

# **RESOURCE Project**

Refugees' contribution to Europe

Country Report: **Italy**

By Marco Catarci

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### ICS

[www.icsitalia.org](http://www.icsitalia.org)

Via Salaria 89,  
00198 Rome

Telephone: +39 06 8535 5081

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## I Introduction to RESOURCE

This report will illustrate the positive contribution that refugees can make to current and projected labour market needs. Most refugees come from urban settings and have a good level of education. Many hold academic or professional qualifications and have considerable work experience. They are highly motivated and employers who recruited refugees report being very satisfied with their work performance.

The report is part of a European wide research project called RESOURCE (Refugees' Contribution to Europe), carried out by a partnership of fourteen agencies<sup>1</sup> and funded by the European Refugee Fund. The project analysed elements, practices and policies, which have contributed to refugees' participation in the European labour market from refugees' point of view. It focussed on how refugees' prior skills, qualifications and working experience are being utilised in sectors of the labour market that are currently experiencing skills shortages.

Through desk research and in-depth interviews with employed refugees in EU member states<sup>2</sup>, the project gives insight into the various factors that have contributed to (or obstructed) refugees' integration in Europe. Considering the high levels of unemployment and under-employment among refugees, it is clear that refugees' potential is at present under-utilised by employers. To tackle this waste of human resources the project will describe successful pathways to employment and show how the many barriers refugees encounter can be overcome.

The results are presented in fourteen country reports and one overall publication. We hope that our findings will be an inspiration for:

- Employers to recruit refugees and to take into account the skills, qualifications and work experience they brought with them in exile.
- Refugees to take initiative, build their confidence, and find suitable employment.
- Educational institutes to improve refugees' access to their programmes and develop tailor-made programmes that take into account refugees prior learning.
- Registering bodies to adopt more flexible rules for recognition of refugees' qualifications.
- NGOs and mainstream organisations to provide better support for refugees.
- Policy makers at national and European level to implement more successful integration policies that will create real opportunities for refugees to become self-sufficient.

Because of demographic developments Europe will increasingly be in need of foreign labour to sustain economic growth. Across Europe employers are experiencing difficulties recruiting staff at both skilled and unskilled levels. At the same time the European Union receives over 350,000 asylum applications per annum. It makes good economic and social sense to better utilise this huge potential.

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<sup>1</sup> RETAS (UK), UAF (the Netherlands), OCIV (Belgium), ETC (Austria), Finnish League for Human Rights (Finland), France Terre d'Asile (France), ProAsyl (Germany), Social Work Foundation (Greece), SPIRASI (Ireland), ICS (Italy), ASTI (Luxembourg), Portuguese Refugee Council (Portugal), CEAR (Spain), CARITAS (Sweden).

<sup>2</sup> The RESOURCE project is funded by the European Refugee Fund. Denmark does not participate in this programme.

## 2 The Italian context

According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees), in 2001, there were 22,870 refugees in Italy, of which 12,800 had refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention and 10,070 granted humanitarian protection. In 2002, 1,270 asylum seekers were recognised as refugees; that is one for every 45,000 inhabitants or 0.02% of the population. The European average is five times higher at 0.1%. Official figures have not yet been released for 2002 (Italy is the only EU country yet to release these figures), but we estimate that approximately 17,000 people requested asylum; this would be only 4.4% of EU requests. Quarterly statistics on asylum requests in 2002 across the 29 industrialised countries, published by the UNHCR, lack figures for only one country – Italy. However in Italy, in addition to refugee status, two kinds of protection have been adopted for people requesting asylum:

- *Humanitarian protection* – This is issued by the police headquarters, following guidelines from the Central Commission, in cases where refugee status has been denied but it is not safe to return applicants to their country of origin.
- *Temporary protection* – This comes out of an agreement following a decree from the prime minister. It offers fundamental protection for a number of people on the occasion of specific conflicts, natural disasters or other serious events.

Italy remains the only EU member that has no law controlling asylum, although the constitution sanctions such right and calls for a law controlling the matter.<sup>3</sup> There is also no body that oversees the integration of asylum seekers and refugees and therefore the matter comes under general immigration controls. The new immigration law, the Bossi-Fini law,<sup>4</sup> contains some norms relating to asylum. In particular institutes a territorial commission to examine asylum requests, composed of representatives of public safety, local agencies and the UNHCR. Moreover, the law states that an asylum seeker whose claim is rejected must leave Italian territory; this appears to contradict the principle of *non refoulement* (which states that refugees will not be returned to potential danger). In contrast to the Italian constitution and the European Directive on asylum procedure, the Bossi-Fini law does not guarantee legal protection for asylum seekers awaiting approval. Moreover it excludes judicial appeal against rejection, only allowing an appeal to the commission that made the original decision. Many elements of the new law hit asylum seekers hard, reducing the possibility of getting protection as envisaged by the Geneva Convention and introducing serious problems:

- The reduction in identification centres for nearly all political asylum seekers.
- The introduction of a simplified and probably ineffective procedure to define refugee status.
- The uncertain composition of the territorial commission.

The old, Martelli law is currently still in use. It provides an allowance for destitute asylum seekers of €17 per day, for up to 45 days. The Bossi-Fini law abolishes this subsidy. Even now only a few get the payment, because of bureaucratic difficulties and forced movement from the Centres of first reception to other Provinces; even then it is only issued after months of rows and prayers at the offices. Through the 1990s, until 31 March 2001, there was a Ministry of the Interior fund (co-managed with the UNHCR) to help recognised refugees integrate in the first months after refugee status was granted. This fund no longer exists. Under Bossi-Fini it is absorbed in the 'National fund for asylum policies and services', which has yet to be activated. So, since the beginning of 2002, refugees have had no support from the Italian state; Italy is the only EU state in this position. In order to construct a systematic national system for the acceptance and protection of asylum seekers and refugees for the first time, in July 2001 the National Asylum Programme (PNA) was started, promoted by the Ministry of Internal affairs, the UNHCR and ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities). According to this programme, reception is structured on a number of levels:

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<sup>3</sup> In art. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Law n. 189/2002.

- Material acceptance (food and accommodation).
- Legal attendance for the asylum process.
- Social guidelines.
- Social integration (finding independent accommodation and work).

The PNA brings together the entire Italian contribution to the European Fund for Refugees, which EU states are obliged to use at least in part for measures that aid the integration of refugees. The Italian Government's programme foresees a 15% quota for such measures, but since April 2002, they have not come into effect due to lack of money.

## 3 Employment policies and schemes for refugees in Italy

### 3.1 The introduction of refugees to the labour market

There is no Italian legislation directly relating to the introduction of refugees to the labour market. This is regrettable, as work is one of the most important factors in the integrating refugees, partly because it affects public opinion concerning the presence of foreigners. Furthermore, an immigrant cannot obtain permission to stay in Italy without a job contract.<sup>5</sup>

Since public opinion tends to judge foreigners on their utility to the workforce, it is clear that exclusion from the job market can only exaggerate social marginalisation.

Any accurate analysis of the Italian socio-economic context would show that the presence of foreigners is vital to the most productive sectors of the economy.

*The trend toward integration in industrial sector jobs is very important, where labour shortages have informed the political debate about regularisation and fluxes. The need for foreign workers is another confirmation of the liveliness of the economic system, which is both creating regular work and accommodating the needs of the submerged and invisible economy.*<sup>6</sup>

In this way, the regions with the highest production potential are those that need most foreign labour. This confirms the analysis of the CENSIS (Centre for Studies on Social Investments) in 2001, which said: 'big cities, like Florence and Bologna, and regions with great production potential (Vicenza, Parma, Pordenone) are the centres of the many complex migration movements.'<sup>7</sup> We have to point out, however, that the areas that most require labour are those where it is hardest to find secure accommodation.

So, it is very important to investigate the various problems in reconciling the requirement for foreign workers with the competences and professions of existing refugees.

### 3.2 Work and integration

Integration can essentially be divided into three elements:

- Social integration (learning Italian; gaining access to the public services; knowledge of and interaction with the territory they live in; developing social relations with native Italians).
- Independent accommodation.
- Integration in the labour market.

Integration in the labour market assumes a central role in a refugee's integration, but is dependent on status. Recognised refugees are allowed to work, use job centres and access professional education courses, like Italian citizens and other migrants.

However, refugees' integration process must start while they are still waiting for a response to their asylum request. In Italy refugees are not allowed to work, register as unemployed or start a course in this period. In fact most asylum seekers are working on in the black economy, as they no longer have any access to state assistance, since 1 August 2001. They work in unstable jobs, without any state or union support.

<sup>5</sup> Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (2003) *Secondo rapporto. Indici di inserimento degli immigrati in Italia: analisi territoriale all'inizio del 2001*, Roma, p. 36.

<sup>6</sup> CENSIS (2002) *36° rapporto sulla situazione sociale del paese 2002*, Milano: Franco Angeli, p. 302.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 483.

Work is a key factor in integration, and the inability to access the labour market during asylum process is a serious obstacle. There is no Italian law that regulates a refugee's right to work, so the 1951 Geneva Convention is followed.

Moreover, while refugees are forced to deal with unemployment they are not attending to the recognition of their real abilities and qualifications. This means they are often trapped in jobs that make no use of their existing skills and qualifications.

To make integration in the labour market a possibility it is vital that asylum seekers are given the chance to acquire a basic competence in Italian early in their stay. After this it is possible to concentrate on developing work access programmes that take refugees' skills, qualifications and work experience into account, along with their ambitions.

In Italy many asylum seekers frequent language courses run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and various associations. It has been observed, however, that there is a worrying gap between professional training and access to the labour world. There must be an increase in services offered, so that they are developing language competence, refugees also learn the skills they will need to find a job.

It must be remembered that in addition to the issues already mentioned refugees often lack the social net that helps people find work. Neither do they have the socialisation in Italian culture that would enable them to know what will be required of them.

Integration in work and society are made more difficult by the traumas refugees have lived through, the fact their migration was not by choice and the general instability these factors cause in their lives.

In a more general context it is useful to consider that the integration of refugees should be:

- *Dynamic and reciprocal* – Effort is needed from the reception associations, as well as the individuals and communities involved in the process. From a refugee's viewpoint, integration requires an ability to adapt oneself to the host country's lifestyle without losing his or her cultural identity. On the other side, from the host society's viewpoint, integration requires a willingness to accept refugees as part of the country's population and to adopt measures in order to ease their access to particular resources and to help with important decisions.
- *Long term* – Psychologically, integration often begins at the moment the person arrives in the host country and ends when the refugee becomes an active part of society from a legal, social, economic, working, educational and cultural point of view.
- *Multidimensional* – For an effective participation in all aspects of economic, social, cultural, civil and political life, as well as the perception refugees have of their reception in the host country and their feeling of being part of it.<sup>8</sup>

The services offered to refugees in Italy are usually those developed for foreigners in general, but it is important to consider refugees as 'individuals with special needs'.

The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) recommends countries adopt special programmes that should touch the following points:

- *The active participation of refugees* – in a common sphere of public and social life, in the same context as that of the host country. It should include social welfare measures in a similar context to that for citizens of the host country (as regards money, education, housing and sanitary assistance).
- *Respect for differences and diversity* – with regard to religious creed, political opinions, cultural affiliations, personal and cultural identities, both in the public sphere and the private one.
- *The ability to develop in an independent way* – following which a refugee will be able to use his or her knowledge and competences, to find good employment and to become a self-sufficient person, as a member of his family and of a social group.<sup>9</sup>

Programmes that promote job participation for refugees should be measured on the individual, after having taken into consideration the abilities and knowledge of refugees, their past professional experi-

<sup>8</sup> ECRE, *Position on the integration of refugees in Europe*, 1999, p. 2-3.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*



ences, their interests and aspirations. On-the-job learning should be made easier, by combining it with training courses. In practice all these things only happen rarely and without an intentional and personalised plan.

Several job access programmes do not start from a full knowledge of the labour market or consider general strategies for economic regeneration and development. Few programmes are specifically targeted at women refugees, supplying them with information on workplace rights, social welfare and childcare assistance.

A key element in opening access to jobs has been the creation of partnerships between institutions, like the Chambers of Commerce, employers in the private and public sectors, local development agencies, unions and job advisers. So far the following have been developed:

- Guidelines developed by experts.
- Workplace rationalisation based on 'positive experiences of refugees'.
- Creation of workplace networks for job opportunities.

Refugees should be consulted in all stages of adjustment, realisation and valuation of the strategies aimed to respond to their needs. Moreover those who succeed should be used as role models, offering professional advice on the basis of their experiences.

On the political front, the Treaty of Amsterdam established that EU member states should treat employment as a common issue and they are bound to co-ordinate their programmes. Guidelines on jobs were established at the EU employment summit held in November 1997. It is useful to remember that the 1999 job guidelines included among the recommendations to member states, the promotion 'of social integration and equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups'.

Research has shown the following to be the main impediments to the integration of refugees into the labour market and society in general:

- Language problems.
- Prejudice and discrimination.
- Lack of recognition for qualifications and experience.
- Low-wage, low-status, insecure jobs (usually contracted or short-term).
- Ignorance of the Italian labour market and cultural norms.
- Legal barriers.

Employment can be found through formal or informal channels. Formal channels include job centres, while informal ones include networks of acquaintances and other personal contacts. In Italy the informal channel tends to be more effective in finding work.

Formal channels can be useful though for getting help with issues like professional training, job advice and, occasionally, skills audit.

The experience of collaborating with small and medium sized commercial organisations can be effective; such collaborations encourage the social and employment integration of refugees in a local setting.

Finally it is worth looking at where the National Asylum Programme (PNA) fits in the integration picture. The idea for the programme developed from awareness of the lack of an organic policy or a national reception system. It also aims to offer protection and integration as well as programmes of voluntary and assisted repatriation for asylum seekers, refugees and people with humanitarian authorisation to stay. In agreement with the UNHCR and ANCI, the Ministry of the Interior has promoted a national strategy with strong institutional support and participation from the municipalities, as well as all the forces primarily involved in asylum rights. This strategy has been characterised by individual interventions aimed at helping the target group integrate with the labour market. It also utilises professional training courses and training centres in the municipal territories. Municipal projects have financially supported the provision of training.<sup>10</sup> In this context the PNA projects at Forlì, Pontedera and Rieti are interesting; particularly the first, which concentrates on professional training, through the association with training institutes. It has tried to establish protocols for the integration of asylum seek-

<sup>10</sup> As foreseen by the law, art. 18 of law 196/1997.

ers in companies through training. The Pontedera project has made agreements with local companies for the creation of training courses. Rieti has developed conventions with small local companies for the development of stages.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3 The independent employment of refugees

As far as independent employment is concerned, it must be emphasised that the Italian norm,<sup>12</sup> considers refugees to be free from the principle of reciprocity, which is otherwise binding for the constitution of enterprises by migrants who want to operate in collective way. This element turns out to be advantageous for refugees, even though the whole process is complicated by the absence of a law that helps refugees start in business. Even if such a law could not offer financial help, it could help with tax incentives, following the model for co-ops and schemes to encourage women and the young to open businesses. There are also no structures to aid refugees in the start-up phase, offering business advice and help writing a business plan (analysing the market, defining potential customers and providing a triennial budget forecast). The existing services don't appear to have the necessary skills or experience to help people from abroad or refugees in these matters.<sup>13</sup>

The following are fundamental to start an enterprise:

- Access to information explaining what steps are required to set up an enterprise and how its viability can be predicted before starting.
- Support for the start-up with the right training intervention.
- Guaranteed financial resources for the start-up period.

An important aid to establishing such help could be offered if the financial resources of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the UNHCR, suspended from the beginning of 2002, were restored.

In fact, starting an enterprise turns out to be particularly complex for refugees, particularly because of lack of detailed knowledge of the mechanisms of the Italian economic market.

### 3.4 The problem of discrimination in the labour market

Often, in the labour market, the refugees have to face problems of direct or indirect discrimination. The Unions have a major role in protecting the interests of workers and therefore also of refugees. In the same way, the national government and the NGOs would have a key role in increasing awareness among employers and the unions about the valuable skills and knowledge that refugees can bring to the workplace. The measures against discrimination defined in Article 13 of the Treaty of Amsterdam should be applied equally to refugees; there should be no distinction between foreigners from within the EU and those from outside.

### 3.5 Recognition of foreign training and professional qualifications

One of the reasons refugees have trouble finding suitable work and escaping from unskilled jobs is the difficulty in gaining recognition for qualifications obtained in foreign countries. This is a serious problem; refugees who had skilled jobs before their flight can find themselves in an entirely new situation, which they are forced to face without any acknowledgement of their education and training. In Italy a law regulates the recognition of overseas qualifications.<sup>14</sup> The procedure it defines is long and com-

<sup>11</sup> Programma Nazionale Asilo, *L'esperienza del PNA in breve (luglio 2001- dicembre 2002)*, 2002, p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Following the Geneva Convention (art. 7).

<sup>13</sup> ICS, *Fund for Refugee Employment and Education (FREE). Il caso Italia*, Roma 2002, pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Law decree 297/94.

plex and there is a single organisation (the International Social Service) to assist refugees in completing it. In sectors where the labour market demands foreign professionals (such as nursing), the recognition of qualifications is regulated by regional laws. Since these vary from region to region it makes it even harder for refugees to find a point of reference.

However, the recognition of the professional qualifications was regulated in August 1999 by some EU directives.<sup>15</sup> Frequently recognition is subordinated to a compensating measure consisting of a vocational test. The way the test should be performed is defined by ministerial decree. In practice, professional re-evaluation is complex. This is further complicated by the difficulties territorial offices have in finding out about refugees' professional backgrounds and because of tight access rules for professional associations. In Italy there are no specific programmes created for the professional re-evaluation of refugees. The difficulty in getting recognition for past work experience and professional qualifications keeps many refugees in unskilled work.

### 3.6 Professional training

Under 'professional training' we include everything from introductory training to advanced technical-professional training, including improvement, re-evaluation and professional advice aimed at providing professional competences immediately useful for the job. UNESCO defines professional training as *'that training aimed at the development of individual attitudes, of the knowledge and the competences demanded for employment or a job. It indicates all the types of systematically organised training, distributed independently from age and from the individual cultural level, given to students foreseeing a professional activity, in order to acquire the necessary practical and theoretical qualifications to carry out the activity'*.<sup>16</sup>

Training cannot be considered as a solution to all refugees' problems because their difficulties come not only from lack of training, but also from, broadly speaking, social problems of various kinds.

Professional training implies *'the necessity of starting from the person and returning to the person and that means considering first of all the subject in training, the subject's ability to express himself, to find a place in a given context'*.<sup>17</sup>

It is necessary to give answers to the refugee, *'we need, in order to prepare him, to move towards him, to start from his experience, his interests, his knowledge and from there on bring him to new knowledge and new methods. And, finally, it is necessary for him that this training can be valued in the daily life'*.<sup>18</sup>

Very often the refugees were specialised in the country of origin for a profession for which in Italy they obtain only a lower degree of qualification. Moreover the rhythms imposed by training can be too burdensome to put up with, not fitting in with working hours and so forcing a choice between training and work, which is for many refugees the only source of maintenance.

There are various professional training projects, usually organised by NGOs, associations and regional training agencies. Both refugees and asylum seekers are admitted to these courses, as there is no demand for authorisation from the employment office, which asylum seekers can't get, as there would be for regional courses. The professional training programmes must therefore consider the present and future requirements of the labour market and possibly, within specific limits of time, lead to a stage or an assumption. Refugees often fail to find information agencies because they are not thought to be for them in particular (as the regional services of resources are). Refugees should, on the contrary, be encouraged developing flexible goals for training and participation to the labour market, for example through courses preceding the ones of professional training, like a language course inherent to their working area, or courses of job advice, or job market knowledge, advising for the career and for the development of those necessary abilities to look for an employment. Such programmes should

<sup>15</sup> See DPR n. 394/99, art. 49.

<sup>16</sup> Source: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

<sup>17</sup> B. Schwartz, *Modernizzare senza escludere. Un progetto di formazione contro l'emarginazione sociale e professionale*, Anicia, Roma 1995, p. 227.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

be connected to courses that lead to employment and should try to involve the employers in the public and private sectors in the training in the workplace.

Considering the numerous consequences of the acceptance phase on integration of refugees in the long term or on the repatriation perspectives, it would be appropriate to offer basic training courses for asylum seekers from the moment they demand asylum. These courses should be concentrated on the development of skills which could be useful in case of establishment in Italy, as well as in the case of return in the country of origin or movement to a third country. Finally it must be observed that the courses of professional training in Italy often do not take into account a person's previous knowledge, aspirations or previous experience. It would therefore be appropriate to use skills auditing in a more systematic way.

### 3.7 Skills audit

In order to make training effective it is necessary to analyse professional and training requirements. This analysis has become a fundamental instrument for the support of the training programmes coherently with the needs expressed by the social-economic system.

It has to find and to anticipate professional requirements and, by describing the skills requested, to transform them in training needs, which can be used as reference points for potential trainees. The system of skills auditing was born in France as a way of finalising professional development, closely related to continuous training and to the actions of an active job policy.

Actions that allow the development of skills auditing help workers in realising their own professional and personal abilities, as well as their attitudes and motivations, in order to define a professional plan and, where necessary, a training plan.

The skills audit is characterised, therefore, as an action finalised to the development of the workers' professionalism closely linked to the continuous training. From the point of view of the individual this action represents the possibility to be aware of one's knowledge and of one's 'knowing how to make things', with the aim to render them visible.

The fundamental elements characterising skills auditing are the following:

- The evolution is strictly personal and individual.
- The subject is involved in the process of reconstruction, re-appropriation and valuation of acquired skills as well as in the search for information on the sector.
- The exploration of the personal resources stresses self-evaluation.
- The realisation of a social mediation (talks, encounters with experts, group sessions, researches and contacts on the territory, tests of verification) that stimulates to confrontation.
- The relationship between budgetary adviser and customer is the fundamental thread of the activities and the actions of the progress.

In Italy there have been several experiences of skills auditing, but such instrument appears still to be little used in the plans and in the services for refugees.

## 4 Labour needs in specific sectors

### 4.1 The Italian Labour Market

There are 20 million unemployed in Western Europe, including over two million in Italy, where there has been a downturn in economic activity since the last quarter of 2000.

The Italian labour force numbers 23,781,341, of which women are the majority (51.9%). There are 21,514,000 people employed, 63% in services, 32% in industry and 5% in agriculture. Women make up a quarter of those employed in industry, a third in agriculture and a little less than half in services.

There are 2,267,000 people seeking work, 9.5% of the national labour force (8.8% for men and 11.5% for women) with approximately double this rate in the South. Half of the jobless remain unemployed for over a year. The average for industrialised countries is only a third, although Germany has a similar rate. Italy has a worrying level of youth unemployment.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 1: The Italian labour market in December 2001 (thousands)**

	Population of working age			People in search of work				Employed by sector			
	Total	Male	Female	Number	Total	Male	Female	Number	Agriculture	Industry	Services
<b>North West</b>	13,109	6,311	6,799	289	4.3	2.9	6.3	6,410	2.6	37.7	59.7
<b>North East</b>	9,224	4,455	4,769	174	3.6	2.3	5.4	4,680	5.0	36.7	58.3
<b>Centre</b>	9,630	4,608	5,022	348	7.4	5.4	10.3	4,345	3.8	28.4	67.3
<b>South</b>	11,580	5,589	5,991	950	18.6	14.1	27.3	4,149	9.2	25.8	65.0
<b>Islands</b>	5,541	2,668	2,873	506	20.8	16.1	29.9	1,931	9.3	20.7	70.0
<b>Italy</b>	48,759	23,461	25,298	2,267	9.5	8.3	11.5	21,514	5.2	31.8	63.0

SOURCE: Calculated by Caritas/Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2002 from Istat data.

#### 4.1.1 The importance of immigrant labour in 2001

According to reported data 4,743,650 people started new jobs in 2001, of which 467,304 were people originating outside the EU. Non-EU workers are more likely to find work in small and medium sized firms than in firms with more than 50 employees: 58% of non-EU workers are employed here, 7% above the average for Italian natives.

Non-EU workers accounted for 9.9% of total new jobs, 8.8% of contract terminations and 19.8% of the balance between new jobs and terminations. This includes all new jobs still in existence at the end of the year even if, as is frequently the case, they were temporary.

Immigrant labour accounted for 4% of new jobs in the South and Islands, 10-11% in the Centre and North West and 15% in the North East (nearly one in six). In all areas, the balance between new jobs and terminations is more favourable for immigrants than that for Italians: on average one post remains at the end of the year for every five started during the year. There are territorial differences: the aver-

<sup>19</sup> Caritas (2002) *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2002*, Roma: Anterem, p. 244.

age is better in the North West and North East (one in four) while it is one in six in the Centre and one in seven in the South and the Islands.

Non-EU workers are 3% of the total labour force, but represent three times that proportion of new jobs and six times the proportion in contracts lasting more than a year. One in ten new jobs involves a non-EU worker, but this value rises to one in five for posts lasting more than a year. In other words, immigrants are more likely than Italians to be taken on and to remain in their jobs.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 2: ITALY. Occupational flows of Italians and immigrants, by area (2001)**

		<b>New jobs</b>	<b>Terminations</b>	<b>Balance</b>
<i>North</i>	<b>Italians + foreigners</b>	1,190,084	1,093,308	96,776
<i>West</i>	<b>Non-EU</b>	138,157	110,934	27,223
	<b>% non-EU</b>	11.6	10.1	28.1
<i>North</i>	<b>Italians +</b>	1,181,044	1,075,427	105,617
<i>East</i>	<b>Foreigners</b>			
	<b>Non-EU</b>	180,331	144,492	35,839
	<b>% non-EU</b>	15.3	13.4	33.9
<i>Centre</i>	<b>Italians +</b>	1,053,612	969,296	84,316
	<b>Foreigners</b>			
	<b>Non-EU</b>	99,923	82,030	17,893
	<b>% non-EU</b>	9.5	8.5	21.2
<i>South</i>	<b>Italians +</b>	944,889	829,909	114,980
	<b>Foreigners</b>			
	<b>Non-EU</b>	35,288	29,753	5,535
	<b>% non-EU</b>	3.7	3.6	4.8
<i>Islands</i>	<b>Italians +</b>	374,021	329,265	44,756
	<b>Foreigners</b>			
	<b>Non-EU</b>	13,695	11,647	1,958
	<b>% non-EU</b>	3.7	3.6	4.4
<i>Italy</i>	<b>Italians +</b>	4,743,650	4,297,205	446,445
	<b>Foreigners</b>			
	<b>Non-EU</b>	467,304	378,856	88,448
	<b>% non-EU</b>	9.9	8.8	19.8

SOURCE: Calculated by Caritas/Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2002 from INAIL/DNA data

#### 4.1.2 **Professional fields of Health and Social welfare, IT and Engineering**

In Italy no specific work data on refugees exists, the only classification being foreigners in general. To analyse specific fields of the labour market we used the Excelsior Information System, created for *Unioncamere* (Italian Union of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture) in agreement with the Ministry of Employment and the EU. Such a system bases its information on assumptions, following enterprises' forecasts, in the course of 2003 for provinces, fields of economic activity in the small, average and large enterprises, and combines these to understand which professional figures will be demanded by the enterprises, their educational level, field, age, experience, knowledge of languages and IT. It is a limit of forecast surveying that the only source of the statistics is assumptions about the labour market. The research aims to look into the following professional areas: Health and Social welfare, IT and Engineering. The professional profiles taken from the Resource project are divided into areas, and can therefore be described in the following table, based on the professional figures present in the Excelsior Information System:

<sup>20</sup> Caritas (2002) *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2002*, Roma: Anterem, pp. 252-253.

**Table 3: Professional profiles in Excelsior Information System for Resource project**

Health & Social Care	IT	Engineering
Doctor	Informatics' specialists	Engineers (different specialisations)
Technical paramedic	Technical informatics	Technical engineers
Nurses and obstetricians	Informatics' assistants	
Social assistants		
Socio-sanitary assistants		
Physiotherapists		

Looking to the job market to investigate the Italian job market on the basis of those professional figures, the following table (Table 4) was created, through the Excelsior Information System.

**Table 4: new jobs in 2003 estimated by firm**

	TOTAL Jobs started in 2003	In firms with less than 50 employees (%)	Not short- term	Without specific experience (%)	Difficult to find (%)	As a substitute for other employees (%)	TOTAL Job start 2002
<b>TOTAL professional profiles</b>	672,472	59.7	56.5	49.6	41.0	34.1	685,888
<b>Informatics' specialists</b>	9,973	44.7	62.7	33.3	41.4	25.9	15,595
<b>Nurses</b>	7,718	52.1	71.1	42.0	68.7	42.7	4,022
<b>Civil engineers</b>	4,742	74.9	71.6	19.3	42.9	18.9	4,447
<b>Electronic engineers</b>	4,624	44.9	61.6	34.7	44.3	21.5	5,249
<b>Mechanical &amp; mining engineers</b>	4,071	32.2	65.4	35.7	47.1	33.8	3,381
<b>Technical engineers</b>	3,352	41.3	60.2	31.7	44.2	24.5	3,695
<b>Informatics specialist &amp; assistant</b>	3,324	62.7	52.5	36.7	26.8	28.1	2,656
<b>Physiotherapists</b>	1,290	74.7	70.8	24.7	75.4	23.7	1,037
<b>Electrical engineers</b>	499	15.6	45.9	54.3	32.3	72.9	387
<b>Doctors</b>	258	24.0	91.5	16.3	72.1	21.3	238
<b>Socio-sanitary assistants</b>	11,875	17.0	65.6	33.1	48.1	57.4	12,245

Source: Excelsior Information System

Putting the data together in the three areas of interest:

**Table 5: New jobs in 2003 estimated by firms in resource project's areas**

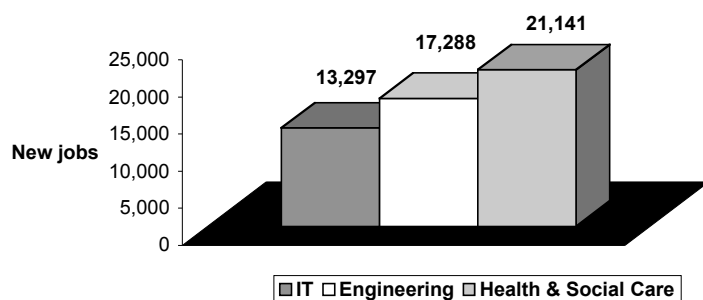
	TOTAL New jobs 2003 (estimated)	TOTAL New jobs 2002 (estimated)
<b>IT</b>	13,297	18,251
<b>Engineering</b>	17,288	17,159
<b>Health &amp; Social Care</b>	21,141	17,542

Source: Excelsior Information System

From the table it emerges that, according to the Excelsior Information System, businesses planned to employ more labour in 2003 in the Health and Social sector, with 21,141 forecasted jobs and with a forecast of increase on 2002.

We have to notice, moreover, that the foreseen employments for the professional figure of 'assigned to the social-sanitary attendance', at about 11,875, constitute 56% of the employment forecasted for the Health and Social sector.

**Figure 1: New jobs in 2003 estimated by firms**



As what to how far this analysis of the job market concerns refugees we have to refer to the movements regarding foreigners in general, because there isn't specific data relating to refugees. The 2003 predictions regarding new jobs for workers who are not EU citizens are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6: Job starts by non-EU workers in 2003**

	North West	North East	Central	South & Islands	Total
Technical engineers	197	178	98	18	491
Informatics specialists	665	294	406	343	1,708
Technical engineers	1,176	875	396	421	2,868
Technical informatics	459	571	151	139	1,320
Technical paramedic	327	205	100	196	828
Nurses & obstetricians	1,119	343	378	505	2,345
Social assistants	64	118	21	23	226

Source: Excelsior Information system

From the table it is possible to see that the north-west is the area with most possibilities for professionals. Putting together all data we come up with the following, which indicates the new areas of research:

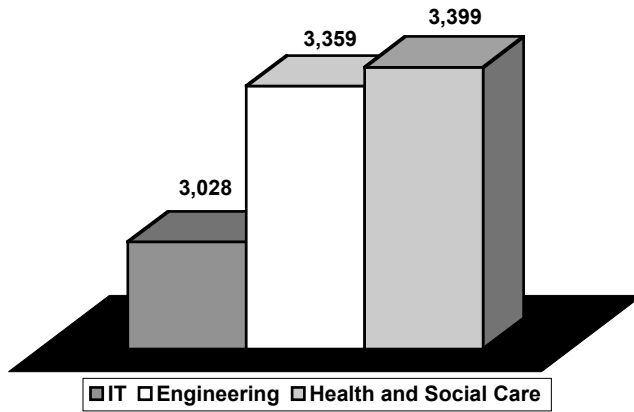
**Table 7: Job starts by non-EU workers in 2003 in Resource project's areas**

	North West	North East	Central	South and Islands	Total
IT	1,124	865	557	482	3,028
Engineering	1,373	1,053	494	439	3,359
Health & Social Care	1,510	666	499	724	3,399

From this new table we see that the areas of health and social welfare and engineering present higher values in the forecast for foreign workers, in comparison with the area of informatics:



Figure 2: New jobs for non-EU workers in 2003



We foresee, therefore, for 2003, 3,399 jobs starting in Health and social care, 3,359 in engineering and 3,038 in the area IT.

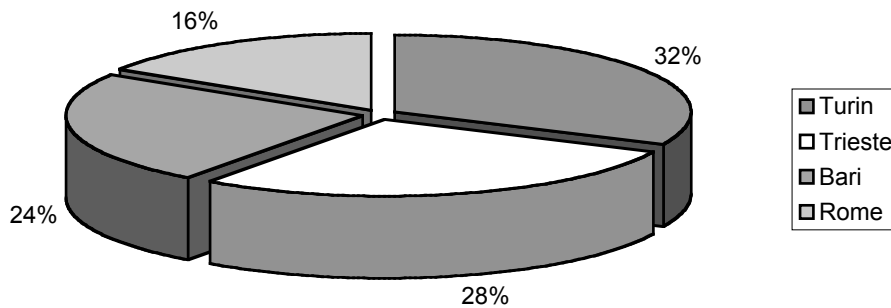
## 5 Refugees' contribution to Europe

For the research 25 structured interviews with refugees were carried out, between June and September 2003, with very precise questions, decided in advance and following a fixed order. Eight interviewers have conducted the interviews that were then analysed by a researcher.

The research aimed at investigating the pathways to work of 25 refugees, chosen because of their skills in the areas of Health and Social Care, IT and Engineering.

It is however important to point out that it was difficult to find refugees that had studied and subsequently worked in these three professional areas in their countries of origin. The decision to carry out the interviews in four different geographic areas (the north-east, the north-west, central and southern Italy) has allowed us moreover to collect information about various zones that present differences for the labour market as well as for integration of refugees. Eight interviews took place in Turin, seven in Trieste, six in Bari and four in Rome.

**Figure 3: Place of interview**



The main difficulty met was finding refugees who continued using the skills acquired in their country of origin, as most refugees are forced to change professional field during their working integration in Italy.

Moreover, it's worth pointing out that many refugees refused to be interviewed, expressing their fatigue with the many interviews done since their arrival in Italy. It must finally be observed that the chosen selection is not representative of the present population of refugees in Italy; on the contrary we have concentrated on people getting work in professional areas, and above all in the three areas Health and Social welfare, IT and Engineering.

### 5.1 Characteristics of the interviewees

There are 25 interviewees, with 17 males and 8 females. Most people were aged between 30 and 39.

**Figure 4: Gender**

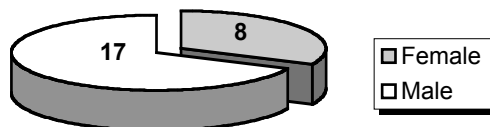
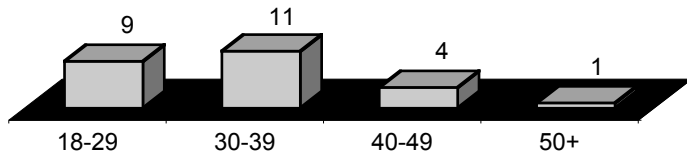


Figure 5: Age



As the figures below show the refugees came from a variety of places, the biggest single group being from the Balkans.

Figure 6: Region of origin

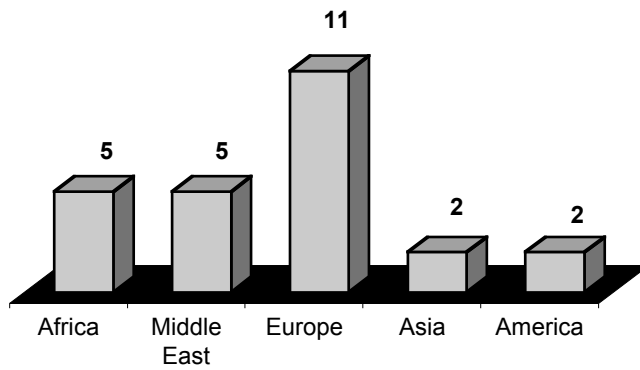
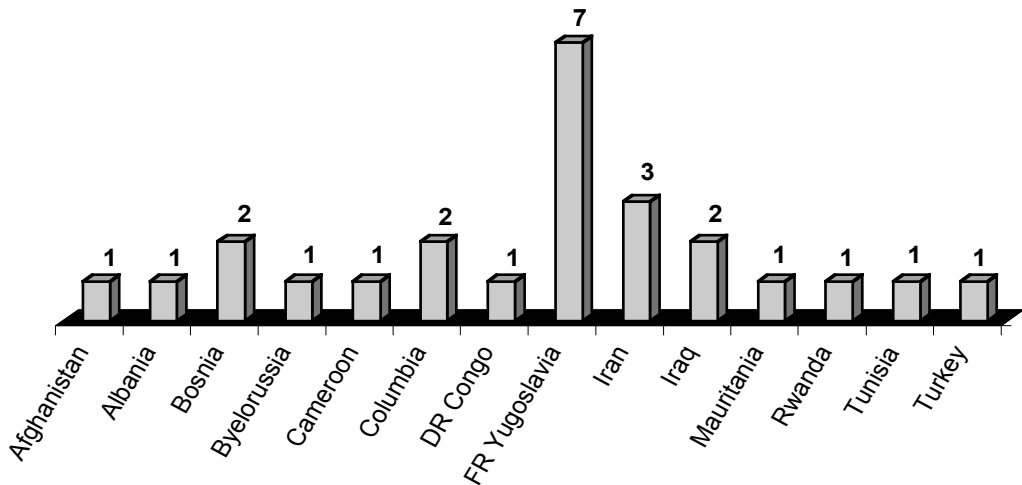
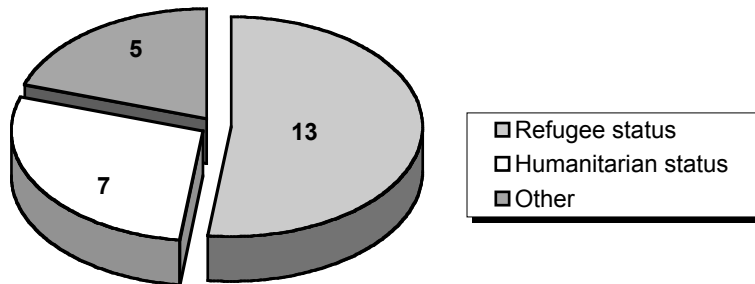


Figure 7: Country of origin



Most of the interviewees have refugee status (54%), while a smaller number have the status of humanitarian protection (25%).

**Figure 8: Status**

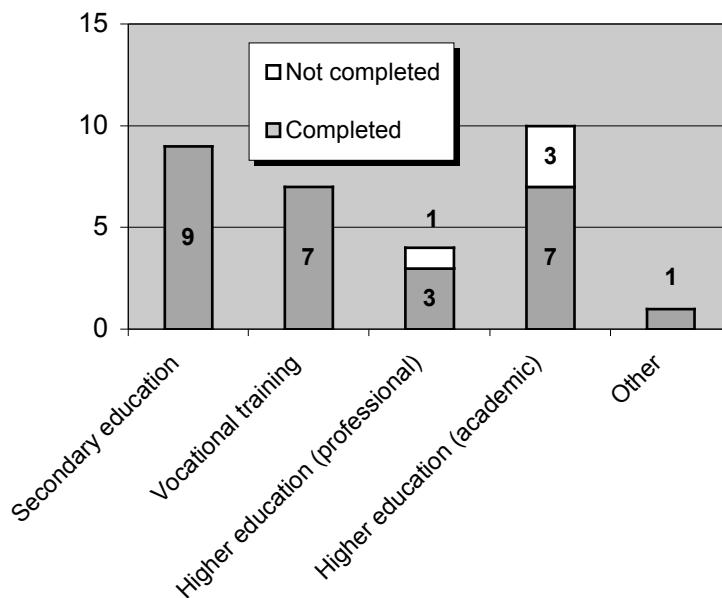


The full quantitative data from the research is given in the appendix.

## 5.2 Educational experiences (training received in the country of origin and in Italy)

The level of education acquired in the country of origin by the interviewees is high (28% with an academic title), but none has achieved full recognition of their degree (57% of graduates have no recognition of their degree, while 47% have partial recognition after 5 years waiting).

**Figure 9: Highest level of education before arrival in Italy**



As far as documents relative to the training capacities earned in Italy, the majority of interviewees declare that they were not able to bring their certificates with them from the country of origin, because they escaped: *'I have carried no documents with me. In 1988, when my family and I had to flee Iran, all my documents were burnt.'* (Interview 14)

A refugee explains the method used to gain recognition of his qualification. After requesting recognition of his degree through the International Social Service, papers were sent to the Italian ambassador in Cameroon, who had to get them verified at the university. Finally, after four years, the qualification was recognised and an equivalent diploma given. The interviewee therefore declares that *'it is like a Jungle and anyhow all these things aren't useful.'* (Interview 1)

When complete recognition is obtained it often grants a secondary qualification, and an additional educational engagement is requested from the refugee. As another interviewee says: *'My "middle school" degree was only partially recognised. In order to obtain the full acknowledgement I had to attend a course of 150 hours at the Italian school'* (Interview 6)

In many cases, however, day-to-day necessities render it impossible for a refugee to face the complex procedure of getting recognition of his or her qualifications. Two interviewees confirm this: *'None of my qualifications has been recognised. I haven't made anything for the validation, because I did not have much time to dedicate to the study. I have a family and therefore I had to work'* (Interview 10); *'I haven't thought about this possibility, I began to work in order to maintain my three sons'* (Interview 17); the financial impediments constitute another obstacle, since the procedure requires original documents and translations: *'we need the money for translations'* (Interview 14).

In the majority of cases these financial difficulties and the necessity of working to survive prevent ongoing education and training in Italy. The courses attended in Italy are usually language courses or, as far the professional area is concerned, courses for professional linguistic mediator, a figure that in Italy is becoming deals with foreigners with higher education degrees.

Some refugees point out that the educational opportunities offered do not respect their previous educational experiences and their expectations, because they do not come from a real analysis of the refugees' educational and cultural needs; one points out: *'there is no educational policy for the emigrating people. The only existing policy is to waste money. For example, there are many courses, organised by the Provinces or the Regions, that don't correspond to the real needs of the foreigners! There is no political will to understand what are the real needs of the migrants.'* (Interview 10).

### 5.3 The experience of working

The interviewees' experience of working in Italy is often characterised by instability, lack of regular contracts (and so of social protection). Even regular jobs are often on short contracts.

It is interesting to look at the refugees' reasons for leaving jobs in Italy. In particular we find contractual difficulties and little guarantee of social protection: *'I had problems of poisoning by Trielin. In the factory they did not execute the right controls'* (Interview 3); in other cases the problem of the insufficient salary emerges: *'low salary was justified by our insufficient knowledge of Italian and little experience in Italy, but anyhow the working hours were too long and I also carried out external duties for the restaurant'* (Interview 16). Many interviewees told about jobs without regular contracts, above all when they were asylum seekers, pressed from the necessity to work in order to survive. One states: *'I also carried out jobs in the "submerged world" in Italy,'* but he doesn't want to talk about it (Interview 1); two refugees say to have been forced to accept work in the black economy in order to survive: *'they were temporary jobs I did when I still hadn't my documents, when I was asylum seeker and I could not work...they were in order to survive'* (Interview 10); *'it was a temporary job. Moreover I did not have a regular contract because I was an asylum seeker'* (Interview 20). Comparing, the fields of occupation in the country of origin and in Italy it is evident that the refugees rarely continue working in the same field they had acquired skills and experience in before their arrival in Italy. And also when they continue to work in the same professional field, as it happens the area Health and Social welfare, it happens after a re-qualification to an inferior level, as in the case of refugees with the qualification as professional nurses who in Italy work as assistants to the elderly.

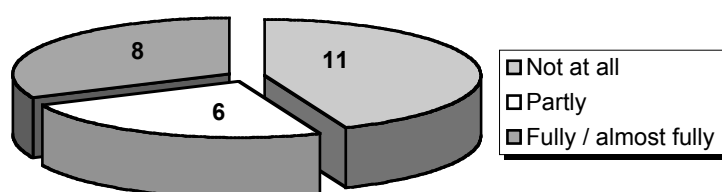
Table 8: Number of refugees employed in the country of origin and in Italy per sector

	In the country of origin	In Italy
Health & Social Care	5	6
Engineering	2	0
IT	1	0
Other sector	14	15
Student	2	2
Not employed	1	2
TOTAL	25	25

#### 5.4 Use of previous skills and experience

During the interviews 44% of refugees revealed that their actual job does not reflect in any way the level of the competences, abilities and knowledge acquired in the country of origin.

Figure 10: Extent to which current employment reflects existing knowledge



It should be observed that, in all but a single case, those who declared that their jobs entirely reflect the acquired competences from their countries of origin do not have professional degrees and justify the answer with the improvement in living conditions and escape from persecution: *'Wholly, because in Italy I feel myself more free'* (Interview 2); an interviewee gives evidence of different concerns from recreating professional life:

*Completely, it allows me to make things linked to my experience. This employment makes me feel good because I'm in a job that I know, not like doctors or engineers who arrive in Italy and are forced to do manual jobs. Unfortunately after the arrival in Italy those who graduate in a specific field are forced to do work that they don't find satisfying. The only thing that makes me sorry is that in Colombia I was the owner of a company, here I'm a worker. (Interview 10)*

Also when they continue to work in the same professional field, the interviewees tell of having changed duties and having had to assume an inferior position: *'the assistance foresees also some nursing duties, but I have an contract as attendant; I'm not considered a nurse'* (Interview 5); *'I like my job very much, although there are some disadvantages: not having my qualifications recognised the salary is lower and sometimes I cannot sign the plans'* (Interview 7).

The ones who didn't have high competences perceive the gap with the past work experience less powerfully, often going on working in the same professional field.

Several problems emerge from the interviews, like the discomfort of change *'I cannot give importance to all that that I have learned during the previous work experience and in the course of my studies. I have a scientific training and now I work in the social field'* (Interview 1); and again: *'Anything, my actual job is of manual type and completely unlinked to my preparation and academic training'* (Interview 3). Often refugees present this gap between their occupation in Italy and studies undertaken in the country of origin, as two of them tell: *'this job is much too easy. And it is a type of job that I have already had in Russia as training in order to specialize. I am an engineer and I'm able to do much more, I could make much more'* (Interview 6); *'Not at all, the actual job does not reflect my completed studies'* (Interview 11).

The refugees consider the failure in appreciation of academic qualifications as the core cause of this forced change, as one of them asserts: *'My diploma from Kosovo wasn't recognised, isn't useful'* (Interview 8). Sometimes, moreover, the necessity to work in order to survive forces refugees to accept a job below their expectations: *'At all, I have not been able to try something more adequate in order to find a job in little time to maintain three sons'* (Interview 17).

## 5.5 Pathways to employment

In finding work qualifications from the country of origin are considered useful, even when they are not formally recognised, as they show concrete competences, which can be used on the Italian labour market, as an interviewee says: *'not formally but as training, preparation'* (Interview 7); another states:

*Also if academic qualifications, above all the university degree, have not been recognised officially they were still useful in getting a job. In factory it showed that a person already knew how to work and they were reliable. They have employed me because I have studied as a mechanical engineer, but at the same time they pay me like a person who has only a middle school degree.* (Interview 6)

Work experience from the country of origin is therefore important in the search for a new employment, even if this does not correspond to the previous one, as someone says:

*The skills I acquired working in my country, above all as regards my time employed in the Ministry for agriculture, have been very useful. These abilities are linked to the organisation in the job, to the facility of communicating with others and to manage and mediate.* (Interview 1)

The main training courses undertaken in Italy are essentially in Italian and, in the professional areas, courses that don't offer effective possibilities of labour market introduction. Many refugees have attended a cultural linguistic mediator's course, which allowed them to find a job: *'I obtained my present job thanks to the Course for cultural Mediators'* (Interview 7). Such professional figure in Italy provides an aspiration for highly skilled foreigners, however, it must be said that the chance of getting this kind of work has almost expired. Knowledge of Italian, moreover, is considered an essential skill for working: *'to speak the language is important. If you do not speak Italian no one gives you a job'* (interviews 14 & 20).

The complete change of career becomes is an effect of the necessity to accept whichever job to survive, as two refugees tell: *'More than a change of career it is to be pleased of whichever job, because of the impossibility to obtain qualified jobs or jobs for which qualifications or previous experiences are demanded.'* (Interview 4); *'A refugee does not decide to change career, but accepts the job offered to him'* (Interview 20).

Finding a job is rarely helped by public service initiatives or private employment agencies. The interviewees have used such services, but without results: *'As soon I could, I enrolled in the jobs lists, but it has not been much use. I have tried to enrol in the co-operatives' lists, but I have had problems caused by age limits – the labour market demands people aged below 30 years'* (Interview 1); *'I have been to thousands of agencies in Trieste, but they didn't work, they call you, call you, and in the end*

nothing comes' (Interview 4); *'I was enrolled in the lists of temporary jobs agencies but they never called me'* (Interview 13).

Informal job channels seem more effective when searching for a job; in many cases initiatives from voluntary associations and refugee associations have produced positive results: *'When the organisations needed a graduate refugee for a job they called me'* (Interview 1); *'I found a job thanks to the cooperative Crescere insieme, that organises the ARCA plan, together with the CISA'* (Interview 2); *'I succeeded in finding a job thanks to my acquaintances, thanks to all the people who work for the facciamo pace association'* (Interview 3).

In most cases the successful channels jobs are still informal and consist of personal contacts, even if these were built through NGOs, as an interviewee says: *'The reception structure addressed to me to a first job and from that one I found the job of attendance in the rest house. I have found the job through personal contacts'* (Interview 3).

Nearly all the interviewees say they have only found a job thanks to personal contacts: *'I found a job thanks to my acquaintances, to the people who were part of the association of Canelli. The placement office wasn't any use'* (Interview 6); *'As I arrived in Italy, in Lecce, they sent me in a Kurdish Centre, in Milan. I was lucky because I could live at the Centre and those that helped me introduced me to the NAGA association that found me various jobs. Once I was recognised as a refugee the NAGA found me a house in Casale and put me in contact with the Red Cross who found me a job in a factory'* (Interview 20).

The interviewees forcefully emphasise, however, that they wouldn't have found their jobs without their own skills and personal abilities: *'they would not have employed me if I had not had experience and if I was not prepared'* (Interview 6); *'personal skills have been fundamental in obtaining a job. Above all my education gained in the technical Course I took in Colombia and my work experience'* (Interview 10).

Another refugee compares his personal abilities in the different Italian and German contexts: *'I succeeded in finding a job thanks to the course I took in Germany. People only give you a job to you if you are able to carry it out. In Germany, unlike Italy, I was able to attend the course, because the German government gave me a subsistence cheque and paid the rent for the house. At the end of the course they have found me a job and I have been able to support myself'* (Interview 14).

The search for a job through informal channels demands that all personal competences and abilities are declared and used, therefore an interviewee stresses the importance of being resolved: *'I found job with through a classified adverts newspaper, I ran my advert many times and after four months I found a job and I have started'*. (Interview 4).

In conclusion, interviewees found some fundamental factors that help enormously in a job search. The most frequently repeated are a network of personal acquaintances, the refugee's personal abilities and previous educational experience.

## 5.6 Obstacles finding employment

During the interviews, refugees have stated different obstacles to finding employment. Almost all the interviewees' had difficulty in getting equivalence for qualifications: *'our diplomas aren't recognised. When I succeeded in getting my documents to Italy I discovered that I had to take two exams to get my academic degree equivalence'* (Interview 1); *'diplomas aren't recognised. This causes many problems in finding a job, or better, a job that reflects in any way personal abilities and previous educational experiences. For example I could work in the education field'* (Interview 3); the trouble caused by the non-equivalence of the diplomas emerge also in this interview: *'It's hard, mainly when you have to work but you don't have time to study and, so, you can't make the diploma equivalence'* (Interview 7).

Interviewees also complain that lack of work experience in Italy is another obstacle to finding employment, as in this case: *'without experience they don't give me a job'* (Interview 4).

The main obstacle to finding employment is communication difficulties, as various refugees say: *'At the beginning the fact that I didn't speak Italian was a problem, then I took different courses'* (Inter-



view 1); 'If you want work you have to learn the Italian language' (Interview 6); the problems caused by not knowing Italian also emerge in this interview:

*It's the first important thing to do. To learn the language – that is to read it, write it and pronounce it right! – you need at least one year. The first year is a period in which you don't have guarantees, in which you could have no job and in which you discover that even if there are courses to learn Italian, you don't have the possibility of taking them. (Interview 10)*

Finding employment is then hindered by the lack of knowledge of the labour market and by the lack of the opportunities that can facilitate finding employment, as the interviewees say: '*the ignorance about methods of finding employment has been an important obstacle. Now I would like to know the way to be successful in finding a job in an international organisation, in order to increase the value of the skills I acquired in Cameroon*' (Interview 1); '*If I were a craft worker or had taken vocational training I would have had less difficulty finding a job in Italy. In fact I was sure that I could find a job related to my qualifications. I didn't expect that I would have to leave my country*' (Interview 3).

When the subject of legal status is raised, the difficult position of asylum seekers emerges, with their ban from working, as many interviewees explain: '*When you are an asylum seeker you can't work, you can have only a grant, which means you work a lot and you earn little!*' (Interview 3); '*All the day at home, I was fed up... at least two or three hours per day you need to earn some money*' (Interview 4).

Another refugee shows how the restrictions on employment for asylum seekers are related to the general context of the Italian reception system:

*In Italy there isn't a right policy for the asylum. When you are waiting for the procedure you can't work! But how can you live? You can become a tramp! The state doesn't help you and doesn't allow you to have a house; it doesn't give you grants or anything. I know that in other European countries they give you a little bit of money every month, they help you more! Asylum seekers have no rights. You can only begin to live normally when you become a refugee. (Interview 10)*

Another says: '*restrictions on employment for asylum seekers are a big problem. I have been lucky because I could live in the 'Kurdistan' organisation's building, but many others asylum seekers lived in the streets*' (Interview 20).

Some refugees point out various bureaucratic obstacles, which make their access to the Italian labour market difficult:

*I had many problems finding a job even when I had refugee status. Because of many bureaucratic obstacles, even if you have refugee status, you can't have the residence and documents. The bigger problem is that you aren't able to reflect on your condition, on your expectation and wishes, you aren't able to plan a strategy to find a job. You are marginalised and distracted by quotidian problems: housing, food. (Interview 1)*

Some interviewees talk about problems of direct or indirect discrimination in the labour market: '*The sensation of marginalisation I feel in Italian society doesn't come from the citizens' behaviour, but from the way in which our public media, newspapers and television, speak about immigration*' (Interview 1); in other cases the same problem emerges:

*I believe that discrimination is caused by the lack of cultural exchange between Italian and foreign citizens. Turin municipality made a mistake creating 'ghettos', like 'Porta Palazzo' or 'San Salvario', and isolating foreign people. Isolation and separation increase, on one hand there is prejudice and discrimination, on the other solitude, fear, desperation, rage, and, sometimes, violence. In order to avoid degeneration we need a cultural exchange and different ways of life. (Interview 3)*

Sometimes discrimination isn't aimed at foreign people in general, but particularly at refugees, stressing that Italian society is still unprepared to deal with refugees: '*They didn't give me that job because I was a refugee, they saw my temporary residence permit's cause, and they didn't give me job*' (Interview 4).

During the interviews, some refugees point out that Italian society considers them only as a 'labour force', and not as human beings, it emerges in this case:

*To give a job means to notice the abilities of a person, who belongs to the economic system of the country in which he lives and so contributes to its development. We are always considered as foreigners and never as Italian citizens; we are considered as a labour force, to do jobs that Italian don't want to do! It's important to consider foreign people as a resource, not only an economic resource, but also a cultural one. If we had a true exchange between Italians and foreigners we could have a different vision of the world and, in this way, the possibility of find an appropriate solution to the problems. (Interview 10)*

It emerges that family responsibilities are important in labour market expectations, as two interviewees explain: *'The thought of my family in Cameroon didn't allow me any other possibility. I had to work in order to send money to my family'* (Interview 1); *'Part of my family is still in Kosovo. This was always a psychological burden to me. Now I'm serene because I send money every two months to my family'* (Interview 3); *'Still today I must help my family in Iraq. I send some money every month to my sisters, who could come in Italy, but they haven't enough money'* (Interview 14).

All the interviewees tell in different ways about how trauma and the experience of exile are a burden in accessing the labour market: *'The preoccupations related to the daily problems give me no chance to reflect on my condition. When you have to think of where you can sleep, what you can eat, you are not in condition of thinking and trying to plan a job search related to your skill and ambitions'* (Interview 1); *'The solitude, the difficulties and, above all, growing in a different country block my creativity'* (Interview 3).

Also in other cases the suffering due to the experience of exile is described: *'This is a big problem today, it isn't simple to overcome the separation from my country. Also my wife and my sons feel homesick and miss people left in Russia'* (Interview 6); *'the first two years were the most difficult ones of my life! It isn't simple to change your life, language, culture... and to think that your friends and your story are still in another continent. After two years you realise you have to think to the future and so you start to overcome painful things... you realise that you can live in a good way also here, far from your country'* (Interview 10).

Finally the interviews revealed several problems, like the difficulty of accessing a new labour market for the second time and at an advanced age, with a long bureaucratic procedure when work is necessary to survive: *'I lost 20 days waiting my work permit'* (Interview 12); instead some interviewees talk about difficulties with the boss: *'I was willing but I was deceived by many bosses, who planned systems to avoid paying me. For example when I worked in leafleting my boss convinced me to buy a car to work better. After this I realised that he didn't want to pay me for the job nor for the car. The only one thing I learned is not to trust anyone'* (Interview 1).

In conclusion, the biggest barriers to accessing the labour market are lack of work experience and qualification equivalence; difficulties due to the trauma and experience of exile. As an interviewee says: *'The third difficulty isn't a material one, but an emotional one. I was depressed because of the separation from my home and for the preoccupations. To overcome these barriers my ex-girlfriend helped me, she was a Spanish girl I met in Italy'* (Interview 3); *'Continuous fear of being sent to Iraq. A foreigner has no rights and he feels always irregular'* (Interview 14). Other difficulties are related to the knowledge of Italian, as in this case: *'At the beginning I didn't speak; when I came back at home I cried, I cried because I didn't speak; I got always angry... I translated writing into my language, and I had to do this because I couldn't read in Italian; the boss reassured me and told me he didn't care about it. Now I understand everything, I can also write in Italian: I learned it alone'* (Interview 19). Precarious job conditions, without contracts are suffered by refugees, because they need a job: *'The irregular job. They take advantage of you, and you work on Sunday and with absurd timetables'* (Interview 7).

Finally, some interviewees point out difficulties in finding accommodation: *'they only let you a flat if you have a work!'* (Interview 6); *'I was lucky because the police headquarters informed the organisation Facciamo Pace and they find me an accommodation. I lived for four days with six other families in a flat with two rooms. Than I met a student, an interpreter, who introduced me to a professor in Rivoli,*

*who offered me hospitality for six months. Then I went to the house of my friend in the Facciamo Pace organisation (first in Castiglione, then in Rivoli). But if you don't meet anyone and if an organisation doesn't help you then you are a tramp' (Interview 3); 'You don't have an house and you worry continuously about your accommodation. I could live with the 'Kurdistan' organisation in Milan, but not everyone is lucky' (Interview 20).*

## 6 Conclusion & Recommendations

### 6.1 Recommendations

Interviewees offer recommendations to the institutions and to the NGOs. Many of them say that Italian society is still unprepared to face refugees' problems, demonstrating a lack of awareness of them, as evidenced in this case:

*Asylum seekers feel fear and need real protection, and the state must guarantee it. To ensure this protection the state shouldn't create discrimination related to asylum seekers' options in Italy: above all there is the reception: when I arrived they put me in a warehouse! Then there are all the things you have to do to become a refugee. Besides the state doesn't care about the expectations, abilities and knowledge of asylum seekers... there could be more awareness from Italian institutions. (Interview 1)*

Some interviewees address their recommendations to the Italian social and political system:

*Making a political proposal to recognise immigrants' rights is important: foreign people should participate in elections; vote for political and economic projects in the region and province. Foreign people belong to the Italian political and economic system and could act and be important as Italian citizens. Only in this way we can speak of true integration! (Interview 10)*

Human dignity is demanded by some refugees, who declare they are considered only as a 'labour force': *'It is important that foreigners aren't considered only as a labour force. We are not only here to work. With our story we can contribute to an understanding of the world. A more complete and general vision can be useful to find solutions to different problems'* (Interview 10).

Recurrent comparisons were made between the Italian reception system and those in northern European countries, as in this case:

*May I ask a question? Why in Italy isn't there governmental help as in other European countries? I know, for example, that in Germany they give you a house and they find you a job... they help you more. If I hadn't found the NAGA organisation and the Italian Red Cross, I and my family would have been on the streets. I arrived in Italy attracted by D'Alema's political position, but honestly I expected more from the Italian government. I ran away from my country because I was under arrest many times. For example in 1982, after the state stroke, they put me in prison with my brother. When we came out my brother committed suicide because he wasn't able to bear all the violence... in prison they hang us by the feet. (Interview 20)*

Almost all interviewees advised reforms to facilitate equivalence of qualifications, that hindered their access to the labour market: *'Reform education's situation: diploma equivalence it's important both for adults, if not immediately, after a course or an exam, as for children, for example my daughter, in Russia, had almost finished high school, but in Italy she had to restart studies from the first class. My daughter is 19 years old – she could go to university, instead of being in a classroom with 15 year old students. In Belgium it's different!'* (Interview 6); *'Find a solution to the diploma recognition. For Iraqi people problem of documents is very hard because almost all were burned'* (Interview 14).

Refugees frequently asked for more coherence between vocational training and refugees' professional and educational backgrounds, suggesting that this kind of courses could offer real opportunities in finding employment: *'Improve and reform vocational training and educational courses for adult refugees. Also improve the information network related to finding employment, and the government must prevent irregular work'* (Interview 6).

In one case a refugee points out the importance and the role of education in order to improve his integration in the Italian society: *'You have to rely on training to get knowledge and value everyone's competences. The possibility of studying in Italy allows you more competences in language and to approach closer the Italian culture'* (Interview 22).

In many cases refugees' observations point out limits and lacks of Italian institutions, as in this circumstance: *'the situation would be better if we had less bureaucracy and if there were no contrasting laws that hinder your understanding. For example I was seeking information about the possibility of going back in Kosovo to see my family. CISL Trade Union told me that I could come back but police headquarters told me I couldn't; you receive different information in different offices'* (Interview 3).

The Italian reception system is believed to be inefficient, and many interviewees recommend an improvement in this direction: *'Improve reception centres, so that they become points of reference without leaving people on streets. When you are in a foreign country and you don't know where you can sleep, it is clear-cut to become desperate, it is clear-cut to give up and become a thief, make little crimes'* (Interview 3); *'Reform reception centres and the quality and length of the asylum determination procedure. Then it must be guarantee the permits of access to work to asylum seekers'* (Interview 4).

In other cases the recommendation to restore economic grants emerges: *'I would never raise grants'* (Interview 4).

Finally interviewees call attention to the fact that finding employment is included in a larger problematic subject, related to integration, as an interviewee points out:

*I would like to remark a thing in this interview related to access to the labour market. Job and residence permits are important, but there are also other problems. To have a job doesn't mean to have the same possibilities, opportunities and rights as Italian citizens. I believe that there are focal points related to the Asylum Right. I believe we need a larger political proposal related to the real integration. People escape from their country... and it would be better find a right policy for migrants!* (Interview 10)

In conclusion, in many interviews the importance of considering the access to the labour market close to the reception and integration system of the society emerge, as an interviewee points out: *'It is essential to help refugees, first of all to survive and then to live. Before access to the labour market refugees need security: housing, food, clothes. It is essential to satisfy primary needs. Because he has psychological traumas, and often physical ones, he needs psychological balance'* (Interview 22).

## 6.2 Conclusions

The search has shown the influence of various dynamics on the flows of refugees in Europe. In particular it seems opportune to observe that, in comparison to many countries of northern Europe, Italy still remains a passage land for many refugees: in fact the greater part of those with professional qualifications move to countries that offer greater possibilities for professional re-evaluation. It must also be observed that for many of the refugees presently in Italy (as in the case of the Kurds or the Kosovars) is often impossible to achieve the re-evaluation of higher education qualifications due to the persecution suffered in their countries.

It emerges from the research that the refugees, in their course of work integration, regret the difficulties in gaining recognition of their past educational and work experience. Above all they find jobs through informal channels, through personal acquaintances and contacts, showing the ineffectiveness of the official services for job access or even some NGOs. Frequently, in fact, such services offer only the information necessary to reach other subjects, but nobody then offers the real possibility of creating individualised plans for work integration. Such problems also appear regarding professional training, which seems to be determined more from approved outlines, than from personalised analysis of the educational needs and of the expectations of the refugee. It must be observed that the professional courses to which refugees take part do not result, for the most part, in elevated qualifications, and gaining access to university is also difficult. The refugees attend courses of average to low professionalism, which allow the recovery of previous skill levels for those who didn't possess high qualifications. The interviewees, moreover, lament that in the professional training courses' structuring, and during their development, they did not take past knowledge into consideration.

Many courses don't offer money to participants, rendering attendance impossible for the majority of refugees, because they are forced to work in order to survive; in addition the professional courses don't seem to offer real possibilities of integration in the labour market. Another topic that emerges from the interviews is the request for reinstatement of the economic subsidies, which represented a small contribution for the refugees in the delicate beginning of their process of integration, and supported a start to independent activity. It appears obvious that the interviewees judge the treatment of the asylum seekers illogical, because they are not allowed to work, but are in fact forced to work without a regular contract, with heavy consequences on the salaries and on trade-union guarantees.

To improve the process of refugees' work integration the following recommendations emerged from the research:

- The majority of asylum seekers work in the black economy, some without contracts and in the absence any social protection. The inability to legally approach the labour market during the first period after arrival seriously hinders integration of refugees in the long term. Therefore, beyond obtaining the working papers asylum seekers would have to be supported in access to the labour market as in participation on training courses.
- The training courses should be developed from the needs analysis and from the expectations of the refugee to recover in the best possible way the past educational experiences. Therefore, skills auditing constitutes a fundamental instrument for the support of an educational policy in coherence with the expressed needs of the associate-economic system. Moreover, the courses should offer a money contribution to the participants in order to allow refugees not to give up training to survive.
- Recognition of academic and professional qualifications should be eased, in order to render refugees able to use their own competences on the Italian labour market. A real professional re-evaluation signifies in fact that the professional and educational backgrounds are recognised.
- Services should be constructed that offer plans of working integration based on the individual. From the research emerges that the current guideline services on jobs, both institutional and those of support organisations, seem to function mainly only as information gateways, so that they send back to other services, rather than leading to jobs.

In conclusion, the problematic of work integration is tied to the broader one of the acceptance characteristics of a society and of its ability to guarantee to its weaker participants a dignified plan for their lives; many interviewees felt that Italian society is still unprepared for the problematic connected to the figure of the refugee, demonstrating an insufficient knowledge of his or her needs, showing evidence of limits and endemic deficiencies in our society.

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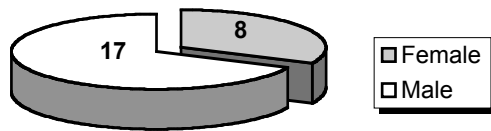
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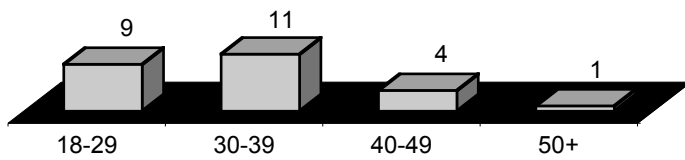
## 8 Appendix: quantitative data

The 25 interviewees had the following characteristics:

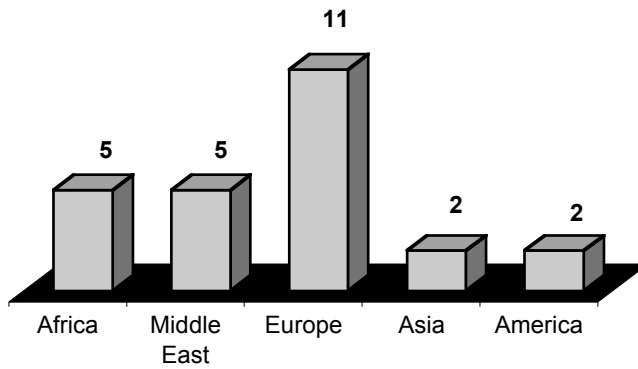
### 1a Gender



### 1b Age

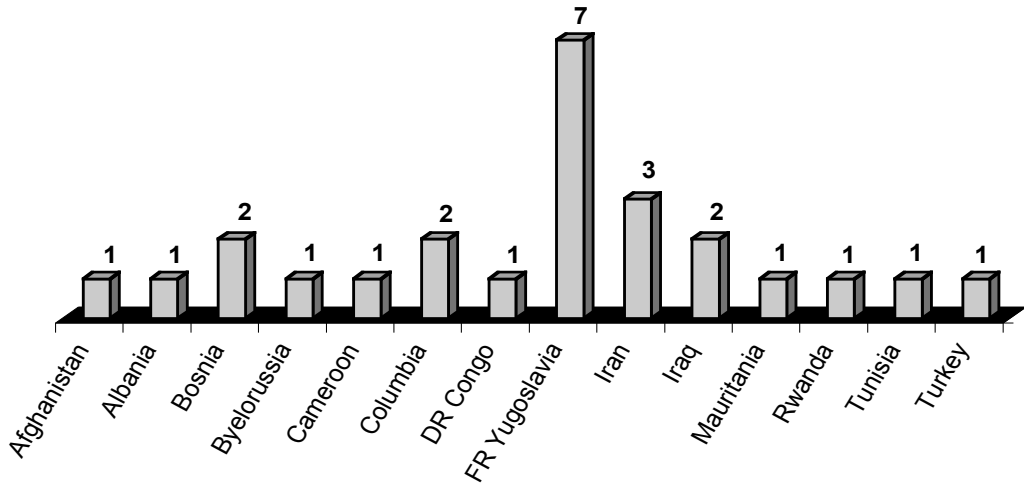


### 1c Region of origin

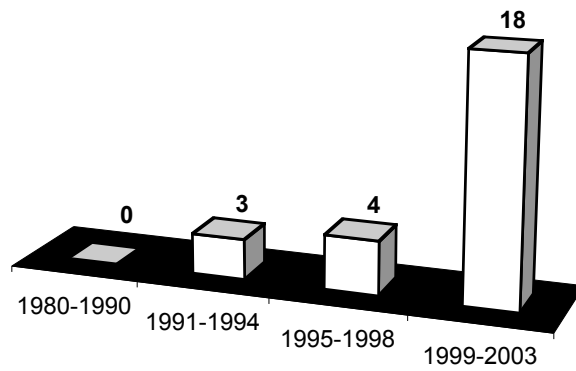




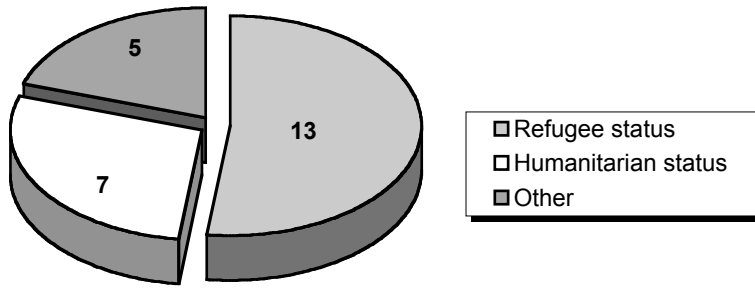
ld Country of origin



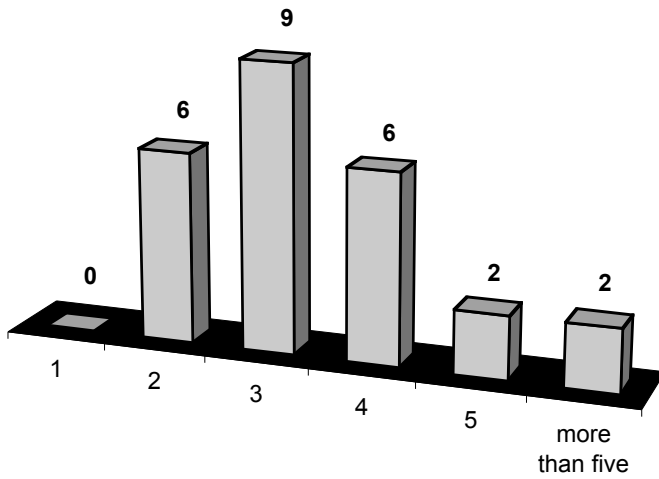
le Date of arrival in Italy



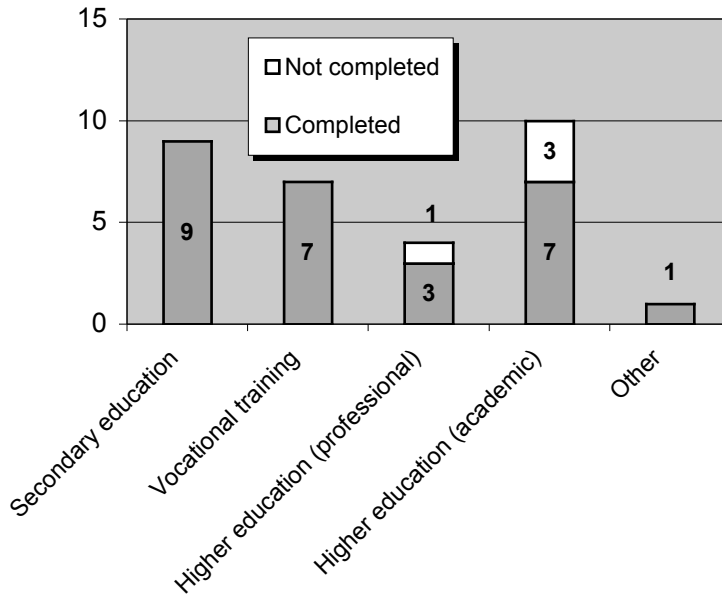
If **Status**



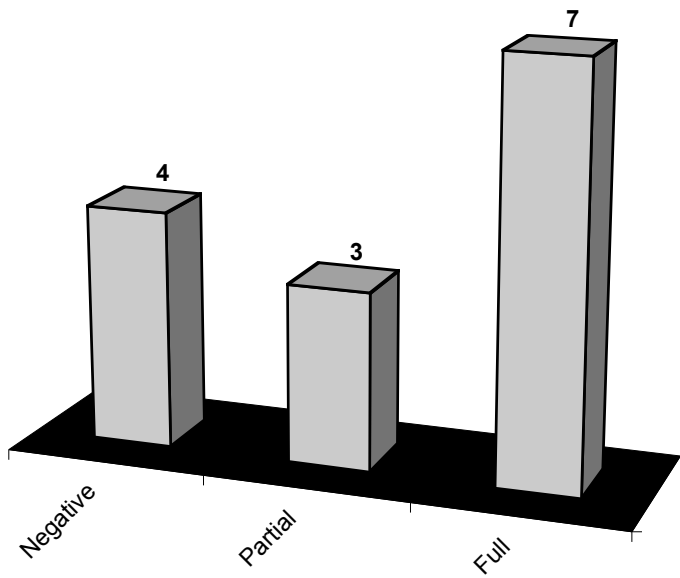
2 **Knowledge of languages (including mother tongue)**



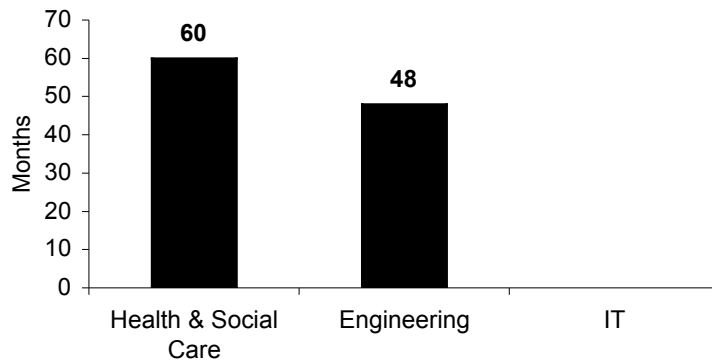
3a Highest level of education before arrival in Italy



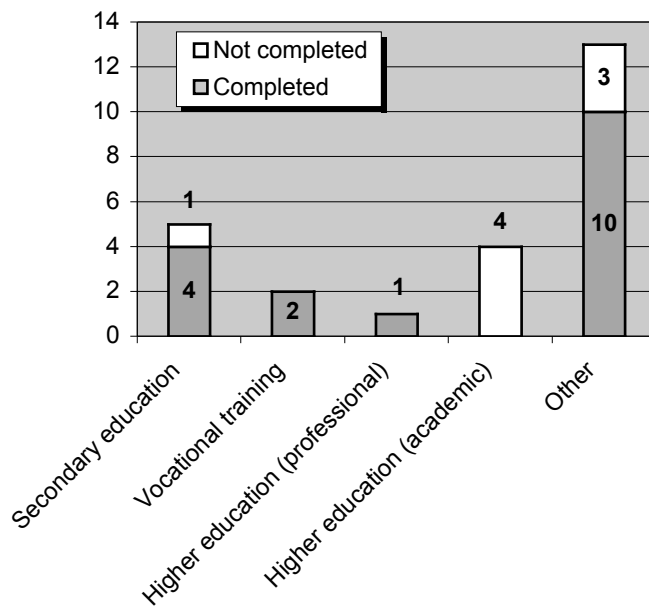
3b Diploma/equivalence recognition in EU country



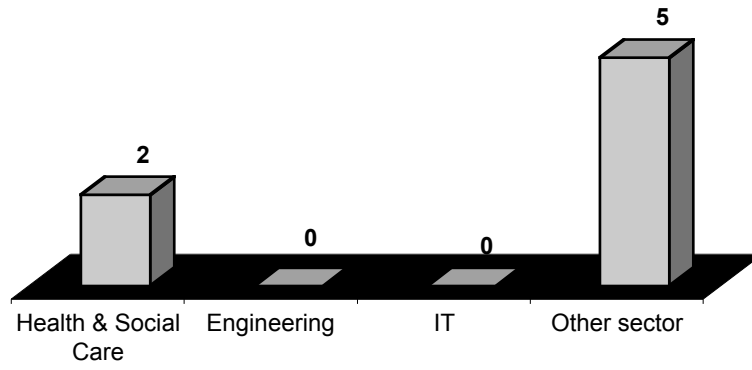
3c Average length of recognition procedure per sector



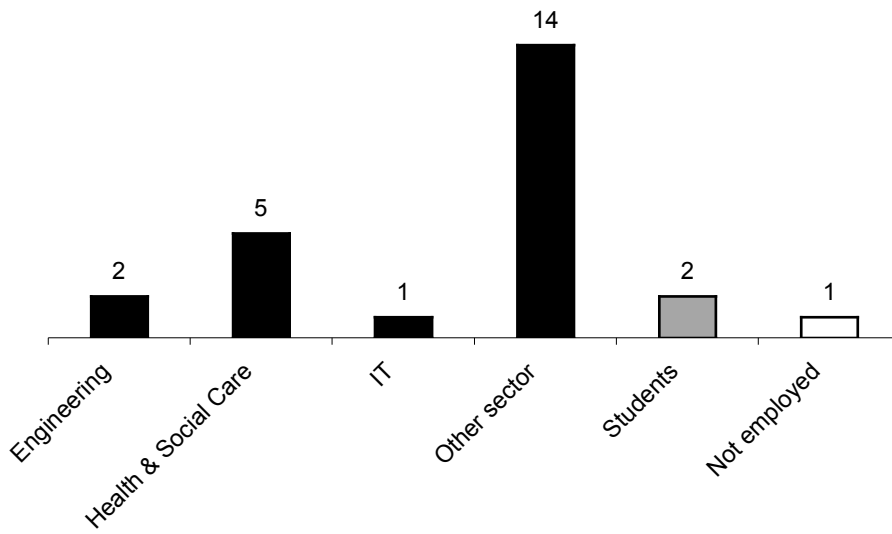
3d Highest level of education in Italy



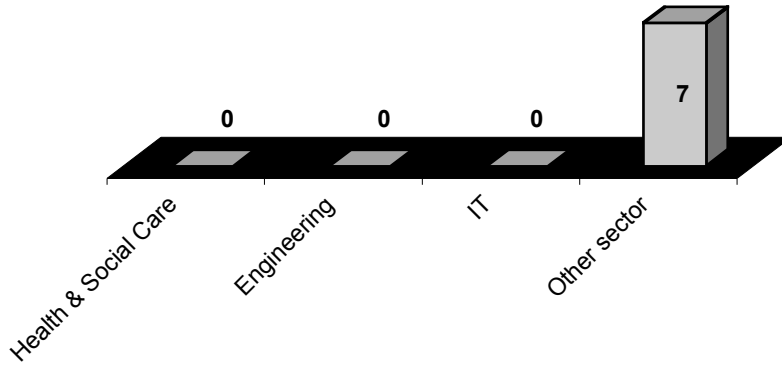
4a Number of refugees who followed practical training before arrival in EU (per sector)



4b Number of refugees employed before arrival in Italy (per sector)

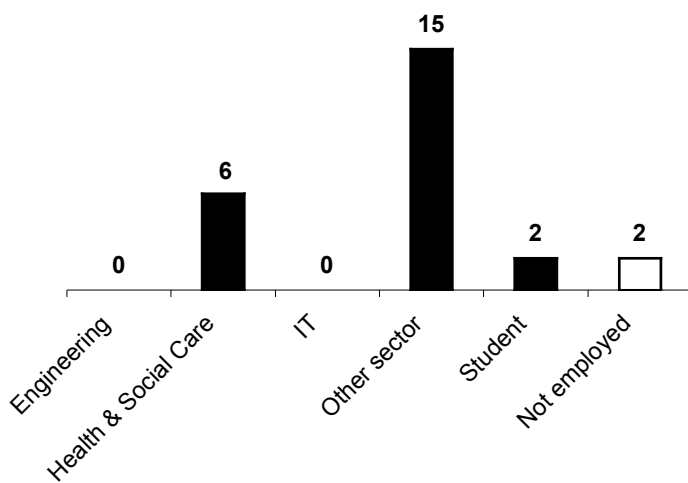


4c Number of refugees who followed practical training in Italy (per sector)



(Total people: 7)

4d Number of refugees employed in Italy (per sector)



5 To what extent do refugees' current jobs reflect the level of their skills, abilities and knowledge acquired before arrival in Italy (per sector)

