



Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees

Italy

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Summary table on the support available to (a) asylum seekers; (b) refugees; and (c) third country nationals (TCN) in Italy

	Refugees	Asylum Seekers	Third Country Nationals	Recipients of Subsidiary Protection
Is the PES involved in the labour market integration of (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) third country nationals (TCN)?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Do (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) TCN have access to:	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring subsidies 	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Startup (self-employment) support 	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job training 	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other labour market integration support? 	YES	YES	YES	YES
Is there a systematic mentorship scheme in place for (a) asylum seekers (b) refugees and (c) TCN?	NO	NO	NO	NO
Are (a) refugees, (b) asylum seekers and (c) TCN eligible to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Are benefits that are generally received by (a) refugees, (b) by asylum seekers (if applicable) and (c) TCN, conditional on job search requirements/activation?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Does the support provided to (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) TCN end as soon as they get a job?	YES	YES	YES	YES
Please specify which services asylum seekers or refugees have access to that other TCN do not have access to.	None	None	None	

1 What is the role of PES in integrating (a) (some¹) asylum seekers² and (b) refugees³?

If the PES is not involved, is there another agency dealing with the labour market integration of migrants?

Does the support offered differ according to different factors (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics, family circumstances, host country language skills etc.)?

Does the support differ according to the skill level of the target group?

Are there specific programmes for these target groups?

To what extent do these target groups benefit from measures for broader target groups?

Measures that concern labour market access for asylum seekers and refugees are regulated by Legislative Decrees 142/2015 and 251/2007 respectively. The latter of these decrees transposes the Council Directive 2004/83/EC on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals, stateless persons as refugees, or persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted.

Art. 22 of the Legislative Decree 142/2015 (transposing Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection and Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection) allows asylum applicants to start work 60 days after the initial submission of their asylum application. The stay permit 'for asylum application' authorises the applicant to work only until the application procedure is settled, and cannot be converted into a regular stay permit for work reasons.

Decree 251/2007 establishes that foreign nationals who have been granted refugee status or the status of beneficiary of subsidiary protection 'are entitled to the same treatment provided for Italian nationals regarding paid employment, self-employment, and inclusion on professional registers, vocational training and on-the-job training' (Article 25).

Refugees and asylum seekers with residence permits may freely register with Public Employment Services (PES) (*Centri per l'Impiego*). Following the enforcement of Law Decree 34/2014, registration can take place in any PES in the national territory; before this, it was compulsory for one to register in the PES associated with his/her own temporary address. Registration is not mandatory, but it facilitates gaining access to some services and being entitled to some benefits. In particular, it provides the exemption from the co-sharing of health services costs, which is commonly referred to as the 'ticket': both asylum seekers and refugees are granted equality of treatment in access to health assistance in Italy. The exemption from the payment of the 'ticket' is granted to all asylum seekers in the period that they are not allowed to work following the initial asylum application.

Once registered, asylum seekers and refugees can, in principle, access all job-related PES services under the same conditions as national citizens. Some PESs, especially in large cities, have set up a desk dedicated to resolving job-related issues encountered

¹ The reasoning for including (some) is that there is no requirement by the EU that asylum seekers are included in integration policies.

² Persons who have applied for international humanitarian protection but have not been granted it yet.

³ Covers all beneficiaries of international humanitarian protection – both refugees and subsidiary protection.

by migrants, and to inform them about job placement opportunities with the help of language and cultural mediators. Recent monitoring reports of PES disregard the nature of target groups in terms of nationality status (Ministry of Labour and Social Policies 2014 and 2015).⁴ According to a relatively obsolete report (Isfol 2009, pp. 144-150),⁵ about 75 % of Italian PESs provided services specifically targeted at non-EU citizens in 2008; all PES provided information services, while about 40 % had cultural mediators and only 10 % provided legal assistance.

PESs, and therefore Regions and Provinces responsible for PES management, are not the only public authority in charge of dealing with the labour market integration of migrants. Legislative Decree 142/2015 also envisages that asylum applicants living in the System of Protection for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR)⁶ centres may attend vocational training when envisaged in programmes eventually adopted by public local entities. With regard to the type of vocational training provided, there are different forms and lengths, including residential vocational training courses, with a view to help people gradually leave reception centres, and courses aimed at fulfilling mandatory education obligations (for people under 18 years of age). According to the Italian Council for Refugees (2015),⁷ training usually requires 20, 25 or 30 hours of attendance per week, for a period of between three and six months. The SPRAR has implemented standardised integration programmes to support the integration of asylum seekers or beneficiaries of international protection within the SPRAR system by means of individualised projects that include vocational training and internships.

Vocational training or other integration programmes can be provided also by means of national public funds (8xmille) or the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In this case, the Ministry of Interior can finance specific projects of NGOs at national level concerning the integration and social inclusion of such groups. The projects financed under AMIF are, however, very limited in terms of the period of activity and number of beneficiaries.

2 How does the support provided to (a) (some) asylum seekers and (b) refugees compare to other categories of migrants (third country nationals)?

Third-country nationals (TCNs) are subject to norms specified by the consolidated text on the provisions governing immigration and the conditions of foreigners (Legislative Decree 286/98, amended by Law 189/2002). TCNs who intend to work must obtain a work visa before entry, which, after entry, will be converted into an 'authorisation to work' (*nihil obstat*) at the single desk for Immigration (an operative structure set up in all Territorial Governmental Offices involving various public offices: Ministries of Interior, of Labour, of Economy, and of Treasury; National Institute for Social Security, National Institute for Insurance against Labour Injuries; and, at the level of care practices,

⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2015), '*Indagine sui Servizi per l'impiego 2014. Attività di monitoraggio*', available at internet: http://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/Barometro-Del-Lavoro/Documents/Rapporto_monitoraggio_SPI_2014.pdf Ministry of Labour and Social Policies (2014), '*Indagine sui Servizi per l'impiego 2013. Attività di monitoraggio*', available at internet: http://www.cliclavoro.gov.it/Barometro-Del-Lavoro/Documents/Rapporto_monitoraggio_SPI_2013.pdf

⁵ Isfol (2008), '*Monitoraggio dei servizi per l'impiego 2008*', Roma, Italia, available at internet: <http://bw5.cilea.it/bw5ne2/opac.aspx?WEB=ISFL&IDS=5640>

⁶ The SPRAR is a network of local authorities that set up and run reception projects for people forced to migrate. SPRAR's main goal is to take responsibility for those individuals accepted into the scheme and to provide them with the support of the third sector, with personalised programmes to help them (re)acquire self-autonomy, and to integrate effectively into Italian society, in terms of finding employment and housing, of access to local services, of social life and of child education.

⁷ Italian Council for Refugees (2015) "Country Report: Italy", Fourth update (December 2015). Available at internet: <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/italy>

institutions of patronage) and then a residence permit. The Government is required to develop a 'long-term programme on immigration policy and foreigners on State territory' once every three years, setting out the policies on immigration. On the basis of this programme, the Government sets quotas on a yearly basis for each country of origin for the entrance of TCNs on a short or long-term basis and for the renewal of seasonal permits, which also determine the number of work permits issued.

Many local administrative bodies (mainly municipalities) have a migrant desk, where migrants may receive support for their needs related to language (at least an A2 level is required for the release of residence permits), employment, or housing. Trade unions and NGOs have also promoted offices with similar purposes in order to assist migrants in coping with procedures to renew residence permits and other bureaucratic procedures. Migrants losing their job can register with the jobseeker list at PES centres for a period of one year or for the whole duration of the unemployment benefit received. This is the general regulation that applies to TCNs; nonetheless, as for labour integration measures, there are no differences between asylum seekers/refugees and TCNs.

3 Do (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) other third-country migrants have access to other ALMPs such as:

- Hiring subsidies,
- Start-up (self-employment) support
- On-the-job training
- Other labour market integration support?

Once registered with PES, asylum seekers, refugees and TCNs can in principle access all job-related PES services under the same conditions as national citizens. Vocational training courses are not limited to those which have been envisaged by Legislative Decree 142/2015 for asylum applicants living in the SPRAR centres, which include vocational training or other integration programmes provided by AMIF (described above in response to question 1); local authorities (regions and municipalities) can also finance vocational training, internships and specific employment bursaries (*borse lavoro*) using a combination of national and ESF funds. These measures are typically available to both Italians and foreigners, including asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Nonetheless, it is difficult to determine if these measures are financed on a systematic basis since they depend on the facultative initiative of local authorities.

Employment services and projects tailored to foreigners may include: start-up (self-employment) support; educational training and employment guidance; mentoring; providing information about hiring incentives; increasing the access to and availability of credit at the national and regional levels; demand/supply matching; re-employment activities; and specific initiatives at the local level or in the countries of origin. In this respect, the Government-managed website, which aims to inform migrants about their employment opportunities in Italy, mentions that '...if you are a foreign national intending to become a self-employed worker or to set-up a business and become an entrepreneur, assistance and support will be available to you through the services provided by the network of employment services, of associations, private agencies and chambers of commerce. These authorities will help you with consulting, guidance, tutoring and training services, facilitating the access to incentives for business creation and to financial resources and microcredit.'⁸ That being said, it must be pointed out that there is a considerable difference between opportunities in accessing integration programmes, which depends heavily on the services provided by the reception centres, where asylum seekers are accommodated, and PES centres where foreigners register.

⁸Internet: <http://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/en/services/employment/Pages/default.aspx>

4 What are the concrete obstacles/challenges faced by (a) asylum seekers and (b) refugees in successfully integrating into the labour market?

Overall, a clearer and more efficient co-ordination of integration bodies is needed across local and sub-national levels. Language training provision is an example of a policy area that lacks coordination, with a myriad of different stakeholders, funding providers and services with partial overlap. The identification and upscale across the country of effective integration projects are needed. A new evidence-based scientific approach using pilots, experiments and evaluations must be promoted in integration policies.

According to the Italian Council for Refugees (2015),⁹ despite the fact that the law makes a generic reference to the right to access employment without indicating any limitations, and that it entitles all persons to register with PES offices, in practice asylum seekers face difficulties in obtaining a residence permit which allows them to work. This is due to the delay in the registration of their asylum claims, on the basis of which the permit of stay will be consequently issued. The delay depends on the complexity of the administrative procedure necessary for the registration. Furthermore, some police headquarters do not automatically issue this kind of stay permit, depending on the administrative burden they have to cope with. In addition, the objective factors affecting the possibility of asylum seekers to find a job are: the current financial crisis affecting Italy; language barriers; the remote location of the accommodation; and the lack of specific support tailored to their needs. Moreover, in Italy, a critical issue remains in the shortage of integration programmes addressed to both asylum seekers and refugees; this means that even though asylum seekers and refugees can have access to labour market integration measures in theory (e.g. VET, language training and civics), these are often not available.

5 Is there a systematic mentorship scheme in place for (a) asylum seekers and (b) refugees integrating into the labour market (and/or society more generally)?

There is not a systematic mentorship scheme specifically aimed at integrating asylum seekers and refugees into the labour market and/or society more generally. As already mentioned, asylum seekers and refugees may register with PES, on a voluntary basis, and therefore have access to mentorship services as national citizens do. Some PESs, especially in large cities, have set up a desk dedicated to immigrants in order to solve job-related issues and inform people about job placement opportunities with the help of language and cultural mediators.

6 Are (a) refugees and (b) (if applicable) asylum seekers eligible to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance?¹⁰

Refugees and applicable asylum seekers are eligible to receive unemployment benefits and assistance under the same conditions as Italian citizens do, if they accumulate a sufficient amount of contributions.

7 In what ways are benefits that are generally received by (a) refugees and (b) by asylum seekers (if applicable), conditional on job search requirements/activation?

The Legislative Decree 22/2015 has introduced the NASpI, which replaces the previous existing unemployment benefit schemes. Unemployment insurance schemes such as

⁹ See footnote 7.

¹⁰ As regards unemployment benefits Dir 2011/98 Art 12 (1) e – obliges MSs to provide equal treatment to all TCNs except asylum seekers and as regards refugees there is also the legal obligation to provide equal treatment under Qualifications Directive 2011/95.

the NASpI, which entered into force in May 2015, requires the participation in active labour market policies as an entitlement condition (i.e. to register with a PES by providing a copy of the residence permit, declaring the immediate availability to work and filling a form with personal and work-related information). While the conditionality between active and passive labour policies was present in previous reforms, the problem has traditionally been the application of this principle, particularly due to the difficulty for heads of public services to 'prove' the worker's refusal. Envisaged sanctions ranging from benefit cuts to suspension and cancellation could therefore prove to be ineffective.

8 Does the support provided to the (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) other migrants end as soon as they get a job or does it continue for a while during the first phase of their employment? If yes, what support continues?

No systematic national programme envisages continued support after the jobseeker finds a job, but there could be measures ensuring this at local level. In any case, these are scattered experiences which do not refer to any comprehensive support framework for these target groups.

9 To what extent are social partners systematically involved in (a) labour market integration service provision and/or (b) labour market integration service/policy definition and design?

Up until now, social partners have not been systematically involved in labour market integration service provision, but are typically involved in the design of vocational training activities at local level.

They are regularly involved in the design of labour market integration service/policy definition and design by being included in the Territorial Councils for Immigration (*Consigli territoriali per l'immigrazione* - CTI). CTI are chaired by the Prefects, and their members include representatives from the state, the regions, local authorities, the chambers of commerce, and organisations active on the local level in assisting migrants, as well as from social partners and non-EU workers' organisations. They are established in all the Prefectures and are primarily aimed at monitoring the presence of foreigners in the territory and have the capacity to adapt in accordance with migration patterns, enhancing cooperation in the planning of social policies, which assist with the integration of migrants.

Social partners are also consulted in the development of the 'long-term programme on immigration policy and foreigners on State territory', which sets out, once every three years, the policies on immigration and the basis upon which the Government sets yearly quotas for each country of provenance. This is carried out in order to monitor the entrance of TCNs on a short or long-term basis and to decide upon the renewal of seasonal permits, which then determines the number of work permits issued. Social partners also participate in the designation - jointly with the associations of migrants, local institutions and NGOs - of representatives of migrants for regional and local councils (as established by Law 286/1998), which aim to identify the problems and needs faced by migrants and suggesting possible solutions.

10 To what extent is the labour market integration of refugees well-coordinated within the country? Do employment agencies and asylum authorities coordinate?

As already mentioned in the answer to question 4, the lack of coordination among the authorities and organisations dealing with the labour market integration of refugees is a key obstacle faced by asylum seekers and refugees. More efforts in successfully integrating such people into the labour market are needed across local and sub-national levels. In practical terms, this could however be difficult to implement and it will take

time to be completed. As a matter of fact, there is a high variability in the degree of coordination among different local authorities to facilitate the labour-market integration of refugees. That is why, besides the coordination across various local and central bodies responsible for migrants' integration, there is also the need for a better coordination between employment authorities. The recent introduction of the new National Agency for Active Labour Policies (ANPAL), with Legislative Decree 150/2015, could improve such effort by clarifying the labour component of integration policies. The ANPAL is aimed at coordinating the PES and, once equipped with the required powers by the constitutional reform, corresponding with the homogenisation of the provision of active labour market policies in different regions, and realising a uniform and more efficient model for the management of PES.

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