Equal@Work Platform 8th annual seminar
Integrating refugees in the workforce: challenges and ways forward

AGENDA

Radisson Red - Rue d'Idalie 35, 1050 Bruxelles

14-15 December 2016

Wednesday 14th December – **Taking stock of the Equal@work Platform (studio 3)**

13.30: Coffee and Registration

**14:00: Introduction**  
Pascal Hildebert (Strategist)

**14:25: Welcoming words**  
Dr. Vilana Pilinkaite Sotirovic (ENAR Board Member)

**14:35: Taking stock of Equal@work: from 2009 to today: what have we done? What changes have we brought? What could we have done better?**  
Joint analysis by Michael Privot (Director, ENAR) and 1st time and longest partner Bruce Roch (CSR & Solidarity Manager, Adecco Group France)

**15:30: Networking and coffee break**

**16:00: Reflecting on equal@work – where to go next? From a conversation on diversity to shared action**  
With views from Bernadette Giard (VP Global Diversity and Inclusion, Sodexo), Marie-Aude Torres-Maguedano (International Director, L’Oréal International Diversity).

**17:30: Launch of Equal@work Tool-Kit: Managing religious diversity at the work place**  
Sarah Chander, ENAR

**17:45: Closing Speech**  
Christopher Hallet (US State Department, Brussels Office)

**19:15: Leaving the hotel for Dinner at Poivre et Sel (rue du Parnasse)**  
Evening talk about testing with Eric Cediey (ISM Corum)

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Thursday 15th December – Integrating Refugees into the workforce: Challenges and Ways Forward 
(studio 3)

08.15 – 9.00: Breakfast in the lobby for participants

09:00: Introduction to the day by Pascal Hildebert (Strategest, Brussels)

09:15: Key note speech on Labour market integration of refugees: from to dream to reality. Lessons from the Belgian experience
By Prof. Dr. Marc De Vos (Ghent and Curtin University), Director of the Itinera Institute (Brussels)

09:40: Setting the landscape – Fishbowl conversation
⇒ Prof. Marc De Vos (Ghent and Curtin University, Director of the Itinera Institute, Brussels)
⇒ Sanna Kohvakka (City of Vantaa Immigrant Services, Finland)
⇒ Laurent Aujean (Policy Officer, DG Home Affairs, European Commission)
⇒ Rike Müller (DGB Bildungswerk Bund, Germany)
⇒ Kari Käsper (Estonian Human Rights Centre, Estonia)

11:00: Coffee break

11:30: Brainstorming working groups
⇒ Participants will be split into three working groups
⇒ After an expert input on the integration of refugees, participants will then discuss and seek to answer key questions in moderated discussion and produce 3 recommendations per group

Expert input from:
- Bernadette Giard (Sodexo, France)
- Petros Heracleous (KISA, Cyprus)
- Helena Ros Pérez (CEAR, Spain)

13:00: Lunch

14:00: Plenary: instructions for the Market place and for the second round of working groups

14:10: Market place of Good Practices (speed dating mode)
⇒ Miriam Salussolia, Lai-momo, Italy
⇒ Maria-Anna Archontidou, Greek Council for Refugees, Greece
⇒ Justine Bousquet, IMS Luxembourg, Luxembourg

14:50: Working groups – Co-creating new approaches
⇒ Participants will be split into groups to test / evaluate / reflect on the recommendations produced by the first round of working groups

16:15: Wrapping up by Michael Privot, ENAR

16:30: Coffee and farewell remarks
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CONCEPT NOTE

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14-15 December 2016

Since 2009, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) has operated the Equal@Work Platform, a space for employers, civil society and trade unions to come together to discuss solutions to today’s pressing issues on the topics of diversity management, inclusion and equality in employment. The platform is a place for critical and practical knowledge-exchange, and aims to address the concerns of employers whilst being ahead of the curve in terms of issues explored.

Equal@work explores the place of origins (race, ethnicity, gender, class, minority religions and culture) in the workplace. In various editions of the seminar, Employers, Civil Society, and Trade Unions have come together to discuss how these origins, in their different intersections and combinations, are contested, discriminated, managed and allowed to exist in the workplace. Our experience has demonstrated that, although the mainstream discourse about diversity management is largely focused on the diversity of ethnic origins in the workplace, this topic continues to present challenges for Human Resources managers. These range from a lack of understanding of racism (in particular in its institutional dimension), a reluctance to react to ‘identity politics’, tense international and national contexts and political climates, depleting resources available for managers, and a general aversion to addressing the core issues of privilege within organisations. These shortcomings in the popular ‘diversity management’ paradigm taboo conversations about (the lack of) diversity of ethnic, cultural and social origins in many work environments. The Equal@work platform has been ENAR’s vehicle to address this broad set of issues in a constructive and empowering way with public and private employers, trade unions, institutions and civil society organisations.

Equal@Work has developed its work with consistency, focusing on of the key questions but deepening a shared understanding and co-designing with its partners. Previous topics have included: measuring ethnic and religious diversity at the workplace, benchmarking progress, accommodating difference, breaking through the glass ceiling and the inclusion of migrant workers. Each of these issues has continued to be at the core of our approaches with the view to support employers to make their genuine commitment to diversity a reality within their organisation.
Integrating refugees in the workforce: challenges and ways forward

The arrival of more than one million refugees in Europe over 2015 and 2016 has been one of the greatest challenges of European economies since the beginning of the century. Although European Member States had dealt with similar or larger amounts of incoming people in the past, in the current context European governments face the enduring impact of the 2008 financial, social and industrial crisis that led to a shrinking economy, in large part due to lack of investment, both from the private and public sectors. Further, all European governments have consistently been scaling down, even largely dismantling, national infrastructures aimed at welcoming and facilitating the social inclusion process of third country nationals, refugees and migrants within their respective social fabric, whatever their legal status and category.

The 2015-16 the number of asylum seekers, in particular from Syria, peaked, although welcoming structures were particularly under resourced. However, governments remained under political pressure to provide refugees with a fast track induction into their host societies so that they would not be “a burden” on social security systems.

In its 4th Equal@work Seminar, ENAR looked at what the EU could do to support and facilitate the labour market inclusion of Third Country nationals. One of the key conclusions of the report was that there was appetite from employers to tap into the potential of Third Country Nationals, yet the administrative hurdles set by Member States to protect their national labour markets made it more complicated to hire TCNs than EU nationals. We pointed out at the time at a number of policy areas where the EU could take the lead to ease normative changes at Member State level – where people are actually going to be employed.

Four years later, the challenges posed by the inclusion of higher percentages of refugees in the labour force is even more acute – in particular when the EU labour market is facing deep structural challenges, among which shrinking job opportunities, massive deindustrialization, no foreseen transition towards post-job societies, deep mismatches between the available expertise and the jobs on offer, disparities between the hardship of jobs and the level of remuneration, and ongoing distortions in expectations between offer and demand.

This year, the Equal@Work Platform will provide a space to creatively look at these challenges. We will do so by addressing the following questions:

- What support mechanisms can we set up, as EU institutions, to facilitate the hiring of refugees at national level? Are all EU policies and measures targeted to the integration of refugees understandable by and adaptable to the employers’ perspective? How do they translate in the concrete recruitment process?
- What measures can we adopt, as Member States within the current legal frameworks to speed up recruitment of refugees by public and private employers?
- What good practices can we put in place, as public/private employers to prioritise the recruitment of refugees in our organisations? Is sponsorship of refugees in the labor market a good deal for private companies?
- What type of support can trade unions and civil society organisations provide to employers to facilitate refugees’ priority hiring and to Member States to make this possible?
- Is self-employment the last resort solution to the employment of refugees?
- What are the key obstacles refugees face hindering their access (or progression) to the labour market? Are measures put in place effectively preventing discrimination? What can be done to address the issue of discrimination against refugees in the recruitment process?

Our unique expertise in creative conversation management will ensure that all participants are empowered to think outside of the box and are exposed to original views and opinions that will trigger new perspectives and exchanges of practices.

**Glossary**

In all conversations related to migration, it is key to understand that all the words that are commonly used are a technical terminology, referring to specific situations and, more importantly, to specific sets of rights. Terms such as *migrant, irregular migrant, circular migrant, asylum seeker, refugee, third country national* all have distinct implications and significance.

To navigate this field, we recommend the following glossaries:


**Background documents**


