society and “guaranteed an “adequate standard of living “ (Reception Directive, Article 14).

## **What?**

For this potential to be fully realised, there is a need to:

- strengthen employers willing to employ asylum seekers,
- disseminate information materials for employers and asylum seekers relating labour market issues,
- ensure the formal recognition of labour market integration of asylum seekers as a task of labour market agencies,
- develop strategies for public relation to ensure economical and social human rights of asylum seekers,
- ensure that labour market issues will be part of the information provision system in all reception and accommodations centres.

## How?

Promising strategies for the pursuit of these objectives include:

- Lobby work with employer lobby organizations, as well as with Trade Unions
- Implementation of social and economical human rights in the public relation and political work of refugee aid and social organizations dealing with asylum seekers (ECRE, COMECE, etc.)
- Initialising or improving/supporting of communication processes between both labour market and asylum policy stakeholders on European level
- Dissemination of researches or initialising work programmes for researches for the inefficiency of labour market prohibition and/or restriction for asylum seekers
- Setting up 'Policy Working Groups', which could be established for a longer period mixed with partners from different Member State, through which opportunities for 'mainstreaming' lessons can be realised.

### **3.2 Priority 2: Encouragement of Empowerment through Education and Training**

***We recommend:***

***Asylum seekers' free access to vocational and language training and orientation courses should be obligatory as early as possible.***

Experiences from the MOLE! transnational partnership have demonstrated that empowerment of asylum seekers through education and training often leads to new solutions and careers for the benefit of both the host society and the asylum seekers themselves. For this potential to be fully realised, there is a need to start as early as possible with education and training for the respective target group.

#### **Why?**

Important reasons for promoting joint approaches and linkages include

- the promotion of social inclusion;
- the implementation of the revised Lisbon Strategy throughout Europe;
- the prevention of illegal work - i.e. by illegal cross-border commuters - and trafficking.

#### **What?**

- Early access to vocational and language training and orientation courses must be obligatory and free of charge. The active participation of asylum seekers in

these courses and their financial instruments (i.e. ESF) should be safeguarded.

- Migrants' and refugees' self organisations must be strengthened and enabled to act as educational and labour market (co-)institutions, in order to enhance the active participation of the target group. Therefore relevant project activities should be supported.

## **How?**

Promising strategies for the pursuance of these aims are:

- lobby work with European politicians about the inclusion of asylum seekers as explicit target groups of ESF operational programmes.
- inclusion of asylum seekers as declared target groups in European educational, vocational and social programmes;
- discussions and thematic seminars with relevant EU organisations (i.e. ECRE).

### **3.3 Priority 3: Enhancement of Public Awareness of Labour Market Access**

***We recommend:***

***Asylum seekers' access to the Labour Market should be recognized in public relation as well as in politics as a human right.***

Asylum seekers are not the reason but victims of a general economical problem, like unemployment. The public discussions often define Asylum seekers access to the Labour Market as reason for unemployment of natives. Consequence of which is a permanent and partially buried racism. Stronger public relation activities should raise public awareness of Asylum seekers' right to work and should combat discrimination and racism.

#### **Why?**

Reasons for promoting joint approaches and public awareness actions

- enhancing integration in society
- reduce illegal work and illegal migration
- combating racism and discrimination

#### **What?**

- Enhancement of the production and dissemination of information material for employers (economical chambers), related to employing of asylum seekers. Therefore relevant information campaigns should be implemented.

- Legal protection against racism and discrimination and implement anti-discrimination laws should be strengthened.

## **How?**

Promising strategies for the pursuance of these aims are

- Lobby work with employer organisations as well as with trade unions;
- Lobby work with politicians on national level as well as on European level;
- Inclusion of asylum seekers as declared target groups in European educational, vocational and social programmes.

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