



TOOLKIT

**Labour market integration
programme for refugees**

**Based on the principles of the
IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme**

Designed by IKEA Switzerland AG

Foreword

How this toolkit came about

Since 2015, a wave of refugees on an unprecedented scale has been reaching Europe. The refugees come from different parts of the world, from regions experiencing crises of all kinds. Whether you understand the geopolitical reasons for the streams of refugees or not, and whether you welcome them or not: the fact is that these people are now here. Men, women and children, young and old, families, unaccompanied minors, educated and uneducated, poor and well off. People with high hopes and ambitions – in search of safety and security, a life of normality and dignity. Many regard Europe, and especially Switzerland, as the “promised land”: everything will be better here, they will be able to make a new start here, work, build a new life for themselves and their families – far away from war and destruction. The reality, as they eventually find, is somewhat different; integration proves to be difficult.

Even though experts agree that having work or a job is the key to integration for refugees, many of them are dependent on social security. Whose fault is that? The authorities’? The refugees’? Or is it the employers’ fault?

**Experts are in agreement:
having a job is an
important step towards
integration.**

Can we as employers do more?


That was our starting point when we at IKEA Switzerland decided to look at this question more closely. In the end, the process led to the creation of a nationwide 3-year work placement programme for refugees – and to the recognition that a great deal more can be done to integrate refugees in the labour market than is currently being done. We also came to the pleasing realisation that, not only can we do more, but we also get more than we expected back in return (more on this in our closing words).

We have therefore produced this toolkit to share the experiences, findings and structures that we have generated through our Refugee Project. Why? If we want to help improve the overall situation for refugees, then sharing information makes sense. It means that employers who also have an interest in integrating refugees need not necessarily make the same beginner’s mistakes as we did. Our research can simply be copied instead of starting again from scratch. And perhaps the setting up of our work placement programme and our findings will serve as an inspiration for anyone else who wants to set up their own programme as a way of giving more refugees a chance to integrate. That would give us great pleasure.

We must not forget: most of the refugees will stay here – for a long time, if not forever. If we want these people to become part of society, we must all – politicians, business leaders and the general population – play an active part in helping them to integrate.

We too have repeatedly relied on valuable contributions from others – so we would like to take this opportunity to give our heartfelt thanks to the many people who have worked hard and have been involved, both inside and outside the company, and who have shown such enthusiasm in helping us to set up the project. It is thanks to them that the labour market integration programme for refugees at IKEA Switzerland has been put in place in its present form.


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Table of contents

A few words of background information	4
--	----------

On legal principles and the challenges of employing refugees	6
---	----------

What you need to know before recruiting	7
---	---

Background information about Asylum in Switzerland	9
--	---

The challenges of recruitment	12
-------------------------------	----

The IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme as an example	14
---	-----------

Making an idea a reality	15
--------------------------	----

Preparatory phase	16
-------------------	----

Recruitment phase	20
-------------------	----

Implementation phase	22
----------------------	----

Evaluation phase	24
------------------	----

Initial findings from the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme	25
---	-----------

Our initial findings	26
----------------------	----

Closing words	30
---------------	----

Links	31
-------	----

Sources	33
---------	----

A few words of background information

A very quick summary of the situation and needs of refugees, the reservations on the employer side, the need for employers to do something and possible first steps.



From adverse circumstances to high hopes

Many refugees undertake hazardous journeys and sea crossings, risking life and limb. Some of them never reach their destination, the supposedly safer Europe: they do not survive the journey or they get stuck on the way and go no further.

Consequently, the hopes and ambitions of those refugees who do make it here are very high: they want to find work to support their dependants, and give their children an education and good prospects for the future. Many regard Europe, and especially Switzerland, as the “promised land”; everything will be better here, they will be able to start again – far away from war and destruction. Germany and Switzerland, in particular, have the reputation of being countries with stable economies and a functioning social system. That makes these countries attractive for refugees looking for a new start.

The vast majority of refugees are highly motivated and want to work.

From high hopes to hard reality

For those who make it and arrive in Europe, the difficult journey is not over. They face rejection on all sides and often spend a long time living in fearful uncertainty as to whether they can stay or will have to go back to homes that, in some cases, no longer exist. The situation is made even more acute because the large number of refugees leads to bottlenecks in the processing of asylum applications and the provision of care and accommodation, and makes integration difficult.

Many of the refugees in Switzerland are unemployed.

So the reality today is that the vast majority of the refugees in Switzerland are unemployed. This statistic is alarming and only helps reinforce the stereotypes and prejudice against refugees. They have no structure to their day and no prospects for the future. Any contact with the Swiss population is often limited to mere essentials, which makes it difficult for them to learn the language and about our culture. Many of them feel dependent and useless, and in that situation self-esteem plummets. For their part, the local population often has the impression that refugees do not want to be independent or self-sufficient and simply want to exploit our social security system. This situation stokes up rejection and prejudice on all sides.

From hard reality to the employers’ initiative

Experts are in agreement: for long-term and successful integration in the host country, integration in the labour market is essential. The many unemployed refugees are an acute reality now and so integration in the labour market needs to take place here and now, not only when conditions are ideal – say, when international treaties are recognised worldwide, or when refugees have good language skills, or the population is united on the need for integration.

So this is where we as employers come in. Of course, companies cannot solve this problem alone, and they do not hold sole responsibility. They need support from politicians and the authorities; political and systematic changes are required that would make it easier for employers to employ refugees.

Known obstacles on the employer side

A UNHCR* series of dialogues with various stakeholders came to the conclusion that employers have the following reasons for not employing refugees:

- Uncertainty about the legal situation regarding access for refugees to the labour market.
- Uncertainty about their qualifications and skills.
- Anxiety about poor performance and low productivity due to lack of language skills.
- Fear of criticism from the general public for employing refugees or asylum seekers.



From employers' initiative to integration programme

Every company's situation is different. At IKEA Switzerland, we certainly benefited from the fact that we already employ people from over 90 different countries. That is because, as a value-based company, we recruit employees not on the strength of their CV but for their individual potential. Diversity and integration are in the company's DNA.

Helping always means stepping out of your comfort zone, taking a risk, engaging.

Today we can offer refugees our standardised labour market integration programme. Thanks to the programme, over a period of 3 years about 110 refugees who were having difficulty integrating in the labour market will gain an initial insight into a Swiss business. They have the chance to learn about the work culture here during a 6-month placement,

to meet people from Switzerland and, in the end, receive a reference that will improve their chances on the labour market. In addition to this programme, we continue to employ refugees through the normal recruitment process.

From integration programme to toolkit

And, finally, we have now created this toolkit. It is intended to inspire other companies to become involved, and to make their work a little easier because we are sharing the knowledge that we have acquired.

It is in three parts: the first part deals with the framework conditions and everything you need to know about asylum and working in Switzerland. The second part is about exactly how to implement a project to integrate refugees in the workforce, taking the Refugee Inclusion Programme at IKEA Switzerland as an example. It explains various aspects, concepts and challenges, and offers tips and possible structures. The third part presents the findings from the IKEA project, showing what we have learnt.

* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.



On legal principles and the challenges of employing refugees



What you need to know before recruiting

One of the main reasons for slow labour market integration, from the employers' point of view, is inadequate knowledge of the rules and options relating to the employment of refugees. Here is some information about this.

What kind of migrants can be employed?

In principle in Switzerland, so-called recognised refugees (B permit) and temporarily admitted refugees and other persons (F permit) have access to the labour market. Detailed information about Asylum in Switzerland can be found at the end of this chapter.

Does the principle of national priority apply?

This prioritisation does not affect refugees who have access to the labour market – i.e. recognised refugees and temporarily admitted persons living in Switzerland. With that status they are given a residence permit and permission to

work and are therefore – as far as the labour market is concerned – legally equivalent to Swiss nationals and EU/EFTA citizens. They are part of the potential national labour pool. Only for people who are still going through the asylum process (status N) does the principle of national priority apply. The principle of national priority is enshrined in Article 21 of the Foreign Nationals Act and says that Swiss people and citizens from EU/EFTA states and foreigners living in Switzerland with permission to work take priority over applicants from third-party countries when it comes to being considered for a job. If an employer wants to appoint someone from a so-called third-party state, he must prove that, despite taking certain steps, he was unable to fill the post with a Swiss citizen or a citizen of an EU/EFTA country.



Are work permits required?

Yes, both for recognised refugees (B) and also for temporarily admitted refugees and persons (F).

The employer must always apply for a work permit from the relevant cantonal labour market authority. In the case of individuals with an F permit, i.e. temporarily admitted refugees and persons, the decision rests with their canton of residence. However, we found that the cantons were very interested in integrating refugees into the normal labour market so that they were no longer dependent on social security.

If the pay and working conditions are fair, the permit is normally granted. The work permit is mainly intended to protect the temporarily admitted person and prevent them from being employed at excessively low wages.

To obtain a work permit, the employer must fill in a form (which can normally be downloaded from the website of the cantonal Migration Office or the cantonal labour market authority) and then send it, with the employment contract, to the labour market authority. The time it takes to issue a work permit varies from one canton to another and, in our experience, can be between 48 hours and three weeks. There is also a fee to pay for the work permit, from CHF 100 to 140, depending on the canton.

How are the wages taxed?

According to the Swiss Refugee Council, recognised refugees are taxed as normal. In the case of temporarily admitted persons, a special rate applies. That is 10% of the gross wage and, similarly to income tax, is deducted by the employer from the monthly wage and paid directly to the state.



Background information about Asylum in Switzerland

By signing the Geneva Convention on Refugees* in 1951, Switzerland committed itself to granting asylum to refugees and protecting people in need of protection. There are many reasons why people flee their country and seek temporary protection.

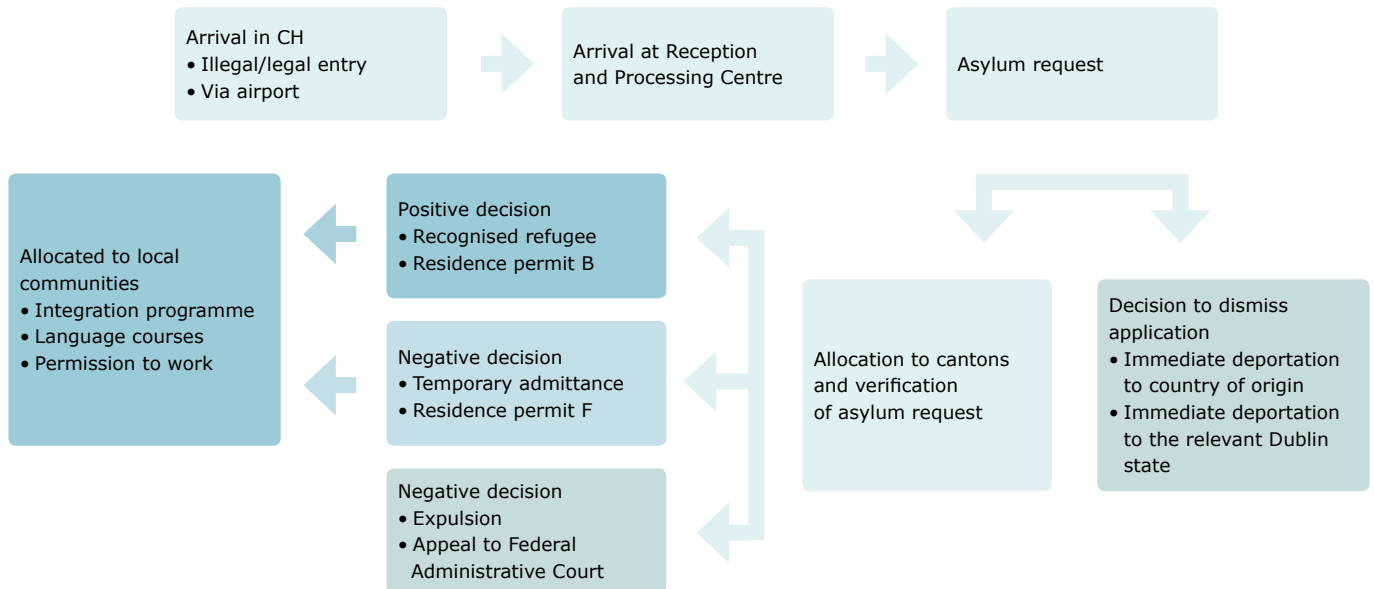
* Convention according to international law, signed by 143 countries; correct title: "Convention relating to the status of refugees".

By no means everyone who applies for asylum – and in principle everyone has the right to do so – is in need of asylum or protection according to the Geneva Convention on Refugees and Swiss legislation. In Switzerland, the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) is responsible for considering asylum requests. They check carefully and on an individual basis whether a request for asylum is credible and whether the individual meets the criteria for being regarded as a refugee under the Asylum Act. Fraudulent claims are rejected.

How long the asylum process takes varies greatly. In recent years, because of the increased number of applications and consequently the lack of resources, it has often taken a very long time.

Asylum application

In Switzerland, in principle everyone has the right to apply for asylum. The application must be made at one of the five so-called centres, officially called Reception and Processing Centres or at the airport, in the case of arrival by plane. The asylum process then begins and each asylum request is considered individually. The decision is made as to whether Switzerland will accept it and, if so, what status will be granted to the applicant.



Checking and decision-making

When an asylum request is being considered, there are two options: firstly, a decision to dismiss an application, when Switzerland does not accept the request, either because it is fraudulent or because the asylum seeker has already been registered in another Dublin Convention member state and therefore that state is responsible for their asylum request. It frequently happens that Switzerland does not accept asylum requests if the person in question registered on arrival in one of the countries covered by the Dublin Convention or the Dublin Regulations II/III (which apply to all EU member states plus Switzerland, Norway and Iceland). According to the Dublin Regulations, the country of first registration must process the asylum application. Most refugees arrive at one of the EU's external borders. Most of them, however, do not want to stay in countries like Greece or Italy or in the Balkans, because the economic,

social and, in some cases, human rights conditions are regarded as less attractive in comparison with Germany or Switzerland. For that reason, many of them try to get past the authorities there to reach Germany or Switzerland and apply for asylum there. However, many of these people were registered by the authorities in those countries when they arrived there, and this can be proved by the Swiss authorities using the central Eurodac system. In such cases, Switzerland does not accept the asylum request and the individual must return to the country in which they first registered.

The other option is to accept the asylum request. Here again there are several alternatives: the request may be approved and the individual given the status of recognised refugee (residence permit B). If the individual is not recognised as a refugee, they may still be granted a residence permit F as a temporarily admitted refugee. On the next page, we go into more detail about the different kinds of status.

Status N

While an individual is going through the asylum process, they are given the status N. That individual may not work for the first three (in some cases six) months. At the end of that period, individuals with status N are allowed to seek non-self-employed work and be employed, provided economic conditions permit. In this situation, however, the principle of national priority applies. This means that the employer must prove that, despite making exhaustive efforts, he was unable to fill the post with a Swiss citizen or a citizen of an EU/EFTA country.

If the decision is made in the asylum process that the applicant can stay in Switzerland, then there are three different categories to which the applicant may be assigned, depending on their individual circumstances.

Recognised refugees (B)

A refugee is a person who was persecuted in their homeland or in the country where they last lived for reason of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion or who has well-founded reason to fear being persecuted on those grounds. This definition is based on the Geneva Convention on Refugees.

Refugees are granted a foreign-nationality identity card B. This is valid for one year and can be extended. After they have lived in Switzerland for 10 years, they can be granted an unlimited permanent residence permit C. If they integrate successfully, they can apply for a C permit after just five years.

Temporarily admitted refugees (F)

A temporarily admitted refugee is someone who meets the above criteria as a refugee, but whose status as a refugee only arose because they left their homeland or country of origin or because of the behaviour of that individual after they left.

Temporarily admitted refugees are given an F permit. This is issued for a maximum of 12 months and can be reviewed by the canton of residence and extended for further 12-month periods. After living in Switzerland for five years, temporarily admitted refugees can apply for a residence permit (B permit). The authorities will take account of whether they have integrated, their family circumstances and the feasibility of returning to their country of origin.

Temporarily admitted persons without refugee status (F)

Individuals may be temporarily admitted whose asylum request has been rejected but whose expulsion cannot be enforced. There are three main reasons why someone whose asylum application has been rejected may be temporarily admitted into Switzerland:

- The removal order is unlawful, if, for example, their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) would be at risk.
- The removal order is unreasonable, for example if there is a war going on in the individual's homeland.
- The removal order cannot be executed. This is the case when the journey is technically impossible at the time of deportation.



The challenges of recruitment

We know from the series of UNHCR dialogues mentioned above that employers are concerned about poor performance at work, whether that is because of lack of language skills or for other reasons. What are the key points?

Language

The biggest hurdle is initially language. Many refugees cannot speak one of our national languages and the compulsory language courses funded by the state, canton or municipality usually only teach basic knowledge.

For employers it is useful to work closely with the authorities to find people with the relevant language skills and potential for the available jobs.

Diplomas, degrees, references

Many refugees cannot find work because they do not have certificates or documents. In many non-European countries, especially on the African continent, the European educational path is not the norm. There you often need no special training to carry out any kind of work. On the other hand, there are also many refugees who are highly qualified and have completed an apprenticeship, a training course or even a degree. However, most non-European diplomas are not recognised in Switzerland and are therefore practically worthless.

Furthermore, many refugees had to leave their personal possessions behind when they fled, or they have lost them or they were destroyed. Consequently, in many cases the certificates and documents required to make a successful job application no longer exist and frequently copies cannot be requested or obtained.

The Swiss application and employment system is based largely on a closely regulated system of diplomas and references.

One solution might be to question these rigid structures and regard all people as people with potential. Often there are jobs that do not require specific training. These offer refugees a way in. Part-time training opportunities give refugees a chance to develop their potential further. Especially those refugees who were highly qualified before leaving their country bring a great deal of experience and potential with them.

For companies that recruit on the basis not of CVs but of personality characteristics, it is therefore entirely possible, with a little flexibility, to use existing potential as a criterion during recruitment and so to employ refugees according to their skills and previous knowledge and support them as

necessary. If a company does not have this option, it can still help by offering low-threshold employment to refugees. Of course, it is important that this is done on fair and proper terms.

Fears

Often background and religion play a central role. For example, the preconception that refugees from certain regions are particularly lazy and are only here to benefit from our social security system. Another widespread stereotype relates to religious faith. Often there is a great deal of mistrust and some employers decide, for example, against Muslim applicants out of fear that they may promote radical views, sympathise with terrorist groups or even belong to one.

Fears and prejudices are very hard to break down.

It is best achieved by direct contact. Introducing a labour market integration programme for refugees, or simply employing them, can turn out to be a good way of overcoming prejudice and giving people from different backgrounds a chance to become part of society. Intercultural training sessions for both refugees and employees are a good way of encouraging integration in the workplace.





The IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme as an example

Making an idea a reality

In this chapter, we outline the structure for a possible labour market integration project for refugees, taking the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme as an example. Of course, every company is structured and organised differently: they will be looking for different skills and staff profiles, and hierarchies will be different. So our programme is intended to serve as inspiration.

What's it all about?

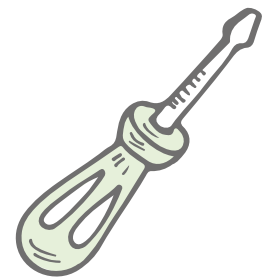
The idea of the programme is that, twice a year, each IKEA store in Switzerland takes on two refugees for a period of paid work experience lasting six months. The placement is accompanied by intercultural training for the interns and for IKEA employees who work closely with the refugees.

During the work placement, there are also regular follow-up meetings between the local IKEA HR department and the interns' supervisors.

The IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme has been implemented at all nine locations in Switzerland, which are in nine different cantons. To test the project, it began with a trial run at the Spreitenbach store in the canton of Aargau. A month later, the roll-out began simultaneously at all the other eight stores. It was important to start at the same time because the participants meet regularly for intercultural training.

The programme is due to run for three years – during that time about 110 refugees will complete a work placement and in this way

learn about the Swiss work culture, acquire a reference from a Swiss employer and find a way into the Swiss labour market.



Preparatory phase

There are certain preconditions for introducing a project and carrying it through successfully. The most important of them sounds banal – but it isn't, at all: does the company really recognise the need for action and does it have the will to carry it through?

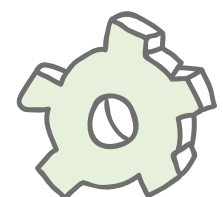
Organisational readiness – do we really want to?

To begin with, there must be people in key positions in the company who support the idea, actively promote the project and are willing to work on persuading those who are critical or sceptical.

Our experience shows us that the workforce will not be 100% behind this kind of commitment. In the case of IKEA Switzerland, the initiative came from top-level management.

In order to gain the commitment of the staff, the undertaking was announced very strategically as being rooted in the humanist values and traditions of the company.

In this way, first of all, all the other levels of management were won over and convinced and they, in turn, prepared their teams. Subsequently all employees were kept well informed in good time and were persuaded.



TIP

Organise a kick-off presentation about the concept, costs, timeline and benefits, followed by plenty of time for questions to the project leaders or management. Make the presentation available for distribution.

It proved useful here to organise a project presentation, which was used initially to inform managerial staff. Afterwards, this presentation was made available for the managers and heads of department to use and so all employees were provided with the same information.

Intentions and objectives – what do we want to achieve?

Before embarking on the detailed planning for a project like this, you need to decide, within your company, what your objectives are in employing refugees.

For example:

- to acquire qualified workers?
- to fill unskilled jobs?
- to play an active role in helping the many refugees to integrate?

For example, for IKEA Switzerland, the primary objective was to give refugees a chance to gain some initial experience of the Swiss

labour market and Swiss work culture through a work placement. The social aspect was definitely the main focus. The provision of a reference or certificate should make it easier for the refugees to apply for jobs on the Swiss labour market in future, including at IKEA Switzerland. Even during the placement, the participants who show sufficient potential are encouraged to apply for available jobs. If they apply, they are definitely invited to an interview.

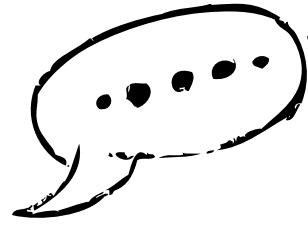
It is also a good idea to define the target group that you are hoping to appeal to with your programme, or rather what expectations you will have of the refugees, because the refugees arriving and living in Switzerland are very diverse.

IKEA, for example, decided during the preparatory phase that the programme should be aimed particularly at those people who were not yet active in the labour market and did not have the language skills to compete with local candidates. The requirements for your potential interns/employees are then defined accordingly.



Checklist of preconditions

- Is there enough willingness in the company to commit to helping refugees?
- Are enough human resources available?
- In which part of the company is the project based?
- Does a project leader need to be appointed?
- How much time should be invested in the project?
- Willingness to deal with negative reactions, internally and externally
- Is there an adequate budget available?



Contact with the authorities – how can we cooperate?

It is also a good idea to contact the relevant cantonal Migration Office and tell them about your plans, or rather to seek advice and support for your project. In our experience, the Migration Offices and associated authorities and organisations responsible for integrating refugees (at work) showed a great deal of interest. They are in favour of refugees becoming independent and so they are happy to provide information and support.

It is important that the applicants to the programme are preselected by the authorities. For one thing, this ensures that the most suitable people really get the opportunity for a work placement. For another, this partnership makes it easier for your HR department: the applications you receive will include only those candidates who are physically and mentally capable of holding down a regular job (which is not necessarily the case with refugees from war zones).

In addition, the smaller the number of applicants, the fewer people will be disappointed or discouraged by being rejected.

You should allow enough time to identify the relevant offices and organisations at cantonal level which you will need to help you and perhaps cooperate with you. Various different organisations are responsible for the integration of refugees in the different cantons, and it can require some patience to find the right contacts. You are recommended to contact the cantonal Migration Office. You can find a list of links at the end of this document.

Time and resources – how much do we want to invest?

Depending on the nature and scale of your project, you need to allow

sufficient time to prepare and execute it. During that time, you should investigate the following aspects internally:

- Planning and requesting a budget
- Scope for new jobs
- Possible areas of work or deployment
- Required job specifications
- Responsibilities within the company (Who, in which post, will take the lead? Which posts will play a supporting role?)

You also need to check whether there is a budget for the project and, if so, how much. The budget that is required can vary depending on a number of parameters. In making your initial estimate, we recommend that you take the following cost items into consideration in your calculation, as appropriate:

- Duration of the programme
- Wages
- Additional training/coaching/instruction for refugees or your employees
- Additional post, with corresponding workload, for a project leader

TIP

If you are planning to help refugees to integrate in the workplace, you need to establish in advance whether the programme you are developing is feasible or whether it is in breach of the principle of non-discrimination. It is recommended that you contact the relevant authorities.

Job requirements and candidate profiles – what are we expecting?

Another important aspect that must be considered during the preparatory phase is the writing of job profiles or specifications for the deployment of refugees. The following criteria need to be taken into account:

- **Language skills:** The required language skills depend greatly on the areas of work. If the applicant is going to be in contact with customers, then they certainly need good language skills (B2/C1). If the work does not involve customer contact, then the required standard can be lowered (A2/B1). In our experience, the actual language skills of applicants can vary from what they state on paper – in either direction.
- **Physical requirements:** Depending on the area of work, this may be an essential factor. The main thing to remember here is that there are many people

among the refugees who have been physically injured by war or during their journey and who consequently cannot be deployed on certain kinds of physical work.

- **Openness** to different and new cultures
- **Teamwork:** Teamwork is a way of working that is not as common in some other cultures as it is in European countries. So lots of refugees are not familiar with working in this way and need time to get used to it and adapt.
- Willingness to **work with women** and acceptance of female managers: In many cultures outside Europe it does not go without saying that women have equal rights, especially not in the workplace. For many refugees it is entirely alien for women to be in management posts. Many of them do accept this situation and adapt to it (usually after a brief period of adjustment).
- **Motivation** and staying power: Many of our traditions in Switzerland are new, unfamiliar, strange and sometimes even incomprehensible for refugees. Many of them arrive in

Switzerland with a high degree of motivation but in some cases with unrealistic ideas about working life here. Faced with the reality and the actual circumstances, it can happen that some of them find their courage and staying power deserting them, because they expected the work to be quite different. So this is an important issue that needs to be discussed at the initial interview.

- **Adaptability:** The work culture in Switzerland is different in many ways from that in non-European countries, including with regard to workplace routines (working hours and breaks) and the workload in general. Punctuality is also a rather elastic concept in many non-European countries, so many refugees have to accustom themselves to Swiss habits.
- **Mobility:** Depending on when working hours start and finish, and where the applicants are living, it may be that a job is out of the question for a refugee if they are unable to reach the workplace at certain times by public transport.



Recruitment phase

Whenever standardised processes and people from different cultures come into contact, first and foremost, a great deal of sensitivity, empathy and flexibility are called for. But also background knowledge: for example, about the Anti-discrimination Act, about how to work with regional authorities or about employment contracts and work permits.

Recruitment – how should the selection be made?

When you have made all your preparations and written the job profiles, recruitment can begin. Recruitment is a key stage and should be particularly well planned and thought through, because it is a vital factor in ensuring the success of the project.

Please note the Anti-discrimination Act that is in force in Switzerland. Under this, if you are filling an advertised vacancy, you are not allowed to exclude or prefer certain groups of people. So when you advertise a post, you may not look

specifically for refugees. There are many reasons why this principle is justified and important.

However, in the context of a support programme, it is possible to focus on a particular group of people with special needs, such as refugees, who would otherwise be unlikely to gain a foothold in the labour market within a reasonable time by normal routes. In order to offer something specifically and exclusively for refugees, at IKEA this was done in the form of a three-year work experience programme, in collaboration with the cantonal authorities. To do this, first of all, with the help of the cantonal Migration Offices in all

nine cantons that were involved, we identified and contacted the authorities and organisations that are entrusted with the integration of refugees into work. These bodies maintain a pool of candidates who are suitable for the labour market. From this pool, based on prescribed criteria and competence profiles, a “preselected” group of candidates were forwarded to each IKEA HR department. This type of recruitment is only possible as part of a specific programme. If you’re trying to fill normal, individual vacancies, the Anti-discrimination Act applies and the jobs must be advertised.

Introductory interview – how can we create mutual trust?

Many refugees are not familiar with the procedure and the (unwritten) rules for interviews. So they often do not react in the way that HR managers expect. In addition, the applicants are extremely nervous and uncertain, which is often only exacerbated by their inadequate language skills. Consequently, their true potential can sometimes remain hidden.

For that reason, in the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme, some applicants were accompanied by their supervisors or by interpreters (paid for by the canton/municipality). We also omitted some standard questions such as “Why do you want to work for our company in particular?”, because it is surely clear to everyone that the applicants are simply looking for work to support themselves and that the actual company is

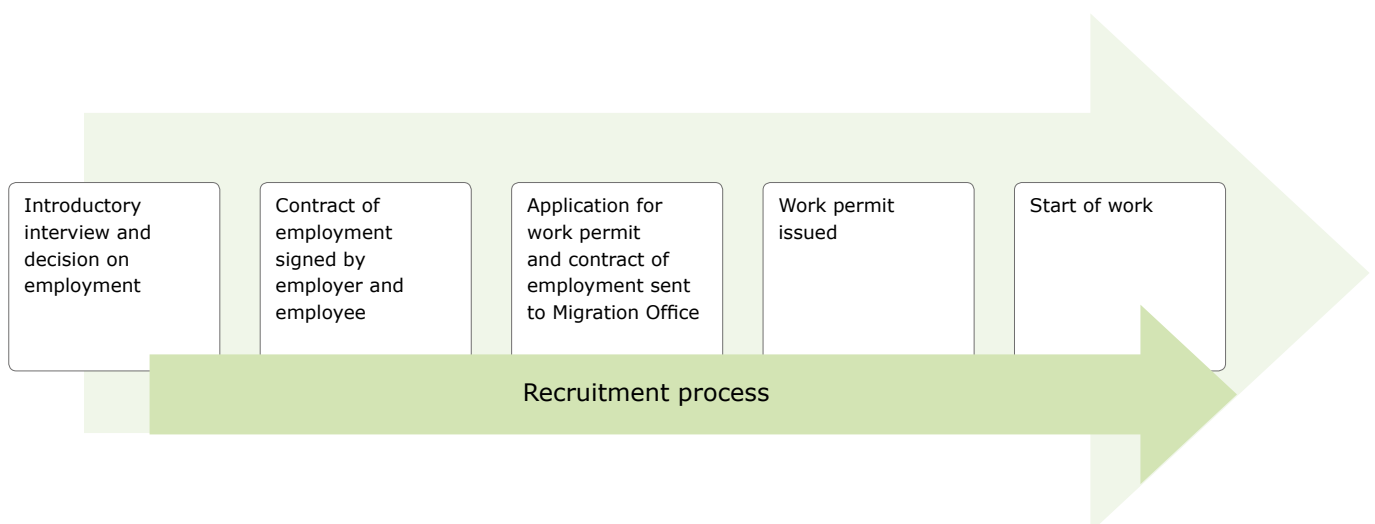
probably of secondary importance. This should not be seen as a negative factor and it should not be held against applicants. Nor should questions be asked about their personal experience of war or escaping. Many refugees have survived terrible and traumatic experiences. An interview is not the time to talk about them.

Employment, contracts, work permits – what do you need to remember?

A work placement or employment contract is prepared in the same way as for regular interns or employees. Once this has been signed by both sides, a work permit can be applied for from the cantonal authority (Migration Office or Employment Office). The arrangements vary from one canton to another. Here too, working together during the recruitment process is extremely helpful.

Tip

It is all about getting to know a person and building up mutual trust – not about filling in a questionnaire. Consequently, you need to be sensitive – some of the standard questions may not make sense in this context. During the application process and especially during the interview, bear in mind the background from which the refugees have come, and the fact that they may have experienced terrible things. That they often feel unwelcome and useless in Switzerland. And that, first and foremost, they want to improve their financial situation.





Implementation phase

Trust is good, close support is better. Integration does not work by itself. So it is essential to provide support: onboarding and supervision for the refugees within the company, intercultural training sessions for refugees and employees and regular project updates to the people in the company who are involved.

Onboarding and supervision – how can integration be made easier?

As we have already explained, for most refugees the workplace situation in Switzerland is new and unfamiliar – they first need to learn about our processes and work culture. To speed up this process and make it as efficient as possible, a good “onboarding” system is important. It is also recommended that refugees are very closely supervised, especially in the initial period. At IKEA, these two elements are part of the introductory process for any new

employee. Every new employee is given an introductory timetable structuring the initiation phase and setting dates for regular feedback and follow-up meetings. In addition, every new employee is given a kind of mentor to act as their point of contact during the introductory period, someone who looks after and supports their new colleague. These measures are particularly important for refugees, because, in our experience, they need very close supervision, especially at first. The better the introductory phase is organised, the better and faster they reach the required standard in their work.

Intercultural training – how can we encourage mutual understanding?

It is not unusual for refugees to lose a job after just a short time because of conflicts, misunderstandings or unfortunate events at work that are due to cultural differences. Certain rules and values are often very different in different cultural groups, such as the oft-quoted punctuality or gender equality, and also the strict separation of work and private lives.

With the best will in the world, it can sometimes take quite some time, especially for adult refugees, to get used to their new circumstances.

In the light of these difficulties, the six-month work placement in the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme is supplemented by intercultural training for refugees. At the start of each work experience cycle, there is a two-day intensive training session at which refugees are taught about the fundamental values and rules of the Swiss world of work. Then, during the work placement, refugees are supported with follow-up training sessions. These sessions are used to refresh the subjects listed above and look at them in greater depth, especially in the specific context of the refugees' daily work. The training provides a good platform for

reflection and sharing experiences, as well as offering help with specific incidents or questions and finding viable solutions to them.

Because the issue of refugees is sometimes associated with fear or prejudice among the general public, another element of the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme is intercultural training for employees.


The main element of this is that all employees in whose departments refugees are doing a work placement are given one day of intensive training. The aim of this is to sensitise the employees and boost their intercultural skills. The training sessions for both refugees and employees are led by external experts.

Follow-up

Once the project has been running for a few weeks, it is recommended that a follow-up session is offered to all those involved and also to people occupying strategic posts within the company. Information is shared about initial findings, positive experiences, potential challenges and any modifications that may be required. This reassures employees that the project is being well managed, and it helps to prevent uncertainty or even rumours from arising.

Suggestions for intercultural training

- Working in Switzerland
- The rules of Swiss work culture
- The position of women in the workplace
- Social manners
- Tips for communicating
- Awareness of cultural differences
- How does integration work?
- Conflict resolution



Evaluation phase

As in anything, learning continuously and incorporating new findings are an important part of the process. Regular evaluation, for example in the form of written questionnaires, may be helpful.

Setting up the project involves, among other things, defining an objective. When can the project be judged to be successful and how will this success be reflected? An evaluation is a useful way of assessing these parameters and also for modifying or improving various processes and procedures. It makes sense for feedback from all the stakeholders and participants to feed into the evaluation. In the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme, a survey was carried out halfway through the work placement and shortly before the end – among the interns and among the HR managers and heads of department who were involved.

We recommend that the evaluation process is carried out in writing, using standardised questionnaires. In that way you get results that can easily be compared. These can then be turned into interim reports and a final report.

In the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme, the evaluation phase began even during the pilot project. This meant that the first modifications could be introduced in time for the roll-out.

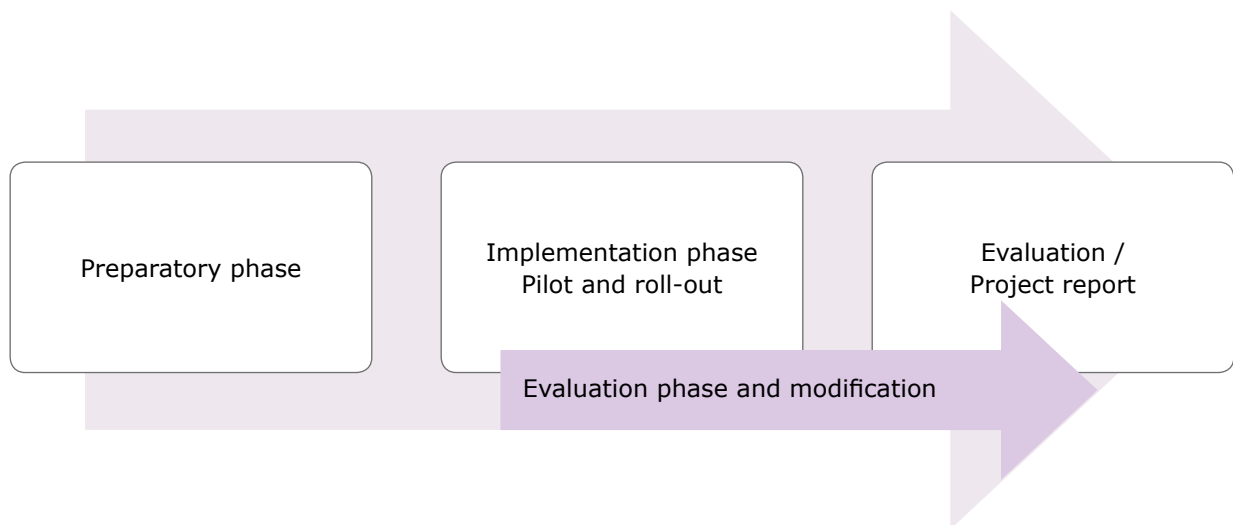
3

Initial findings from the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme

Our initial findings

The first round of the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme is already completed. From it, we have made some valuable findings and learnt some lessons that we would like to share with you here.

Structure of the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme





Cooperation with the authorities is essential

As we mentioned on page 18, working closely with the cantonal authorities is important and extremely useful. So important and useful that we would like to mention it again here.

Internal communication is important

In our experience, one of the reasons why the project was very positively received was because it was publicised internally in good time and via various channels so that all employees were fully informed. This gave them enough time to prepare themselves for the various new processes and adapt to them. A Q&A session for employees, in which the main questions from their point of view were answered, proved to be especially helpful. The relevant department needs to clarify what is being done to help refugees integrate in the workforce, when and why.

The employees were also provided with a “Fact sheet about the main countries of origin”, because we realised during the pilot project that many of the employees held prejudices against refugees that were mainly the result of a lack of knowledge or information. On the other hand, there was also a great deal of interest in finding out more about the situation and background of the refugees. In the fact sheet, any employees who are interested can find basic background information (crisis/conflict situation, make-up of population, religions, human rights situation etc.) about the currently most high-profile countries of origin in the media and among the general public.

Define project management responsibilities clearly

Depending on the scale of the programme, appointing a project manager may be necessary or recommended. Because the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme is a national project that is going on in nine different cantons, we had to give one person full-time responsibility for setting up and implementing the project.

Sample questions for Q&A sessions

- Why do people flee their country?
- What is the situation like for refugees in Switzerland?
- Do refugees in Switzerland have permission to work?
- Why is the company getting involved?
- How is the programme structured or what kind of commitment are we making?
- Who is responsible internally?
- Which parts of the company are involved?
- In which areas/departments will the refugees be deployed?
- What happens to the refugees after the programme?
- Will existing jobs be put at risk by the new workers?
- Where is further information available internally?



Intercultural training sessions are recommended

In the initial evaluation of the training for both refugees and employees, the intercultural training was considered particularly helpful and beneficial (by the employees, not least in the general context of working in teams that are already international).

If the company has an international outlook, that makes it easier

“Diversity and Inclusion” is one of IKEA’s main corporate values. That is why including refugees in our teams was not an entirely new approach. Overall, the IKEA stores in Switzerland employ people from over 90 different countries. So the composition of the teams is already international and employees are used to working with people from different cultures and different backgrounds.

Define responsibilities clearly

It is important that responsibilities are clearly defined, both internally and with any possible partner authorities or organisations. Everyone who is involved must know what their role and responsibilities are. This is the only way to make sure everything runs smoothly.

Language is the biggest challenge

In the questionnaires, all the participants without exception expressed an urgent desire to improve their language skills, because they had realised as a result of the work placement that language is the key to integrating in the labour market and in Swiss society. However, in most cantons, language courses are only funded up to level B1 or A2, which, in our experience, is not always adequate

for day-to-day work. One option would be to make a deliberate attempt to find people (e.g. retired teachers) who would be prepared to work voluntarily.

Women are rarely able to work full-time

At IKEA, gender equality is an important matter. So, with the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme, we very much want to support women specifically. We passed this message on to our partner organisations in the relevant cantons. Nevertheless, they sent us almost exclusively male applicants. We had not thought about the fact that many of the young women refugees become mothers at an early age. For that reason, it is difficult, if not impossible, for many of them to manage a full-time workload. To overcome this, we intend to adapt our programme here and allow flexible alternatives (50–70% of working hours). We also now understand that very many refugees are male. Many families send fathers or sons on the dangerous journey so that their family members can follow them later by a safe, legal route.

Native workers always have the home advantage

It is obvious that the performance at work of refugees will generally lag considerably behind that of the regular workforce. We have already explained the reasons for this. We therefore recommend that, to some extent, you regard your commitment to refugees as a social commitment and keep your expectations of their performance at the start realistic, responding on a case-by-case basis.

A work placement for refugees is not the same as one for schoolchildren or students

The work placement for refugees cannot be compared with normal work experience for schoolchildren or students. It is not about building on, or extending, existing and/or theoretical knowledge. Instead, the main aim is for the refugees to learn about the Swiss world of work and familiarise themselves with its rules and systems. In the end, the refugees should have a reference from an employer based in Switzerland in their hands. It goes without saying that work placement jobs for refugees are

always also part of a company's social commitment and in addition to existing jobs. Under no circumstances should they lead to regular jobs being replaced.

Internal commitment is crucial

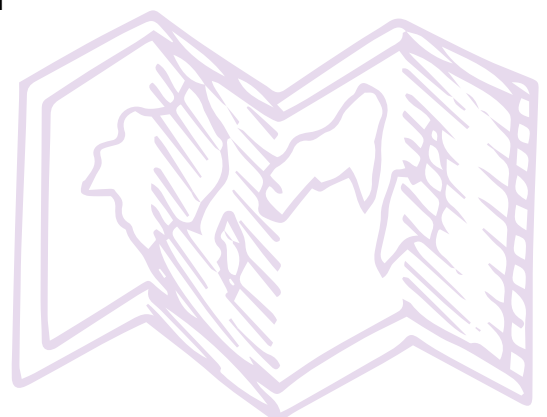
As we have already said, internal acceptance of, and support for, a project for refugees are essential if it is to succeed. We would like to emphasise here the extent to which a fully thought-through and well-prepared overall concept, and good communication, can help bring even critical voices within the organisation on board.

Do not underestimate cultural differences

Sometimes employees are confronted by views and values held by refugees that are alien to an understanding of Western culture, for example about women in managerial roles or the idea of doing "women's work". Here, patience is needed on the part of the employer and employees. The refugees need to learn about the differences, accept them – at least in their professional life – and adapt to them.

There will be disappointments – on all sides

There is often an underlying expectation in society that refugees who are given asylum in Switzerland should express gratitude that borders on subservience. Any initial difficulties can sometimes be interpreted as idleness or ingratitude. However, the fact is that many refugees, understandably, find things a bit difficult at first and require a little longer to feel at home and know how to perform certain tasks correctly. The reasons for this have already been mentioned. Nor must we forget that many refugees have numerous other problems to contend with as well as working and integrating, including traumatic events that they have experienced and worries about family members and relatives who have been left behind. Consequently, it would be a good idea to try not to have unrealistic expectations.



Closing words

Diversity, inclusion, a humanitarian tradition: Fine words, but actions bring them to life. And we learn by doing.

At some point, there are always limits to a company's ambition to stick to an ethos of diversity and inclusion or humanitarian values. That is inevitable. So if we really want to develop and extend our capacity for diversity and inclusion, openness and humanity, we are, by definition, acting at the limit of our experience. In other words: we cannot grow if we stay within our comfort zone. We therefore have a choice as to whether we regard those difficulties that we encounter in being open to all as a catalyst and an opportunity for self-growth – or as an insurmountable obstacle.

Looking at it from this wider perspective, we at IKEA in Switzerland have grown through this experience. The ability of IKEA Switzerland to take people as they are and recognise that they all have talents was certainly put to the test by the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme – and the end result was that it was strengthened. When we simply "wanted to do something", we did not expect that we would get something back in return for our activities like this.

So the IKEA Refugee Inclusion Programme turned out to be a positive experience. Despite – or perhaps because of – the few difficulties, we as a company are still fully behind the programme. The positive outcomes for refugees and for the workforce stack up in equal measure. So far, all the IKEA teams report that cultural difficulties were quickly ironed out and the new interns soon became an important and enriching part of the team. In addition, we have already gained a few new employees through the programme whom the company will be happy to help on a permanent basis in future, on account of their personalities and skills. Most of the participants are grateful and happy to have this opportunity. The existing teams also report that the experience has broadened their horizons in a positive way and that meeting and working with refugees is very enriching.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."
Art. 1* of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights

We live in a world that is changing rapidly; people are forced by conflict or environmental catastrophe to leave their homelands. The worrying developments in the world are very complex and it is extremely difficult if not impossible to identify who is responsible. Ultimately, that does not help those who are affected. They are people who are doing their best. They are doing what they can at this moment, and what they think is the best in the current situation – just as we all do. And quite a lot of these people are now in Switzerland and need help. That is the immediate reality, not only for them but also for us.

And it is here that we can get involved most effectively. As an individual, or as a society, as the government or as a commercial organisation. Everyone doing what they can, however modest that may be. Obviously, looked at like that, our programme is only a tiny step. And yet it still helps boost the total effort. And if this toolkit helps and inspires other companies to take an initiative of their own, and those activities motivate more companies – so much the better.

It's like crowd funding: lots of small contributions that, in the end, grow into a large sum so that great things can be achieved. That's why everyone needs to be involved. Including you.

* Switzerland has ratified the document containing this principle from Article 1 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and committed itself to adhere to it. We should all, individuals, governments and companies, act in that spirit and help those in need.

Links

(Cantonal) migration and labour market authorities

State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home.html>

Canton of Aargau

Amt für Migration und Integration
Aargau (MIKA)

https://www.ag.ch/de/dvi/migration_integration/migration_integration.jsp

Canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden

Amt für Inneres, Abteilung Migration
<https://www.ar.ch/verwaltung/departement-inneres-und-sicherheit/amt-fuer-inneres-abteilung-migration/>

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit

<https://www.ar.ch/verwaltung/departement-bau-und-volkswirtschaft/amt-fuer-wirtschaft-und-arbeit/>

Canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden

Amt für Ausländerfragen
www.ai.ch/de/verwaltung/aemter/welcome.php?amt_id=96

Arbeitsamt

www.ai.ch/de/verwaltung/aemter/welcome.php?amt_id=37

Canton of Basel-Landschaft

Amt für Migration
<https://www.baselland.ch/politik-und-behorden/direktionen/sicherheitsdirektion/migration>

Amt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit

<https://www.baselland.ch/politik-und-behorden/direktionen/volkswirtschafts-und-gesundheitsdirektion/kiga>

Canton of Basel-Stadt

Bevölkerungsdienste und Migration, Migrationsamt
www.bdm.bs.ch

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit

www.awa.bs.ch

Canton of Bern

Amt für Migration
www.pom.be.ch/pom/de/index/migration

Beco Berner Wirtschaft

www.vol.be.ch/vol/de/index/arbeit/auslaendische_erwerbstaetige

Canton of Freiburg

Service de la population et des migrants
www.fr.ch/spomi/fr/pub/index.cfm

www.fr.ch/spomi/fr/pub/main_d_oeuvre_trang_re.htm

Canton of Glarus

Abteilung Migration
www.gl.ch/xml_1/internet/de/application/d1256/d39/d321/d468/f1658.cfm

Kantonales Arbeitsamt

www.gl.ch/xml_1/internet/de/application/d1256/d37/d260/d262/d998/f999.cfm

Canton of Graubünden

Integration
www.gr.ch/DE/themen/Integration/integrationgr/Seiten/Willkommen.aspx

Amt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit

www.gr.ch/DE/institutionen/verwaltung/dvs/kiga/ueberuns/Seiten/default.aspx

Canton of Luzern

Amt für Migration
www.migration.lu.ch

Dienststelle für Wirtschaft und Arbeit

https://wira.lu.ch/abteilungen/industrie_gewerbeaufsicht/personenfreizuegigkeit/meldeverfahren

Canton of Nidwalden

www.nw.ch/de/

Canton of Obwalden

Amt für Migration
www.ow.ch/de/verwaltung/aemter/welcome.php?amt_id=162

Amt für Arbeit

www.ow.ch/de/verwaltung/aemter/?amt_id=161

Canton of Schaffhausen

Migrationsamt
www.sh.ch/index.php?id=46

Kantonales Arbeitsamt

www.sh.ch/Arbeitsamt.240.0.html

Canton of Schwyz

Amt für Migration
<https://www.sz.ch/behoerden/staatskanzlei-departemente/volkswirtschafts-departement/amt-fuer-migration/einstiegs-seite.html/72-416-387-381-1968-1996>

Amt für Arbeit

<https://www.sz.ch/unternehmen/arbeit-gewerbeaufsicht/arbeit.html/72-443-4443-1877>

**Canton of Solothurn**

Migrationsamt
www.so.ch/verwaltung/departement-des-innern/migrationsamt/

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit
<https://www.so.ch/verwaltung/volkswirtschaftsdepartement/amt-fuer-wirtschaft-und-arbeit/>

Canton of St. Gallen

Migrationsamt
www.migrationsamt.sg.ch/

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit
www.awa.sg.ch/

Canton of Thurgau

Migrationsamt
www.migrationsamt.tg.ch/xml_13/internet/de/intro.cfm

Canton of Uri

Amt für Arbeit und Migration
http://www.ur.ch/de/verwaltung/verwaltungorg/?amt_id=853

Canton of Zug

Amt für Migration
<https://www.zg.ch/behoerden/sicherheitsdirektion/amt-fur-migration>

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit
<https://www.zg.ch/behoerden/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/amt-fur-wirtschaft-und-arbeit>

Canton of Zurich

Migrationsamt
www.ma.zh.ch/internet/sicherheitsdirektion/migrationsamt/de/home.html

Amt für Wirtschaft und Arbeit
www.awa.zh.ch/internet/volkswirtschaftsdirektion/awa/de/home.html

Canton of Geneva

Office cantonal de la population et des migrants
<http://ge.ch/population/loffice-cantonal-de-population-migrations>

Office cantonal de l'inspection et des relations du travail, Service de la main-d'œuvre étrangère
www.geneve.ch/ocirt/services.asp

Canton of Jura

Service de la population
www.jura.ch/DIN/SPOP.html

Service de l'économie et de l'emploi,
www.jura.ch/DES/SEE/AMT/Service-des-arts-et-metiers-et-du-travail.html

Canton of Neuchâtel

Service des migrations
www.ne.ch/autorites/DEAS/SMIG/Pages/accueil.aspx

www.ne.ch/autorites/DEAS/SMIG/organisation/Pages/OMOE.aspx

Canton of Valais

Service de la population et des migrations
<https://www.vs.ch/fr/spm>

Service de l'industrie, du commerce et du travail (SICT)
<https://www.vs.ch/web/sict>

Canton of Vaud

Service de la population
www.vd.ch/autorites/departements/decs/population/

Service d'emploi
www.vd.ch/?id=22175

Sources

Asylum – State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/asyl/asylverfahren.html>

Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html

Assessing the potential of refugees and temporarily admitted persons – report by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/va-flue/ber-potenzial-va-flue-d.pdf>

Brief overview of Status B and F – State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)/ Swiss Refugee Council

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/publikationen/info-flue-va/info-flue-va-en.pdf>

Recognised refugees (granting of asylum) – Swiss Refugee Council

<https://www.refugeecouncil.ch/asylum-law/legal-status/recognised-refugees-granting-of-asylum.html>

Legal basis for access to the Swiss labour market by foreign nationals – State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/en/home/themen/arbeit/nicht-eu_efta-angehoerige/grundlagen_zur_arbeitsmarktzulassung.html

Federal Act on Foreign Nationals (Foreign Nationals Act, AuG)

<https://www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20020232/201510010000/142.20.pdf>

German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees – #WithRefugees

www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Meldungen/DE/2016/20160620-statements-weltfluechtlingstag

Dublin Convention

[eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:41997A0819\(01\)](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:41997A0819(01))

Eurodac

eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006D0188

Universal Declaration of Human Rights – United Nations

www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/

Statistics on asylum in Germany – Federal Agency for Civic Education


<https://www.bpb.de/politik/innenpolitik/flucht/218788/zahlen-zu-asyl-in-deutschland#Registrierungen>

The situation of refugees in Hungary – Amnesty International

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/hungary/report-hungary/>

Work permits – State Secretariat for Migration (SEM)

<https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/integration/berichte/va-flue/info-va-arbeitsmarkt-d.pdf>



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